



LEWKNOR PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

For the period 2023 to 2040

Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan Group

Made Version

December 2023

Contents	2
Appendices	3
1. Executive Summary	4
2. Summary of Policies	6
3. Terminology.....	7
4. Sources of Maps	7
5. Introduction.....	8
6. Background.....	10
7. Lewknor Parish	16
7.1. History of the Parish.....	21
7.2. Current Housing	23
8. Vision, Aims and Objectives	28
8.1. Vision	28
8.2. Aims and Objectives.....	29
9. Overview of Policies	30
10. Spatial Strategy.....	33
10.1. Settlement Boundaries: Lewknor and Postcombe.....	33
11. Landscape and Village Character.....	39
11.1. Conserving Heritage	39
11.2. Landscape Character	46
11.3. Protection of Views	47
11.4. The Chilterns National Landscape	49
12. Design and Character of Buildings.....	53
12.1. Character of Developments	53
12.2. Design Principles	54
12.3. Sustainable Design	58
13. Environment.....	59
13.1. Wildlife and Biodiversity	59
13.2. Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve	61
13.3. High Grade Agricultural Land	63
14. Facilities and Infrastructure.....	65
14.1. Local Green Spaces.....	65
14.2. Community Facilities	66
14.3. Sustainable Movement	67
14.4. Green Energy.....	68
14.5. Utilities	70

14.6. Employment, Economic and Commercial Development	71
15. Housing.....	73
15.1. Housing Mix.....	73
16. Transport and Highways.....	75
16.1. Parking and Sustainable Transport	75
16.2. Vehicle Traffic.....	75
17. The Balanced Community.....	77
17.1. Community Facilities	77
17.2. Open Spaces, Roads and Transport, Wildlife and Water Courses	77
17.3. Health and Well-being.....	77
18. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Priorities	79
19. Implementation and Monitoring.....	80
20. Steering Group Members and Consultants	81

Appendices

1. Character Assessment
2. Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces
3. Non-designated Heritage Assets
4. Protection of Views
5. Drawing of Settlement Boundaries

1. Executive Summary

A Neighbourhood Plan is a way of helping local communities influence the planning of the area in which the residents live and work. It is principally about land use and the policies covering development and is formulated by a steering group whose membership consists of residents of the parish to which the Neighbourhood Plan will apply.

The background for neighbourhood planning, and how it applies to the Parish of Lewknor, is set out initially in this document which then goes on to describe the parish and its history. It uses these elements to create a vision, the aims and the objectives for the Parish and the development policies for the period ending in 2040. It works within the framework of the policies laid down in South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan and responds to the issue of housing in the South Oxfordshire District Council area.

The parish of Lewknor includes three settlements namely Lewknor, Postcombe and South Weston. South Oxfordshire District Council classifies Lewknor as a "smaller village", Postcombe as an "other village" and South Weston is unclassified. South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan 2035 looks for housing growth in the towns and larger villages; there is no requirement to deliver additional housing in "smaller", "other" or unclassified villages.

In formulating this Plan the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (the Steering Group) has consulted widely. It has held events at which residents' views were sought and conducted two parish consultations in 2018. The Steering Group has consulted other relevant bodies, such as Natural England, the Chilterns Conservation Board, Thames Water, Lewknor Parish Council and South Oxfordshire District Council.

A wide range of evidence has been collected and used to inform the Plan. Detail supporting this plan can be found in the appendices.

The Plan recognises the key policies set out at local authority and national level, which apply to Lewknor Parish, including the Lewknor Conservation Area, the Chilterns National Landscape (previously the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the grading of agricultural land.

The Plan seeks to maintain the Parish identity - its atmosphere and sense of community - and to conserve its historic and rural character; it includes policies covering Design, Character and the Conservation of Heritage Assets.

Census data and the parish consultations indicate that the young adult population (25-29 years) of the Parish has declined over recent years. This Plan is supportive of inclusion of homes which local young adults can afford to buy or rent and, for those with a local connection, affordable houses in any development.

The current housing stock and housing need are covered in detail. A key goal of the Plan is, within the capacity of the Parish, to promote sustainable development and to respond positively to any local need for more houses. This Neighbourhood Plan does not, however, identify any sites for development because sufficient recent development in the Parish has already taken place in the

context of the requirements of the Local Plan and the housing needs assessment carried out in preparing this Plan did not identify a need.

The Plan sets out policies against which proposals for new development, or alterations and extensions, can be assessed in the future. It seeks to maintain a sensible balance in the Parish between housing, employment, health and well-being, community facilities, open spaces, agriculture, wildlife habitats and water courses. It also sets policies which define the overall spatial strategy and pattern of development including definition of Settlement Boundaries for the villages, development locations and high-grade agricultural land.

The Plan seeks to conserve the local landscape and environment and to minimise the impact of development on the surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems by establishing policies on Wildlife and Biodiversity, Local Green Spaces, Landscape Character, the Chilterns National Landscape, Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and Protection of Views. To this end the Plan has adopted relevant policies from the Chilterns Conservation Board and Natural England.

There are policies set to ensure that any future development is within the capacity of the local infrastructure and facilities covering Community Facilities, Traffic and Parking, Green Energy and Utilities.

An important ambition of the Plan is to maintain a sensible balance between the differing elements that constitute the Parish, including housing, employment, health and well-being, biodiversity, open spaces, agriculture and community facilities.

A number of aspirations are included which are based on views expressed by the residents in the Parish consultations, but which are outside the remit of the Plan, and for which policies have therefore not been set. These include issues such as motorway noise, bus services and commuter parking.

2. Summary of Policies

Lewknor Parish Policy	Title	Page
SS1	Settlement Boundaries - Lewknor and Postcombe	38
CH1	Conserving Heritage	45
CH2	Landscape Character	47
CH3	Protection of Views	48
CH4	The Chilterns National Landscape (previously the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	51
DC1	Character of Developments	54
DC2	Design Principles	56
DC3	Sustainable Design	58
EN1	Wildlife and Biodiversity	60
EN2	Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve	62
EN3	High Grade Agricultural Land	64
FI1	Local Green Spaces	66
FI2	Community Facilities	67
FI3	Sustainable Movement	68
FI4	Green Energy	69
FI5	Utilities	71
FI6	Employment, Economic and Commercial Development	72
TH1	Sustainable Transport	75
TH2	Vehicle Traffic	76

Summary of Maps

Map number	Title	Page
1	Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area	9
2	Settlement Boundary for Lewknor Village	36
3	Settlement Boundary for Postcombe Village	37
4	Lewknor Village Conservation Area	41
5	Heritage Assets - Lewknor	42
6	Heritage Assets - South Weston	43
7	Heritage Assets - Postcombe	44
8	Heritage Assets – Outside the villages	45
9	Key views identified as worthy of protection	48
10	Light Pollution and Dark Skies for Parish	56
11	Lewknor Parish Agricultural Land	63
12	Designated Local Green Spaces	66

3. Terminology

The following terminology is used extensively throughout this document:

Development Plan	The Local Plan as published by the current Local Planning Authority, South Oxfordshire District Council. together with adopted Neighbourhood Plans and Minerals and Waste Development Planning Documents (produced by Oxfordshire County Council)
Local Plan	The South Oxfordshire District Council’s Local Plan 2035
National Policy	Refers to policy set at Government level, and will therefore normally refer to policy specified in the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)
Parish	Lewknor Parish
Plan	Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan for the period to 2040
Steering Group	Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

4. Sources of Maps

Unless otherwise stated the maps in this Plan have been produced using QGIS software (www.qgis.org) and OS Open Data datasets accessed under the Public Service Mapping Agreement (<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/documents/licensing/psma-agreement-unclassified.pdf>): OS data is © Crown copyright 2023

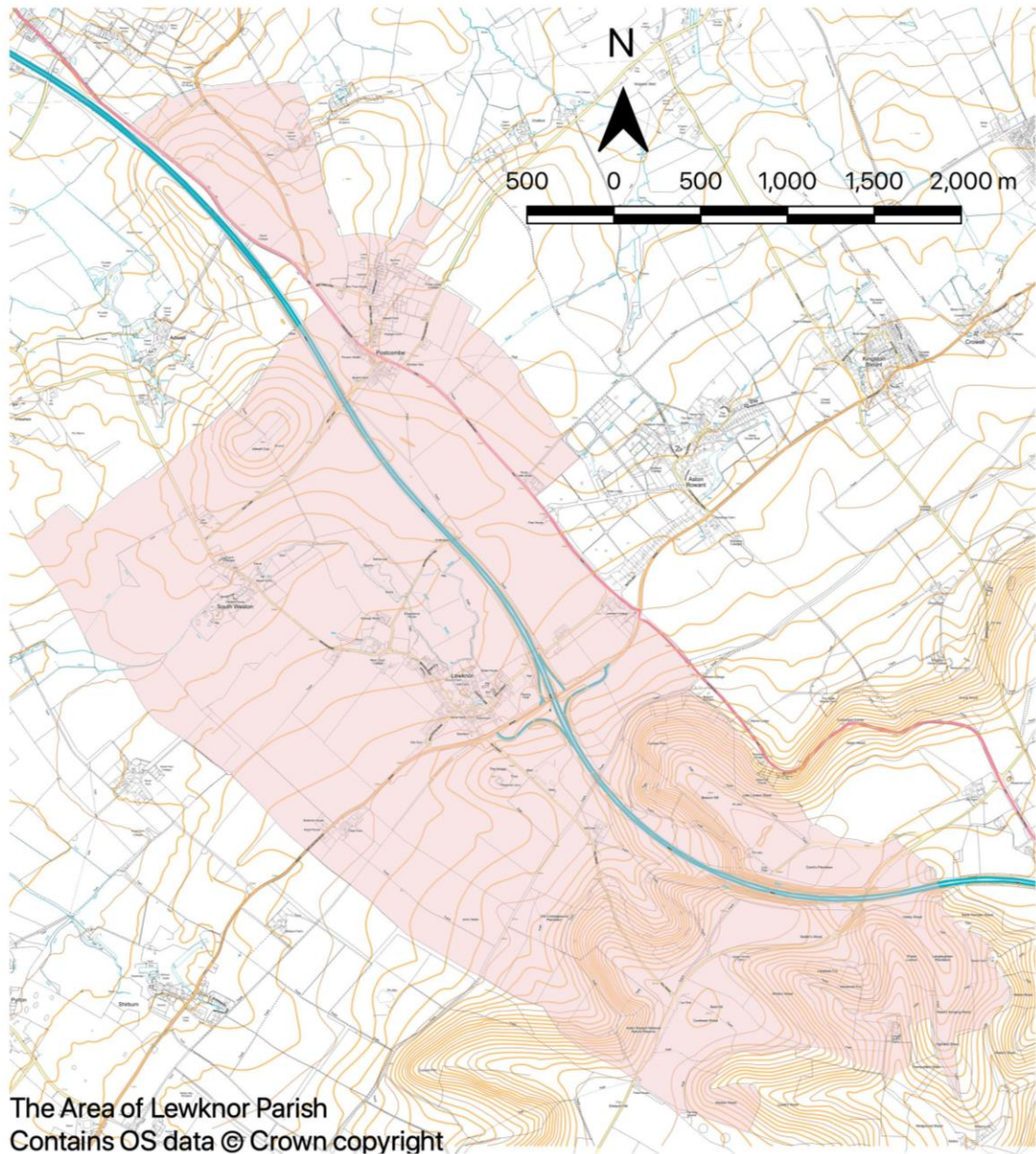
5. Introduction

This Neighbourhood Plan covers the whole parish of Lewknor, which includes the villages of Lewknor, Postcombe and South Weston. It sets out policies against which, in conjunction with National and District planning policies, any proposals for development within the Parish will be assessed in the future. The Plan contains policies which are specific to the Parish and which are designed to shape development in accordance with the wishes of the community.

South Oxfordshire District Council is the local planning authority for Lewknor Parish. This Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in South Oxfordshire District Council's Development Plan.

This Neighbourhood Plan has been researched, written, prepared and process managed by a Neighbourhood Group made up of a small number of volunteer members of Lewknor Parish. The qualifying body and lead organisation with overall responsibility for this Neighbourhood Plan is Lewknor Parish Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan area, as duly approved by South Oxfordshire District Council, covers the parish of Lewknor as highlighted in purple on the map below. The Plan period is 2023 to 2040.



Map 1 - Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area

6. Background

The Government created neighbourhood planning to empower local communities to help residents direct and shape the way their local communities grow and develop into the future.

A neighbourhood development plan, known as a Neighbourhood Plan, is written by local people, 'made' (adopted) by the district council and becomes part of the local Development Plan, which helps to decide planning applications. It takes national planning policy and guidance into account and is 'in general conformity' with the relevant district's planning policy.

If a Neighbourhood Plan meets basic conditions, set out in law and checked by an independent examiner, the community will have the opportunity to vote on the Plan in a referendum. If more than 50% of the people who vote support the plan the district council will formally 'make' the Plan and use it to help decide planning matters.

Development of the Plan involves the following activities:

- The gathering of evidence from a wide range of sources
- Initial consultation with residents of the Parish conducted through a meeting and a comprehensive survey of opinions.
- Consulting with a range of other relevant stakeholders
- Compilation and analysis of the evidence and background information
- The setting of aims and objectives
- A dialogue with South Oxfordshire District Council planning staff and other experts in the field
- Attendance at various South Oxfordshire District Council neighbourhood plan workshops
- Discussions within the Steering Group
- Further consultations with residents of the Parish
- Review of the various draft versions of South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan
- Drafting the Plan
- Formal consultation with parishioners, statutory consultees and South Oxfordshire District Council
- Responding to comments received and re-drafting the Plan as necessary
- Review of the Plan by South Oxfordshire District Council
- A statutory process whereby the Plan is submitted for examination by an Independent Examiner
- Final submission to the Parish for approval through a referendum

As a result of an article in the July 2017 Lewknor Parish Grapevine (a monthly newsletter) and an associated poll, interest in developing a Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan was established. In August 2017, an open meeting was held in St Margaret's Church, Lewknor, and South Oxfordshire District Council planning personnel presented options for the development of a plan for the Parish. An initial Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was subsequently formed and recognised by Lewknor Parish Council and formally 'designated' by South Oxfordshire District Council on 18th October 2017. This Steering Group consisted of a number of local residents with the later addition

of a representative of the Parish Council. The Steering Group set their Terms of Reference and these were agreed with Lewknor Parish Council, as the Qualifying Body.

South Oxfordshire District Council has a web page which explains Neighbourhood Plans and the support that might be expected from South Oxfordshire District Council (<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans>).

The development of the Plan has involved a wide range of activities and the input of expertise from a range of people. Existing information was gathered from a variety of sources to understand what was already known and recorded about the Parish and its inhabitants. This included population size and structure from the National Census, current planning regulation at both national and local level, information on the Chilterns National Landscape and the National Nature Reserve at Aston Rowant, facilities and roads and other relevant material. This material informed which factors needed to be taken into account in the Plan and helped to shape the work plan.

The multitude of factors which needed to be considered were researched in detail and covered an assessment of the local environment, the character of the Parish's villages and the character of the landscape. An initial consultation with residents of the Parish, conducted through a Parish meeting and a wide-ranging survey, was completed to ensure the Plan reflected the wishes of the inhabitants of the Parish. A second survey focusing on Housing Needs and Development was carried out to collect data on this important aspect of the Plan.

The material collected above forms an extensive evidence base in itself and draws on wider sources of well researched evidence (Ordnance Survey maps, Environment Agency data, South Oxfordshire District Council studies) which, when combined with additional input sought from other agencies and organisations such as Locality, the Chilterns Conservation Board and Natural England, provides a sound platform for the Plan.

Sustainability is a key issue for Lewknor Parish, and indeed for the country as a whole, and this is a thread running throughout the Plan. The issues specific to Lewknor Parish have been assessed by drawing on the comprehensive evidence, studies and analysis conducted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the Local Plan.

Whilst the need for additional housing is a national issue, the contribution which Lewknor Parish can make to this is limited and indeed there is no expectation that the villages will need to deliver additional housing within the existing South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan. It is, however, necessary to understand the local need within the Parish and the Housing Needs Assessment for the Parish was designed to assess that need.

It is important to emphasise that this Plan does not identify individual sites for development. The Local Plan states that smaller villages such as Lewknor may, but are not required to, consider development of between 5%-10% of current (2011 census) size in terms of number of dwellings, less any completions since 2011. In excess of this figure of 5%-10% has already been delivered within Lewknor village and should any additional housing be required it is highly likely it could be achieved by conversion or infill.

The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period 2023-2040 and sets the framework and policies against which any development proposals within this period can be assessed.

Supporting Documents

There is a large amount of information lying behind this Plan and to include all of it would have resulted in a somewhat unwieldy document. The evidence base has therefore been compiled into a number of Appendices which accompany this document.

- Appendix 1 - Village Character Assessment
- Appendix 2 - Green Spaces
- Appendix 3 - Non-designated Heritage Assets
- Appendix 4 - Protection of Views
- Appendix 5 - Drawing of Settlement Boundaries

South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan

This Neighbourhood Plan has been developed on the basis of South Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan. Within South Oxfordshire District Council's hierarchy of settlements, Lewknor Village is classed as a 'smaller village', Postcombe as an 'other village' and South Weston is unclassified. This classification is important as certain policies of South Oxfordshire District Council are specific to villages of different sizes.

During the 17-year life span of this Neighbourhood Plan the Prevailing Local Plan will be subject to review at least every five years and then updated as necessary. The policies in this Plan have been worded, wherever possible, so as to be able to accommodate any subsequent changes in the Local Plan, or to national policy, without the Neighbourhood Plan itself having to be re-written. It would, however, seem prudent to review this Plan, at the latest, no more than five years after adoption and possibly sooner, should the situation demand. The Neighbourhood Plan will be regularly reviewed by the Parish Council.

Steering Group

The Steering Group was formed in August 2017, with the first full meeting held on the 30th August 2017 and regularly thereafter. The purpose of the Steering Group was to make decisions on what work needed to be undertaken and to then monitor the progress of the various strands of work which were being tackled by its working groups.

During the tenure of the Steering Group, various working groups were established to gather information, draft documents and communicate with the community:

- Social and Community
- Infrastructure
- Environmental
- Housing Needs
- Communication
- Sustainability

- Policy
- Neighbourhood Plan Writing Group

Policy Setting

A Neighbourhood Plan cannot set policies which override national or local authority planning policies. An understanding of the key national or local authority planning policies, as they apply to Lewknor Parish, is required to develop this Plan. For ease of reference, and where appropriate, this Plan simply summarises or references those key national or local authority policies so as to provide context for the policies it contains.

Consultations

During the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan the Steering Group has ensured that the local residents of Lewknor Parish have been able to provide their views. This has involved:

- July 2017 - Initial questionnaire in Grapevine to gauge support for a neighbourhood plan
- Summer 2017 - An article in Grapevine (Parish Magazine) to raise awareness and explain what a Neighbourhood Plan is
- August 2017 - An initial open meeting to form a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- December 2017 - An article in Grapevine further explaining what a Neighbourhood Plan is, what it means for the Parish, and encouraging engagement in the process
- January 2018 - The first Consultation Questionnaire was undertaken to understand the importance that the Parish residents place on various aspects of the Parish; a 59% response rate was achieved. The findings were collated and a full report issued in June 2018 on the Neighbourhood Plan website. This survey was helpful in ascertaining the key issues to be addressed
- April 2018 - Two feedback events on Consultation 1 were held. Members of the Steering Group were available to answer questions and to discuss the issues raised and attendees were encouraged to give further feedback
 - 14 April 2018 - Lewknor Village Hall
 - 22 April 2018 - England's Rose public house in Postcombe
- May/June 2018 - An article in Grapevine explaining what role a Neighbourhood Plan would play with regard to planning applications
- June/July 2018 - Consultation 2 was undertaken to look at housing needs within the Parish, views on housing development and other issues highlighted as important to the residents of the Parish in Consultation 1. The findings were collated during late summer of 2018
- July/August 2018 - Call for sites - opportunity for landowners to identify sites which had not previously been submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council, including small and infill sites, with potential for alternative uses

- September/October 2018 - Two further feedback events were held:
 - 9 September 2018 - at the Parish Horticultural Show, Lewknor
 - 7 October 2018 - in Postcombe at the corner of Box Tree Lane and London Road

Both events were publicised on posters, in Grapevine and on the Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page.



April 2018 - Feedback session in Lewknor Village Hall

Members of the Steering Group were present at both events to discuss the findings of the consultation exercise.

In addition, a map showing possible development sites in the Parish, resulting from a “call for sites” was displayed.

A leaflet summarising the findings was produced and made available. A copy of this was included in the full Consultation 2 report and was also separately uploaded to the Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan website. The full report on the findings from Consultation 2 was also published on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

- 31 May 2019 - A progress report was published in Grapevine
- 5 September 2019 - Views were sought from Parish residents at the Parish Fete and Show about the proposed Protected Views and the allocation of Green Spaces

- 2019 -2020 - The Steering Group regularly reported its progress in the Grapevine magazine distributed to residents of the Parish
- 22 March 2020 - Flyers advising of the pre-submission consultation were delivered to all homes in the parish and posters were placed in prominent places around the parish. The consultation had to be postponed when the country went into lockdown on 23 March 2020
- The June 2020 issue of Grapevine - a notice was included informing residents of the revised dates for the pre-submission consultation
- 13 June to 31 July 2020 - Pre-submission consultation

Pre-submission consultation was undertaken through the use of a questionnaire survey. A paper copy was delivered to all households and it was also made available online at the neighbourhood plan website. Copies of the neighbourhood plan were available online and paper copies were available for those without access to the internet.

Under normal circumstances the process would provide the opportunity for face to face group consultations, however, South Oxfordshire District Council confirmed that was not a requirement and, therefore, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation at the time, it was agreed that it was not appropriate to hold these group events. Provisions were put in place for direct contact by phone with a member of the Steering Group for those with questions. Adapting to the unprecedented circumstances, the consultation period was extended by seven days from the normal six weeks.

- April 2022 - consultation on proposed non-designated heritage assets was included in Grapevine

7. Lewknor Parish



Looking west across Lewknor Parish from Bald Hill

The small parish of Lewknor has just around 300 dwellings and a population of just over 700. The Parish lies between Oxford and High Wycombe, at the foot of the Chiltern Hills. The former trunk road, the A40, passes the Thame Lambert Hotel (known locally by its historic name - The Lambert Arms) on the eastern edge of the Parish, then bisects the small village of Postcombe, before continuing towards Oxford.

To the south east of the Parish is the Chilterns National Landscape which comprises farmland followed by the escarpment and the Chiltern Hills with wooded valleys beyond. The Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve covers a large part of the escarpment; moving north west there is open farmland interspersed with small wooded areas.

Each area is highly visible and contributes in its own way to the beauty of the integrated landscape and setting of the Chilterns National Landscape.

The Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the Chilterns National Landscape are highly valued by the residents of the Parish and are enjoyed year-round by many visitors. Conserving and enhancing this unique natural resource and its rich biodiversity is a key component in maintaining the social and environmental sustainability of the Parish and its special character and tranquillity.

There are differences in the way the geographic areas of the villages and the specific parts of the Chilterns National Landscape and the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve relate to each other. It is important that any new developments are carefully and sensitively placed and any new buildings and conversions which do take place should have the least damaging effect possible on landscape character and visual amenity, to minimise harm to the environment.

The Parish today divides into the following five distinct areas each of which have different characteristics, but which together contribute to the landscape:

The historic core of Lewknor



Top right: View of the Old Forge and the Leathern Bottle



Top left: The centre of the village by the springs

Bottom: Lewknor School

This consists of the original nucleated village, clustered around the original farm buildings and contains many listed buildings or buildings of historic interest. Some of these date back centuries, including the Grade 1 listed church (which has 12th century origins) and the public house (16th century). This area has been designated as a Conservation Area. The boundary of the Conservation Area was drawn to exclude some more modern houses which were built before it was designated.

The wider village of Lewknor

This has been classified by South Oxfordshire District Council as a 'smaller village'. It has been extended over the years beyond the Conservation area and there are currently 182 households in total. This includes four groups of former council houses - Beacon View, Watlington Road, Weston Road and Barley Close - although some of these houses are now in private ownership. There has also been some organic growth of individual houses together with four small private housing developments - Lewknor Close, Town Farm, Rectory Court and The Glebe. A Parish Council

initiative has enabled six dwellings for people with a local connection to be built on a rural exception site in Weston Road. Manor Close is the latest addition to the housing stock, consisting of nine new houses in Weston Road, construction completed in 2021. There is also an empty retail shop premises, formerly occupied by Fabric Fields which sold fabrics and soft furnishings. A notable characteristic of the village is its hidden aspect, nestled in the local countryside and unseen from the B4009 and M40.

The village of Postcombe



Top right: Elsdale Cottage

Top left: Terraced Cottages in Box Tree Lane

Bottom: View south east along the London Road into the village

This is classified as an 'other village' and sits either side of the A40 road which links Oxford to High Wycombe. There are 86 houses in Postcombe; those to the south-west of the A40 are all relatively modern. There is also a petrol station which includes a small convenience shop selling a limited range of foodstuffs and there are a few business premises in workshops. Alongside the A40 there is a row of council-built houses, most of which are now in private ownership. A new development of eight houses was completed in Salt Lane in 2020. To the north-east there is a mix of old and new buildings, including three farms and a public house. Several of the older properties are listed.

The hamlet of South Weston



Top right: Looking towards St Lawrence's Church



Top left: St Lawrence's Church

Bottom: View West towards Manor Farm House

This is too small to be classified and is situated between Lewknor and Postcombe. There are 17 houses, all in private ownership, as well as a farm and a small church.

Community facilities in Lewknor parish include a village hall and a recreation ground, both of which are used extensively by residents, as well as a thriving primary school and pre-school, two public houses, a hotel and two small allotment sites, one of which is adjacent to the former watercress beds. St. Margaret's Church is currently planning significant modifications to its fabric which will provide an additional multifunctional community space. St Lawrence's church in South Weston continues to be primarily a place of worship.

The parish land surrounding the villages

This is open countryside and consists largely of agricultural land. To the south-east of Lewknor village are the Chilterns National Landscape and the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, leading up into the Chiltern Hills, including an area of Chiltern Beechwoods. There are extensive views both into and out of the villages. The M40 motorway cuts through the Parish, causing some noise and visual disturbance.

Twenty one dwellings in the Parish lie outside the villages, mainly farmhouses or cottages. The Thame Lambert Hotel and the animal welfare centre occupied by Dogs Trust also sit outside the villages adjacent to the A40.



Lower Vicar's Farm and outbuildings

The Parish is well served by numerous public footpaths linking the villages and leading up into the Chiltern Hills and Aston Rowant Nature Reserve. These paths are very popular with both residents and visitors.

Residents have described the Parish in the following terms:

- *'A lovely rural atmosphere - this is what encourages people to live here'*
- *'A rural aspect and community feel'*
- *'Residents like the current contained size of their respective communities'*
- *'The village hall is a great facility and always seems to be in use; residents also value the school, preschool and pub'*
- *'A strong sense of community'*

The presence of the M40 motorway cannot be ignored; it cuts a swathe through the Parish, from south-east to north-west, carrying several thousand vehicles per day which presents associated noise and pollution problems. The Chilterns M40 Action Group has worked for many years endeavouring to mitigate the harmful effects on the communities and trying to persuade the Highways Agency to upgrade the road surface to a quieter material as well as to provide noise screening measures. To date only limited measures have been put in place and the issue is therefore ongoing.

Regular coach services operate from Oxford to London, Heathrow and Gatwick, stopping at junction 6 of the M40, which lies within the Parish. This service is used by several residents, but the downside is that it also results in a lot of parking on the road verges of the B4009 by people from further afield. The resultant unsightly and hazardous parking arrangements have been an issue for many years with no universally acceptable solution. From Lewknor village there are very limited local bus services, so one cannot easily access the surrounding villages for everyday needs such as a pint of milk or a doctor's appointment. Residents are reliant on private transport for the necessities of life. Postcombe, sitting on the A40, fares slightly better for bus services - a bus runs between High Wycombe and Oxford at 3-hourly intervals during the daytime on weekdays.

The distance to the nearest secondary school, G.P. surgery or post office is higher than the national average.

7.1. History of the Parish

The Parish has a rich history, elements of which reflect the changing nature of English life over the centuries. Human activity within the Parish extends back at least to the Iron Age.

Evidence of early habitation exists, documented most recently by archaeological investigations in the early 1970s prior to the building of the M40 motorway, which found traces of a Romano-British settlement near the village of Lewknor and a Romano-British cemetery near the Upper Ickniel Way. This is one of two ancient roads passing through the Parish and runs along the foot of the Chiltern Hills escarpment. Both have been roads since at least the Iron Age. The modern Ridgeway long distance path follows the route of the Upper Ickniel Way at the foot of the scarp. The M40 Archaeological research group also excavated a site at Postcombe and found three Saxon graves. The same group also found traces of a large medieval farmhouse high in the Chilterns in the east of the Parish.

Today, the Parish consists of three settlement areas, Lewknor, Postcombe and South Weston. At its zenith, Nethercote manor also generated a sizeable hamlet but after the manor house burnt down in 1871, the hamlet disappeared.

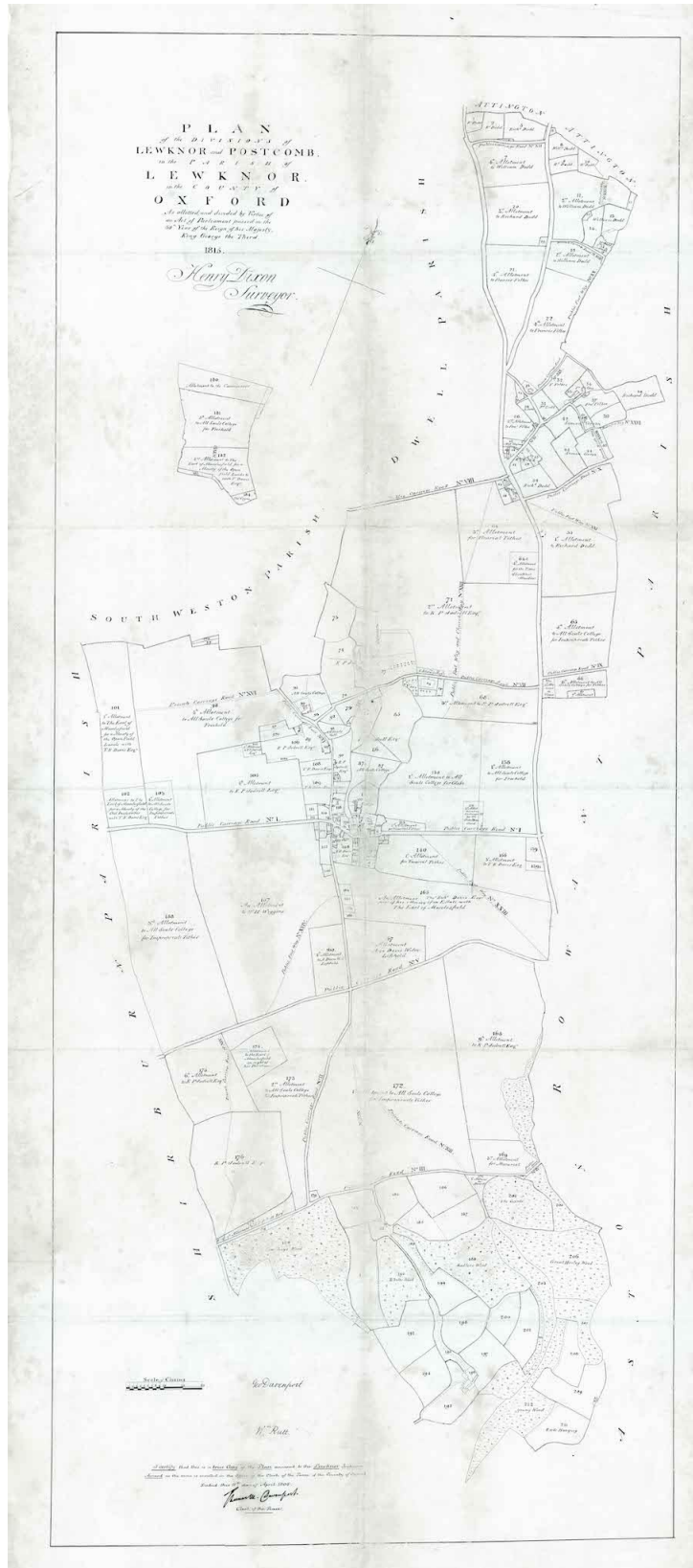
Lewknor village started as a Saxon spring line settlement near the foot of the Chilterns chalk escarpment. The name is derived from the Old English name of its owner Leofeca and refers to a flat-topped ridge with a convex shoulder, presumably Beacon Hill, which would have been a landmark for those travelling on the Upper Ickniel Way. The earliest reference of the name is in the records of a lawsuit in AD 990. In the 11th century the manor of Luvechenora was held by Edith of Wessex, who in 1045 became queen consort of Edward the Confessor. The manor then passed to a Danish thegn of King Edward called Tovi, who bequeathed it to Abingdon Abbey. For most of the Middle Ages the abbey leased out Lewknor manor, until the abbey was suppressed in 1538 in the dissolution of the monasteries. The church was bestowed on All Souls College, Oxford in 1440, the college subsequently acquiring further land in the Parish and remaining a major landowner to this day.

In the 19th century lacemaking was a significant industry in the area with 45 lacemakers in Lewknor while more than a dozen people made components for the chair making industry.¹

The Church, now a Grade 1 listed building, has been the dominant feature of Lewknor village, with large farmhouses and manor houses within reasonable distance. Documentary and architectural evidence indicates the church was built sometime after 1146 and before 1200. It was dedicated to Saint Mary but at some later date was rededicated to Saint Margaret. It was enlarged in the 14th century and in the 15th century a new Perpendicular Gothic west tower was built.

The Parish lies in the south-west of the hundred which bears its name. An open field system prevailed in the Parish until the Georgian era when an 'Inclosure Bill' for the Parish was passed and then put into effect in 1815.

¹ Source: An Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire, 2010, K Tiller and G Darkes, p120-121



1815 'Inclosure map'

Lewknor historically included three townships or divisions: Lewknor, Postcombe and Lewknor Uphill. Like other strip parishes which run up into the Chilterns, Lewknor forms a long narrow strip, with the village and arable land in the flatter land below the escarpment and woodland and

summer pastures in the higher land. Lewknor Uphill consisted of three detached parts in the Chiltern Hills and was transferred to Buckinghamshire by the Counties (Detached Parts) Act 1844.

In 1836 All Souls College funded the conversion of two cottages into a village school, next to the churchyard.

The Watlington to Chinnor road, designated B4009 in the 1920s, passed through the centre of the village. In 1869-72 the Watlington and Princes Risborough Railway was built through the Parish. It ran right past the village but Lewknor Bridge Halt was not built until 1906. British Railways withdrew passenger services and closed the halt in 1957. When the motorway was being built part of the former railway track bed was used to divert the B4009 to bypass the village.

In 1965, the Chilterns (including the escarpment and hills in the Parish,) were declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (renamed a National Landscape on 22 November 2023). On the escarpment on either side of the motorway cutting is Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, which despite its name is in Lewknor Parish. The reserve has beech woodlands, chalk grassland supporting diverse rare plants and butterflies, and is one of the best places in England to see red kites. The Nature Reserve is also a Special Area of Conservation; these are strictly protected sites designated under the European Commission Habitats Directive. Prior to the diversion of the B4009, the boundary of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty followed what is now Lewknor High Street and Watlington Road.

Postcombe is a village within Lewknor parish, on the A40 road with the Chiltern Hills to the east and the M40 motorway just to the south. Historically the village was centred on the London to Oxford turnpike.

South Weston is a hamlet of 17 households in Lewknor Parish. It is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 and the Hundred Rolls of 1279. Its church of Saint Lawrence was built in 1860, incorporating some elements of the previous Norman church. The parish of South Weston was merged in the 1950s into the parish of Lewknor.

7.2. Current Housing

Of the 270 houses recorded in the 2011 census, 185 (73%) are owner-occupied. 11.4% of the housing stock is owned by the local authority or housing association and 40 houses are privately rented. The Parish currently has a slightly above-average number of social houses when compared with the District, County and Area, but an average number when compared with England as a whole. Overcrowding and concealment is low according to the Community Insight Report.

The number of 3, 4 and 5 or more bedroom properties in the Parish is comparable with the average for South Oxfordshire and the South-East. The number of 2 bedroom properties is below the district and regional average.

The Parish has an above-average number of detached or semi-detached houses, but a below-average number of terraced houses or flats. There are currently six houses classified as second homes, a proportion which is higher than the national average.

Figure: Housing tenure breakdowns
Source: Census 2011

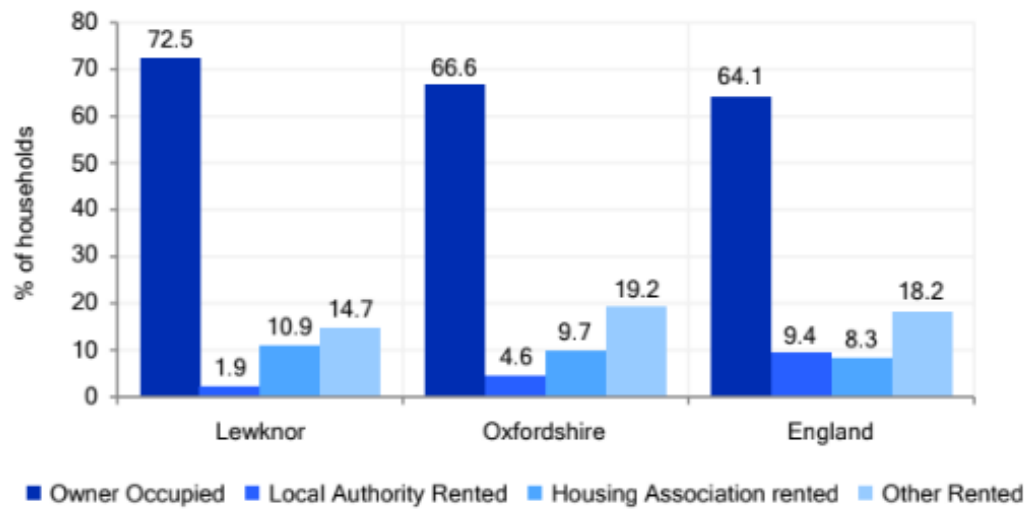
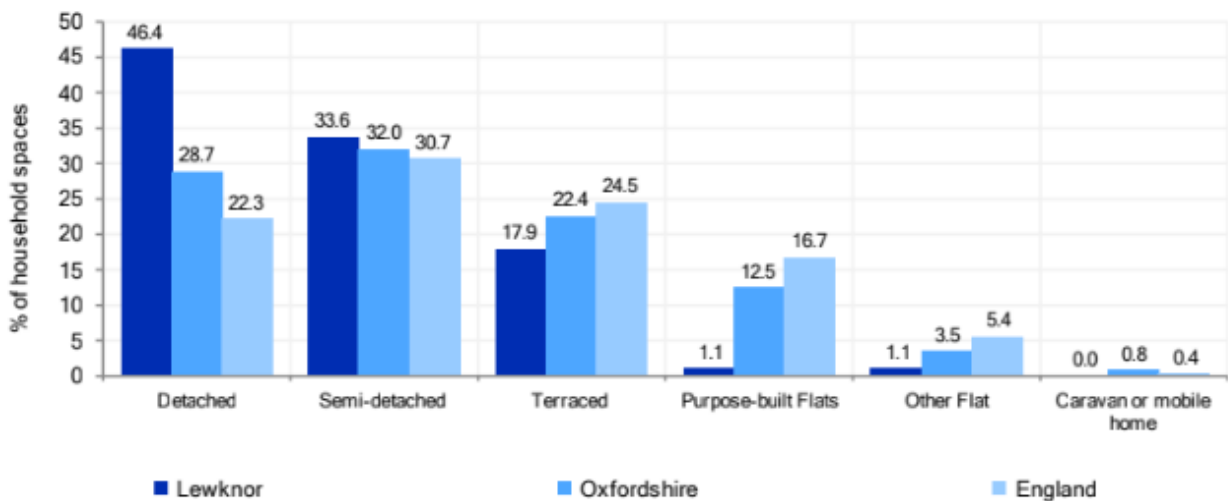


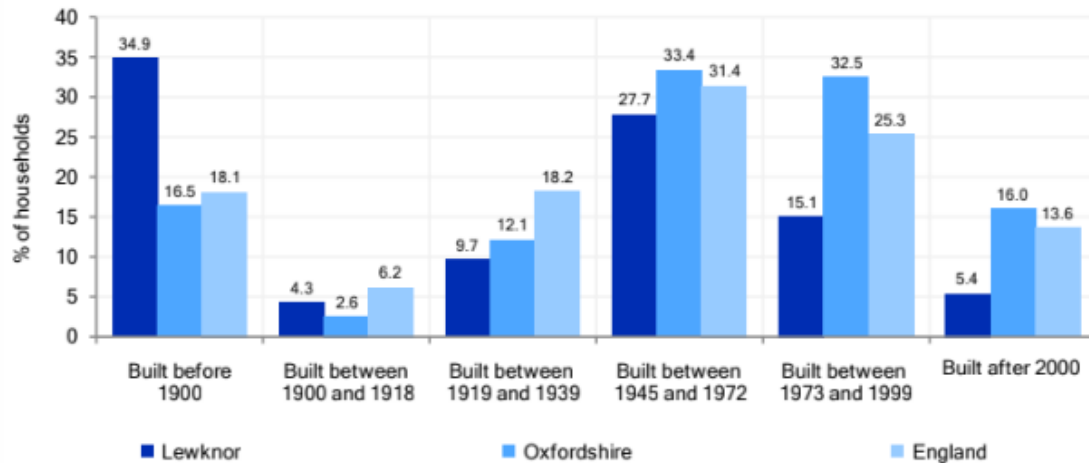
Figure: Dwellings type breakdown
Source: Census 2011



The number of dwellings within the Parish has changed considerably over time, doubling during the period 1900-1999, with the major proportion occurring post World War II. Since the census in 2011 an additional 30 houses have been or will be built within the Parish.

Built before 1900	Built between 1900 and 1939	Built between 1945 and 1999	Built after 2000
97	39	119	15
34.9% (England average = 18.1%)	14.0% (England average = 24.4%)	42.8% (England average = 56.7%)	1.4% (England average = 2.4%)

Figure: Dwellings by age of dwelling (year property was constructed)
Source: Valuation Office Agency (VOA) 2017



Parish Population

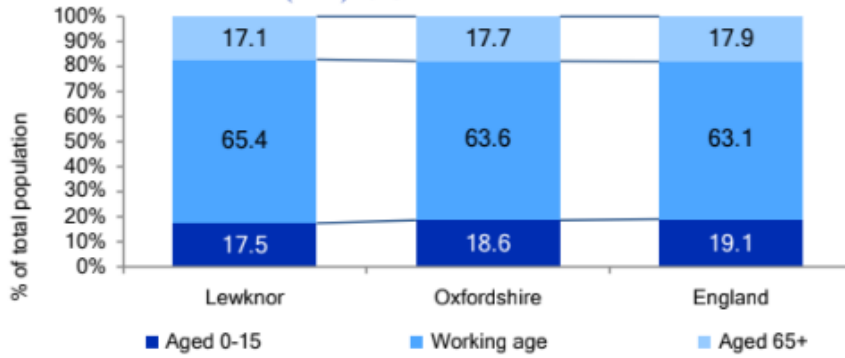
The total population in the Parish is 705, broken down as follows:

Total Population	Aged 0-15	Working age population	Aged 65+	Dependency ratio
705	125	460	120	0.53
48.1% male; 51.9% female	17.5% (England average = 19.1%)	65.4% (England average = 63.1%)	17.1% (England average = 17.9%)	England average = 0.59
Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2016				

Source: Community Insight profile for 'Lewknor' area - Report created 26 January 2018

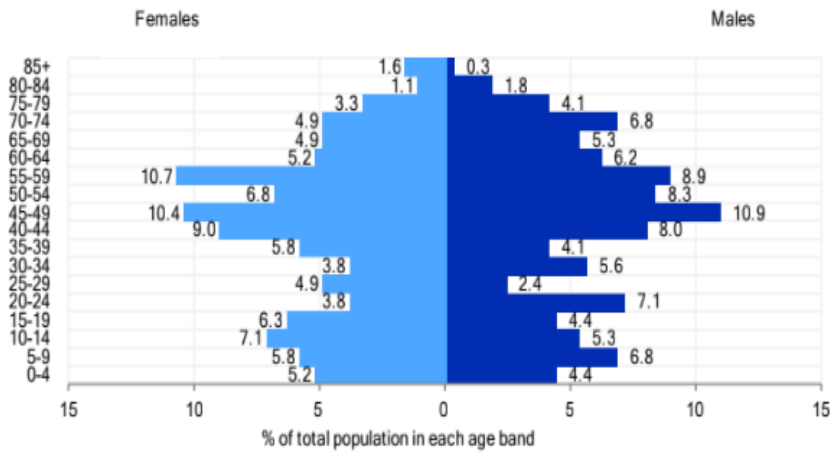
The proportion within each age class is similar to the national average but with a slightly higher bias to working age population compared to the county and national averages:

Figure: Population by age
 Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2016

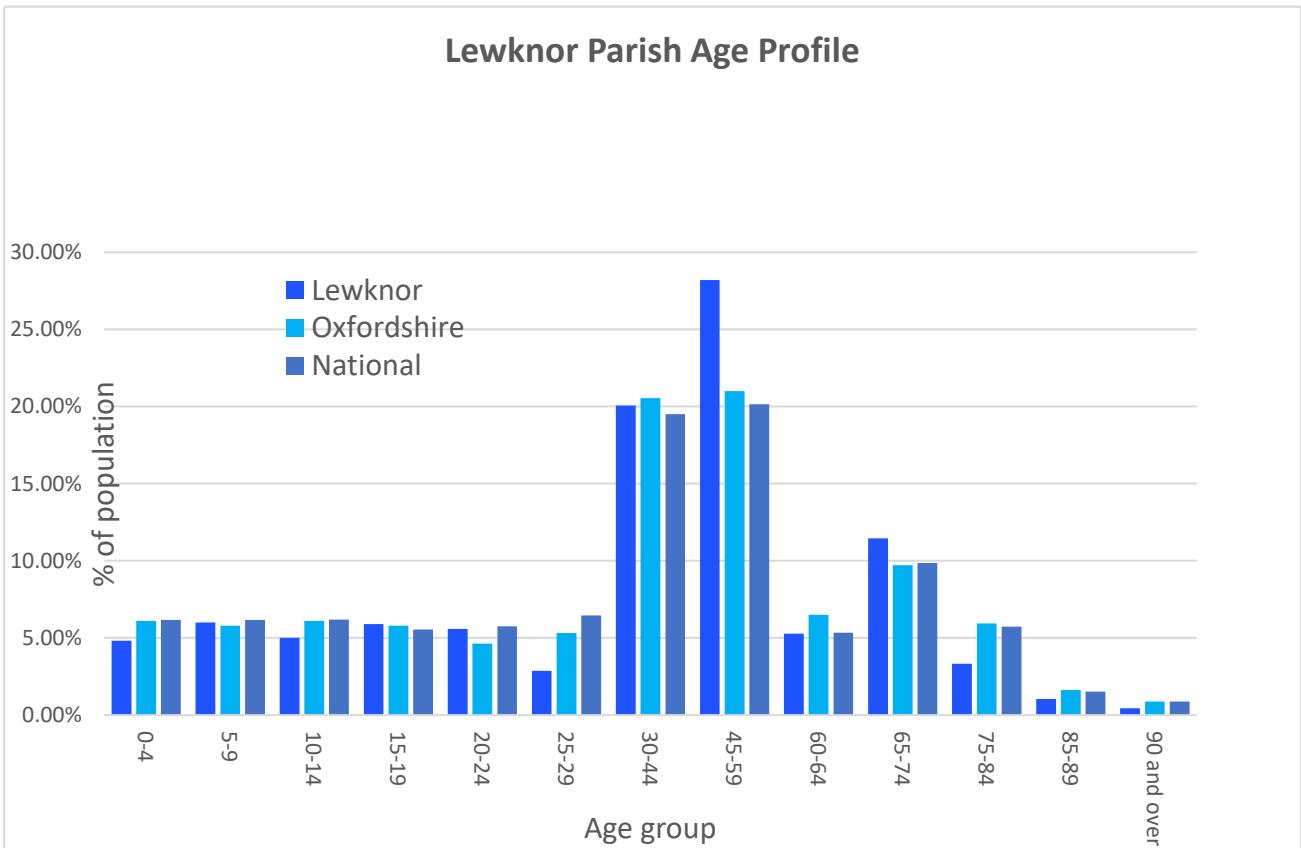


The age profile is as follows:

Figure: Population estimates by 5 year age band
 Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2016



Lewknor Parish Age Profile



The demographic profile reflects a population where the largest segment is middle aged. Lewknor Parish shows a higher percentage of people aged between 45-59 compared to Oxfordshire as a whole, reflecting an ageing population and lower than average percentage aged between 25-29.

8. Vision, Aims and Objectives

“The question that those who love and shape our landscapes need to answer is not, ‘how do we conserve them?’ but ‘how do we make sure both natural beauty and society benefit from change rather than suffer?’”²

This quote embodies what this Neighbourhood Plan attempts to achieve. It recognises that change is inevitable but it seeks to achieve a balance between the needs of the residents of the Parish and society at large along with the natural beauty of the Parish.

Lewknor Parish is a pleasant place to live and the parishioners wish this to continue for all its residents at all stages of their lives. They wish to maintain a strong sense of place and to conserve the Parish, within its natural environment, as an attractive place to live, work and visit. The wish is to maintain a sensible balance in the Parish between housing, employment, open spaces, roads, agriculture, wildlife habitats and water courses. Furthermore, the wish is to preserve the historic character of the villages whilst supporting development which is in keeping with, and which enhances the character of, both the surrounding built environment and the adjacent rural landscape.

New developments in South Oxfordshire as a whole, such as strategic road developments like the Watlington Edge Road and housing developments in other communities, will deliver wider benefits to the area. This Plan seeks, as far as possible, to minimise any negative impact from resultant increased traffic beyond the reasonable capacity of the Parish.

8.1. Vision

In 2040 Lewknor Parish will continue to have the identity of a small rural parish, while new housing will, where local need requires, have been added in a manner sympathetic to the current layout of the villages of Lewknor, South Weston and Postcombe. Such new housing will utilise styles and materials in keeping with the current vernacular architecture, whilst delivering high levels of sustainability and green credentials. In keeping with the current identity, the mix of housing and countryside will be maintained along with existing green spaces within the villages. The natural and historic environment will be conserved and enhanced whilst current views from the Chilterns National Landscape and the National Nature Reserve will be protected with Lewknor continuing to be largely hidden from view. Lewknor school will continue to thrive alongside the Church, which will offer multifunctional space, and the popular village pubs in Lewknor and Postcombe will continue to serve the community. The current sense of community will continue to be an attractive feature of the Parish and will make it a place where all people at all stages of their lives enjoy living and want to come to.

² The Designated Landscapes Review (the ‘Glover Review’) - published on 21 September 2019

8.2. Aims and Objectives

Aims	Objectives
<p>1. To maintain the atmosphere and sense of community of the villages and conserve their historic and rural character</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retain the individual character and integration of the community of each of the villages, principally through a focus on small scale infill development 2. Retain the nestled aspect of Lewknor hidden within the local countryside 3. Delineate the boundary between the open countryside and the settlements of Lewknor and Postcombe 4. Set design, materials and housing density criteria which maintain or enhance the character of the villages, particularly the historic areas of the villages 5. Ensure that any development is of high-quality design, is built to high sustainability standards and complements local distinctiveness 6. Conserve open spaces and designate sites for protection where appropriate
<p>2. To conserve the local landscape and environment, including the local and nationally protected landscapes, and to minimise the negative impacts of development on the surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and enhance the countryside and important features of landscape character around the settlements of Lewknor Parish within the Chilterns National Landscape, by ensuring that outside the village settlement boundaries any change relates to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment. 2. Maximise the opportunities to enhance the natural environment and its flora and fauna 3. Prevent negative impact on the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the Chilterns National Landscape, including the reduction and mitigation of noise impacts and appropriate air quality management measures 4. Protect important views both into and out from the villages and also historic views within the villages 5. Maintain the current distinctive dark skies across the Parish
<p>3. To ensure that any future development is within the capacity of the local Infrastructure and facilities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure adequate capacity for handling surface and foul water 2. Support the Parish's churches, village hall, pre-school, school, pubs and shops 3. Ensure there is adequate parking provision within any future development
<p>4. To promote sustainable development and to respond positively to any need from within the Parish for more houses</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support sustainable development within the settlement boundaries which is in keeping with and enhances the character of both the surrounding built environment and the adjacent open rural landscape and which best meets the local housing need 2. Address any arising need for housing of an affordable nature for people with a connection to the Parish

9. Overview of Policies

The parish of Lewknor includes part of the Chiltern escarpment and hills which make up the Chilterns National Landscape and Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve. Due to its location the Parish has much to cherish in terms of nature conservation assets. Community facilities are important when it comes to maintaining and improving the quality of life in the Parish.

The policies within this Neighbourhood Plan seek to ensure that any change is driven by the needs of the residents of the Parish, while retaining the character of an environment which is recognised for its outstanding natural beauty. Beneficial change is welcomed within these parameters provided that it is in keeping with the landscape of the Parish. Due to the existence of a junction of the M40 within the Parish there is a need to limit the detrimental effects of this facility and to mitigate its impact.

The following policies are informed by the vision of the Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan and should be read and applied as a whole. The current sense of community should continue to be an attractive feature of the Parish, making it a place where people enjoy living and which they want to visit. The Parish wishes to retain its character as a small rural parish, so any development should be proportionate and sustainable. Any new houses should be added in a manner sympathetic to the villages within the Parish, utilising styles and materials in keeping with the current vernacular architecture. The mix of housing and countryside will be maintained along with existing green spaces. The natural and historic environment will be conserved and current views from the Chilterns National Landscape and the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve will be protected, with the village of Lewknor continuing to be largely hidden from view.

Theme: Spatial Strategy

Policies	Objectives to which the policies relate
<p>Policy SS1: Settlement boundaries - Lewknor and Postcombe</p>	<p>Support sustainable development within the settlement boundaries which is in keeping with and enhances the character of both the surrounding built environment and the adjacent open rural landscape and which best meets the local housing need</p> <p>Retain the individual character and integration of the community of each of the villages, principally through a focus on small scale infill development</p> <p>Any development to be within the settlement boundaries unless it relates to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment</p> <p>Prevent negative impact on the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the Chilterns National Landscape, including the reduction and mitigation of</p>

	noise impacts and appropriate air quality management measures
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Theme: Landscape and Village Character

Policies	Objectives to which the policies relate
<p>CH1: Conserving Heritage CH2: Landscape Character CH3: Protection of Views CH4: The Chilterns National; Landscape</p>	<p>Retain the individual character and integration of the community of each of the villages, principally through a focus on small scale infill development</p> <p>Set design, materials and housing density criteria which maintain or enhance the character of the villages, particularly the historic areas of the villages</p> <p>Protect important views both into and out from the villages and also historic views within the villages</p> <p>Any development to be within the settlement boundaries unless it relates to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment</p> <p>Prevent negative impact on the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the Chilterns National Landscape, including the reduction and mitigation of noise impacts and appropriate air quality management measures</p>

Theme: Design and Character of Buildings

Policies	Objectives to which the policies relate
<p>DC1: Character of Developments DC2: Design Principles DC3: Sustainable Design</p>	<p>Maintain the current distinctive dark skies across the Parish</p> <p>Set design, materials and housing density criteria which maintain or enhance the character of the villages, particularly the historic areas of the villages</p> <p>Ensure that any development is of high quality design, built to high sustainability standards and complements local distinctiveness</p>

Theme: Environment

Policies	Objectives to which the policies relate
EN1: Wildlife and Biodiversity EN2: Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve EN3: High Grade Agricultural Land	<p>Conserve and enhance the local environment and its flora and fauna</p> <p>Prevent negative impact on the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the Chilterns National Landscape, including the reduction and mitigation of noise impacts and appropriate air quality management measures</p> <p>Protect and enhance the countryside and important features of landscape character around the settlements of Lewknor Parish within the Chilterns National Landscape</p>

Theme: Facilities and Infrastructure

Policies	Objectives to which the policies relate
FI1: Local Green Spaces FI2: Community Facilities FI3: Sustainable Movement FI4: Green Energy FI5: Utilities FI6: Employment, Economic and Commercial Development	<p>Ensure adequate capacity for handling surface and foul water.</p> <p>Support the Parish’s churches, village hall, pre-school, school, pubs and shops.</p> <p>Conserve open spaces and designate sites for protection where appropriate</p>

Theme: Transport and Highways

Policies	Objectives to which the policies relate
TH1: Sustainable Transport TH2: Vehicle Traffic	<p>Ensure there is adequate parking provision within any future development</p>

10. Spatial Strategy

The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside is recognised (Section 15, para 180). It also aims to ensure that housing in rural areas is sited where it will help maintain the vitality of the rural community and avoid isolated new homes in the countryside, unless there are special circumstances (paras 83 and 84).

The Local Plan policy STRAT1 for South Oxfordshire states that proposals should be consistent with protecting and enhancing the countryside. The Local Plan focuses development in the Science Vale, the edge of Oxford, the three market towns and larger villages and aims to maintain the rural character of the district. Twelve larger villages have been identified to form a network of local service centres.

Policy ENV1 of the Local Plan protects the landscape against harmful development and policy DES1 and DES2 sets out principles of good design that include provision of a clear structure of spaces, respect for existing settlement patterns and legibility through use of landmarks, vistas and focal points, providing landscape structure as a framework for new development and respecting the character of the existing landscape.

10.1. Settlement Boundaries: Lewknor and Postcombe

The Parish is comprised of the two villages of Lewknor and Postcombe and the hamlet of South Weston. In the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Lewknor is described as a “smaller” village, while Postcombe is in the category of “other village” and South Weston is undesignated. Local Plan policy H8 states that where a parish council wishes, in its neighbourhood plan, to make housing allocations within a smaller village to support further growth, the South Oxfordshire District Council will support this. Those Neighbourhood Development Plans will need to demonstrate that the level of growth they are planning for is commensurate to the scale and character of their village, and this is expected to be around a 5% to 10% increase in dwellings above the number of dwellings in the village in the 2011 census (minus any completions since 1 April 2011). Development in Lewknor Parish has already exceeded 10%; this Plan does not make housing allocations.

Under Local Plan policy H16 development within smaller villages and other villages should be limited to infill and the redevelopment of previously developed land or buildings. Infill development is defined “as the filling of a small gap in an otherwise continuous built-up frontage or on other sites within settlements where the site is closely surrounded by buildings. The scale of infill should be appropriate to its location.”

The Plan defines the settlement boundaries, as shown on the maps in Policy SS1. In Lewknor and Postcombe, appropriate development within the settlement boundaries will be supported provided it accords with the other policies of the Local Plan. Proposals for development outside the settlement boundaries, will only be supported if they are appropriate to a countryside location and if they are consistent with Local Plan policies.

The purpose of the drawn settlement boundary is to ensure that the overall character of the villages is retained. This includes the general shape of the settlements, the transition from built area to countryside and the maintenance of key views into and out of the villages.

The settlement boundaries are intended to distinguish between the built-up areas of the Parish, namely the villages of Lewknor and Postcombe, and the surrounding countryside in order to manage development proposals accordingly. South Weston is a hamlet of several small clusters of properties and is therefore not considered to be a built-up area. By defining the boundaries on the Policy Maps, applicants and the local planning authority will have clarity when preparing and determining planning applications. Developments outside the settlement boundaries should relate to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment. The Character Assessment (Appendix 1) demonstrates that the villages have grown in phases reflecting their social and economic history. The overall aim for the Parish is to maintain the existing forms of the villages based on the historic nature of the settlements with a compact and definable form, unique to each village and intrinsic to its character. As such, and in keeping with wider strategic housing policy, it is necessary to ensure that new development, particularly residential development, respects the historic development pattern. For this reason, any new development should be within the settlement boundaries, so that the compact development pattern can be maintained.

There have been significant numbers of new homes built on small sites within the villages in recent years. In the main, such small sites have been supported by the community and add to the variety, affordability and tenure of homes available. There is no identified need for further housing, given turnover of existing stock but some minor increases in stock, deliverable through infill, may become appropriate. 61% of those who expressed a view in consultation 2 supported this position. In Consultation 2, 76% of respondents, who expressed an opinion, said that they were against new development outside the villages. Consequently, the policy indicates that no significant development should occur in the open countryside or around existing agricultural holdings (other than in the limited circumstances set out in the Neighbourhood Plan). Development in these locations would also diverge from the current historic development pattern.

This policy in no way means that every space within the village should be built upon. Many pieces of land are important for recreational, wildlife or amenity purposes, or are important to an area's character, and proposals for development of such spaces will be resisted. Care will also be taken to ensure that the cumulative effects of development will not damage the character and amenity of the villages or local area.

The conclusion of a recent planning refusal, upheld at appeal, on Chalford Road, Postcombe (Appeal ref: APP/Q3115/W/18/3208497) stated that the proposal would do significant harm by failing "to protect the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside in conflict with the objectives of the Framework to conserve and enhance the natural environment". Similarly, in a conclusion to another recent planning refusal, upheld at appeal, on Watlington Road, Lewknor it stated "there would be other unacceptable landscape and visual harm including to the settlement pattern of Lewknor". Both of these decisions emphasise that the character of the villages should be retained.

The Parish's villages are fortunate in being surrounded by open land which is crossed by footpaths and benefits from the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the Chilterns National Landscape.

The ready availability of access to open land is a very important characteristic of the villages and should be enhanced as it promotes wellbeing. The settlement boundaries recognise the valued function of the countryside and working farmland in shaping rural character. In some places there are paddocks, recreational facilities, agricultural units and dwellings in open countryside or on the edge of a village extending into the countryside beyond. Lewknor Parish is rural with space for trees and landscaping to soften the impact of buildings, and the setting of the villages in the wider landscape is important.

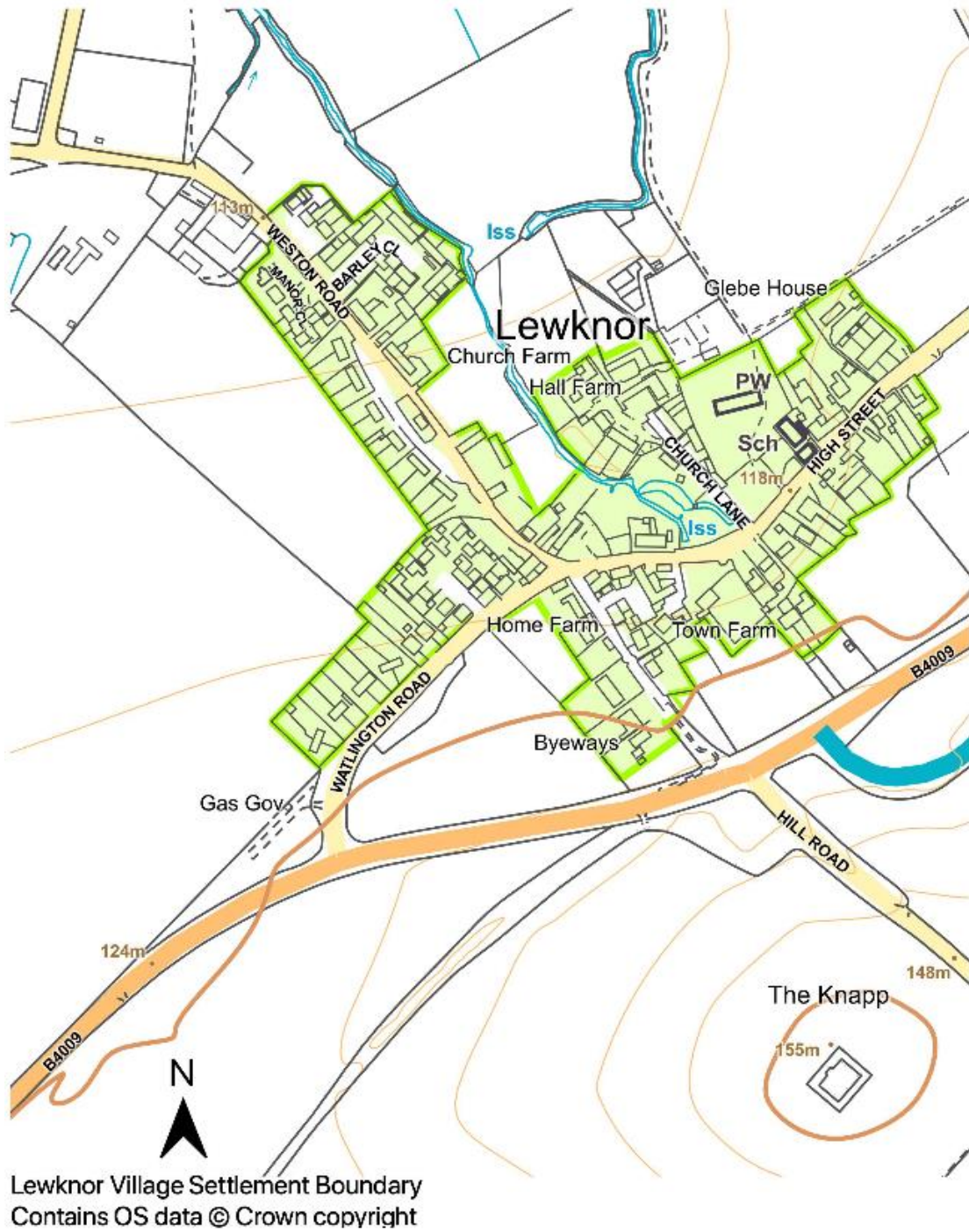
Landscapes on the fringes of settlements are particularly vulnerable to change and special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape edges to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside and to prevent the coalescence of settlements. To retain the rural character of the villages and the separate identities of Lewknor, South Weston and Postcombe it is important that the valued landscape between them is maintained. National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 83 states that housing in rural areas should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 84 sets out criteria required before isolated development can take place. The Protection of Views Appendix 4 highlights those places within the Parish where development would have significant impact on the rural character of the villages and their connection to the landscape.

In general, new development should not occur on land separated from the main settlement by open areas such as large gardens, paddocks or other features, and that it should also not follow linear patterns following the course of local roads. Under the Local Plan policy ENV1 development proposals within the open countryside, particularly the National Landscape, should only be allowed where they relate to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment.

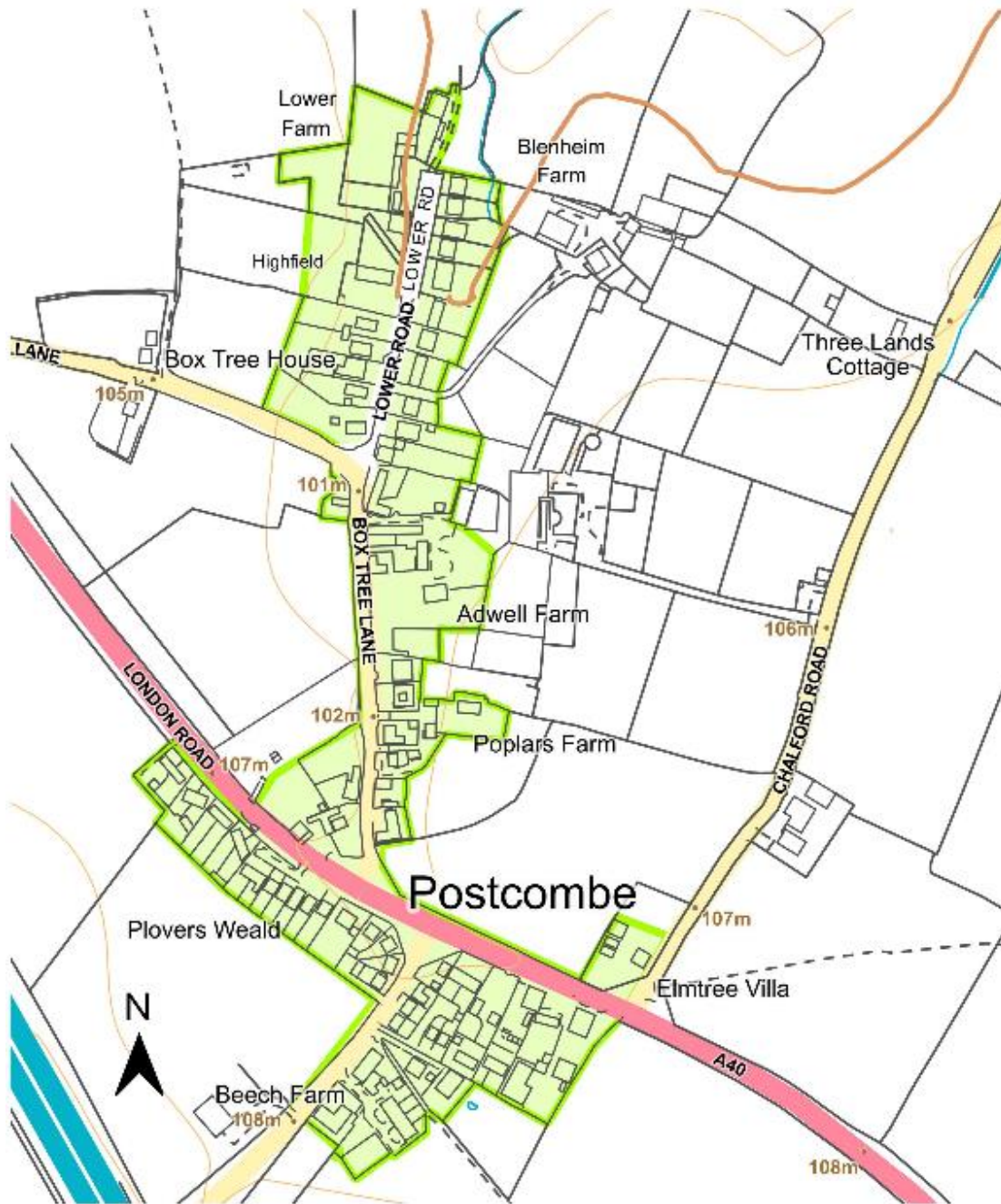
Some large houses have extensive grounds and development of such garden areas will not normally be permitted if this would spoil the spacious character of the area. The National Planning Policy Framework makes specific provision for policies to resist inappropriate development of garden land. The Plan seeks to align with this, therefore, in certain cases, a settlement boundary has been drawn to exclude a portion of a large garden or any other area of privately owned land if the development of part of that garden (or land) would result in an undesirable extension of the built-up area.

Small villages are not generally sustainable locations for the release of green field land for business development.

Without a coherent spatial strategy, development is more likely to happen in an uncontrolled way, extending the built-up area, encroaching into the Chilterns National Landscape and closing the green gaps.



Map 2 - Settlement Boundary for Lewknor Village



Postcombe Village Settlement Boundary
 Contains OS data © Crown copyright

Map 3 - Settlement Boundary for Postcombe Village

Policy SS1: Settlement boundaries - Lewknor and Postcombe

- i. The Neighbourhood Plan defines settlement boundaries at Lewknor and Postcombe, as shown on Maps 2 & 3 which distinguish between the built-up areas of the Parish and the surrounding countryside
- ii. Within the settlement boundaries housing infill development will be supported where it contributes positively to local character and reflects the scale of the village
- iii. Within the Conservation Areas infill development should conserve or enhance the special architectural and historic character of these areas
- iv. Development within settlement boundaries will be supported subject to other Neighbourhood Plan policies provided that the development, individually or cumulatively, would not result in an extended linear form of development along a geographical feature, such as a road or watercourse, which would be out of keeping with the historic nucleated development form of the relevant village³
- v. Proposals for development outside the boundaries will only be supported if they accord with policies of the Local Plan that manage development in the countryside

³ “There has been some further linear development that extends along Watlington Road and an infill scheme on Weston Road but none of this has notably diluted the sense of a compact nucleated village core” Planning Appeal Inspectorate, Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/18/3200335 Watlington Road, Lewknor

11. Landscape and Village Character

In village consultations, the residents of the Parish placed a high priority on maintaining its small village character, the special nature of the historic environment and the natural beauty of the surrounding countryside. It is important to recognise that within the Parish there is a strong sense of community. The residents want the Parish to continue to evolve in a way which retains its essential character as a rural community, therefore, any new housing should be added in a manner sympathetic to the current layout of the villages of Lewknor and Postcombe.

Any building should be of appropriate scale, layout and form, respecting the surrounding character and landscape setting of the existing villages and should be located within the designated settlement boundaries unless appropriate to the specific countryside location.

The Village Character Assessment (Appendix 1) identifies what is important about the Parish, both in terms of its setting and the value of retaining the overall areas of character within the villages of the Parish. The Village Character Assessment fully documents the existing shape and character, mix of building size, style and materials, gardens and spaces between buildings as well as back lanes, the open countryside setting and views. A key characteristic of the rural character of the Parish is the dark night sky, which provides particular advantages for nocturnal wildlife. There is currently limited light pollution and the local community is keen to prevent the introduction of unnecessary light pollution in a dark rural area. In Consultation 2, 79% of those who expressed an opinion indicated they did not want more street lighting.

One of the principal characteristics of the Parish is its close relationship with the landscape: trees, green spaces between buildings, views out across open countryside and remnants of old orchards are as much a part of the character of the Parish as traditional materials and historic buildings.

An important part of the character is the way the Parish has evolved over time to create a place which has several different and distinctive architectural styles, historic buildings and public and private spaces. These combine to create a special character. Any new building needs to respect the heritage of the Parish and reflect its rural character. Whether the new building is in a traditional style or is more modern; it is the quality of design, use of materials, scale, density and landscape details that are important.

The aim is to encourage the best in sustainable design rather than to accept the lowest common denominator.

11.1. Conserving Heritage

Lewknor and South Weston were built in the Eastern Vale Fringes landscape area of South Oxfordshire. The majority of the Parish falls within this landscape area, which has provided a favoured area for settlement since prehistoric times. The Upper Icknield Way, a prehistoric thoroughfare, followed the outcrop of dry, permeable rocks between the wet land of the vale and the steep Chilterns escarpment, and the numerous pure springs which emerge along the scarp foot have attracted the formation of a long string of villages from Chinnor to Ewelme.

Many of the existing settlements, such as Lewknor, Pyrton and Watlington, were evident by the Saxon period and the basic pattern of settlement has changed very little since then. Many villages, such as Lewknor, were originally nucleated in form, with buildings typically clustered around a church and central open space, resulting in an attractive core of historic buildings with widespread use of brick and flint which have then extended in a more linear form. Rooves are typically red clay tiles with occasional thatch. Lewknor is built on West Melbury Marly Chalk.

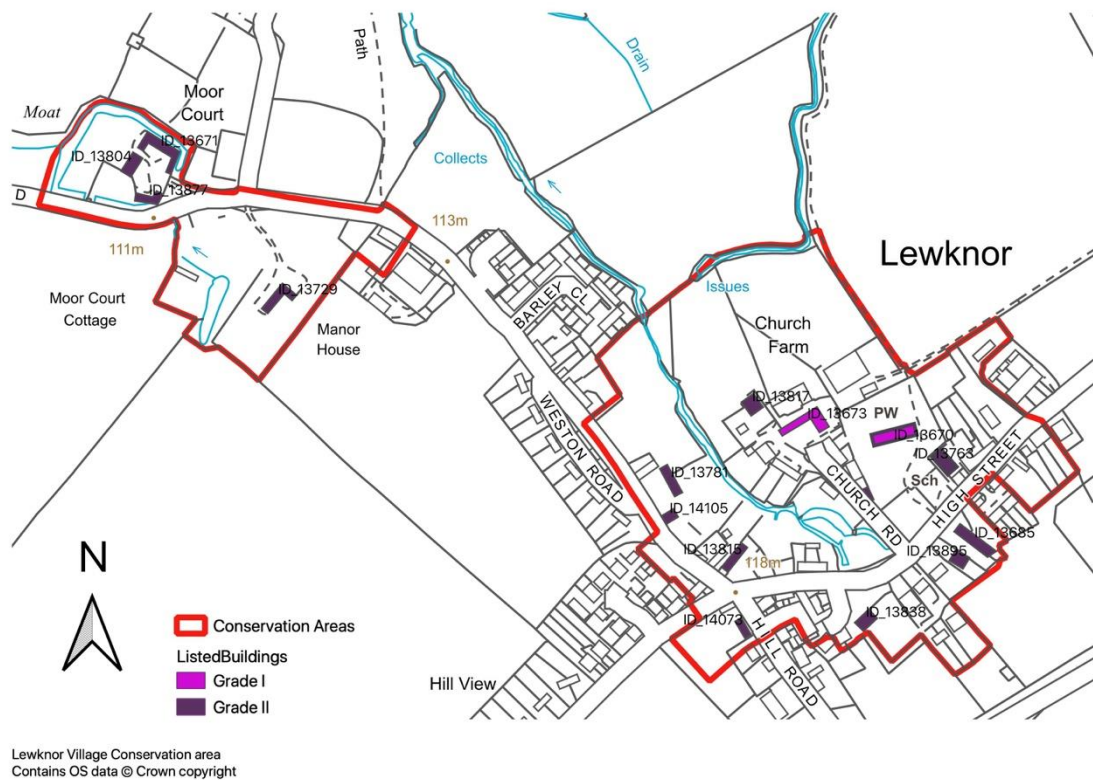
South Weston is a pretty hamlet; most of the buildings are constructed of red brick, with some brick and flint around the farm. It is built on, as you move up the hill from the stream, Upper Greensand, Glauconitic Marl Member and West Melbury Marly Chalk.

Postcombe was built in the Clay Vale landscape area; a small area of the Parish north of the M40 falls within this area. Postcombe's older buildings are a mixture of red brick and weatherboard. The village is built on Upper Greensand.

The Local Plan contains policies which protect the historical environment, conservation areas and archaeology. The community feels it is important that within the historic areas of the villages, the design and materials used should complement what is already in place. There are, however, certain historic features of the Parish which are special to the area:

- i. A wide variety of dwellings in terms of style, design, materials and layout with no particular clashes of style or size
- ii. Colour schemes are subdued
- iii. Houses are built in varying densities and are not all clustered closely together
- iv. The boundaries of the Parish villages give on to open country
- v. In many places pedestrians and vehicles share the road
- vi. Street lighting is practically non-existent in the Parish, and residents have confirmed that they prefer it that way

The Parish is proud of its wealth of older buildings. Within the conservation areas a number of Grade 1 and 2 listed buildings are recognised as an important aspect of its heritage. A fuller description of the heritage assets of the village is contained in the Village Character Assessment (Appendix 1). The map below shows the boundaries of the Parish's Conservation Area (designated on 11 December 1984) and the location of listed buildings.



Map 4 - Lewknor conservation area

This policy helps to conserve and enhance the Parish’s historic character whilst helping inform how the villages will grow and adapt for the future.

In conformity with Local Plan policy ENV6, this Plan aims to protect the historic environment at both a local and a strategic level, strengthening broader heritage policies from the local plan and putting them into action locally. The richness of the Parish’s heritage is well demonstrated by the fact that it contains a Conservation Area and 31 listed buildings and structures.

Safeguarding, conserving and enhancing these listed historic assets and other unlisted heritage assets and their settings is important.

The Neighbourhood Plan requires that development proposals within or next to the Conservation Area or listed buildings must conserve or enhance the significance of the heritage asset and the contribution of their setting. Inappropriate development would potentially cause irreparable damage to the sensitive historic environment.

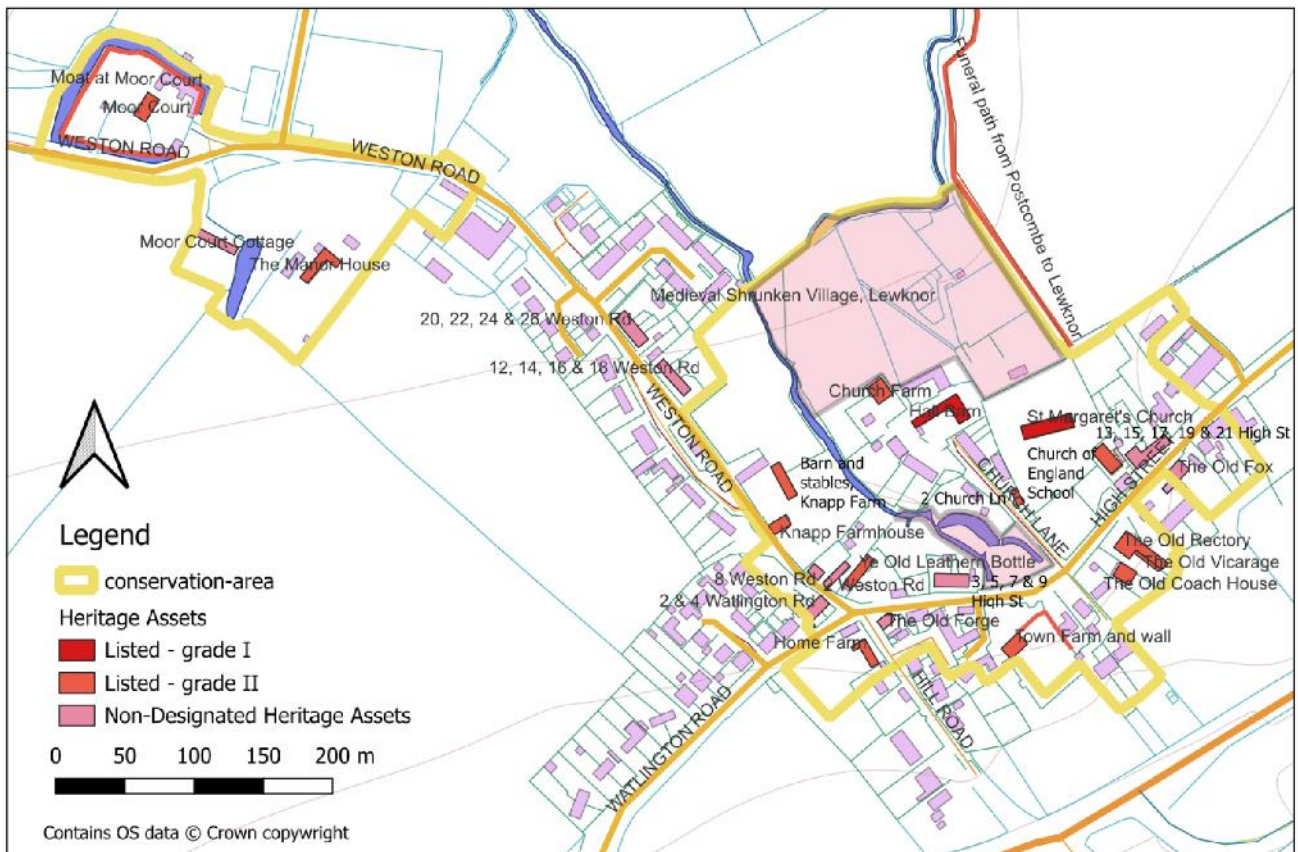
In conformity with the Local Plan policy ENV8 and National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 212, development must have a positive outcome for the conservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area, including consideration of the contribution made by its setting. An Article 4 Direction⁴, which limits certain development which may take place without planning permission, may

⁴ Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995

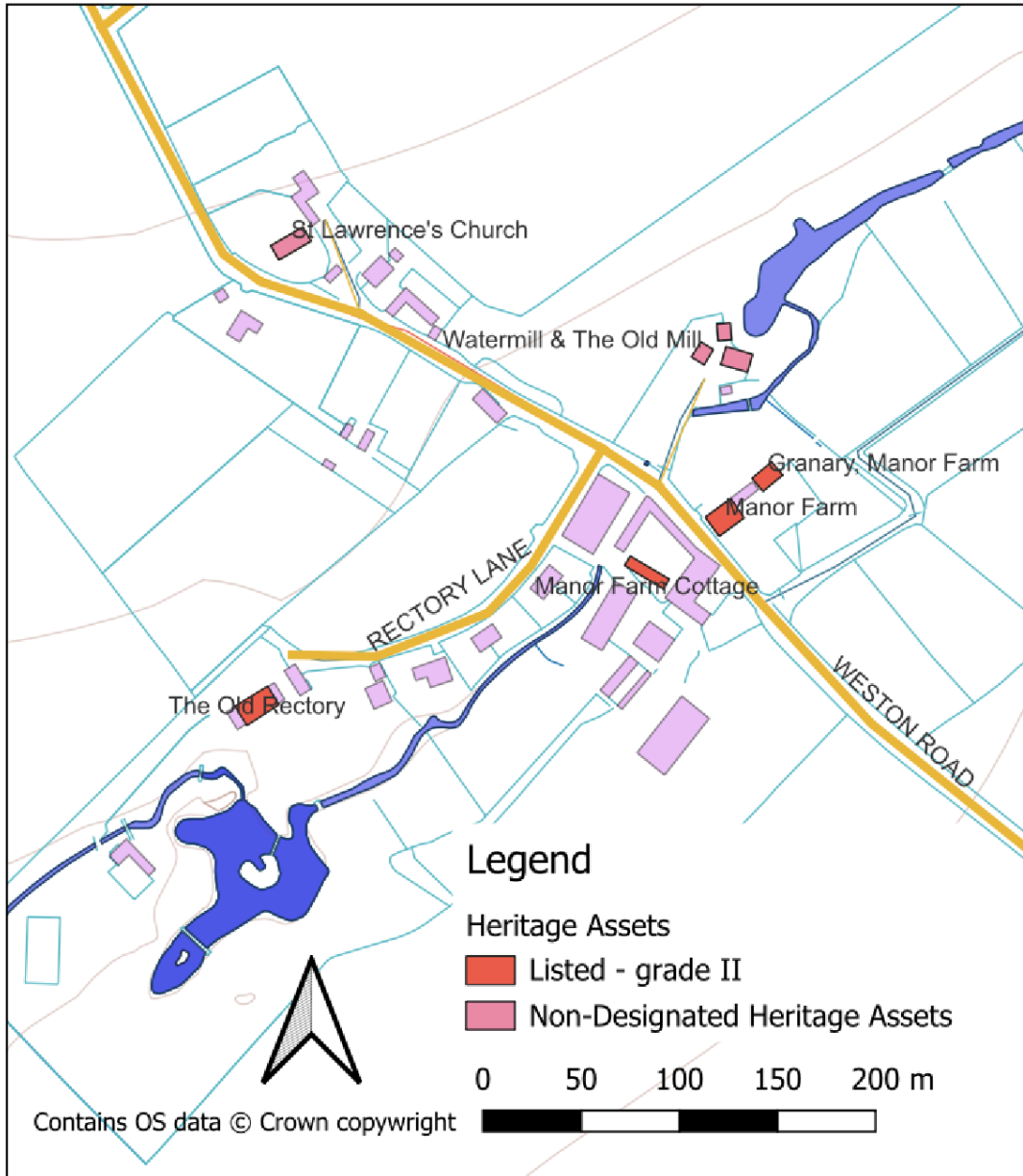
be appropriate for the Conservation Area if permitted development is causing, or would cause, a loss of its special interest, character and appearance.

There are distinctive features of the Parish that shape its character. In the villages, this is not restricted to buildings: mature trees, hedgerows, gardens, open spaces and country lanes all make a significant contribution to the unique and special character. These features are set out in the Character Assessment.

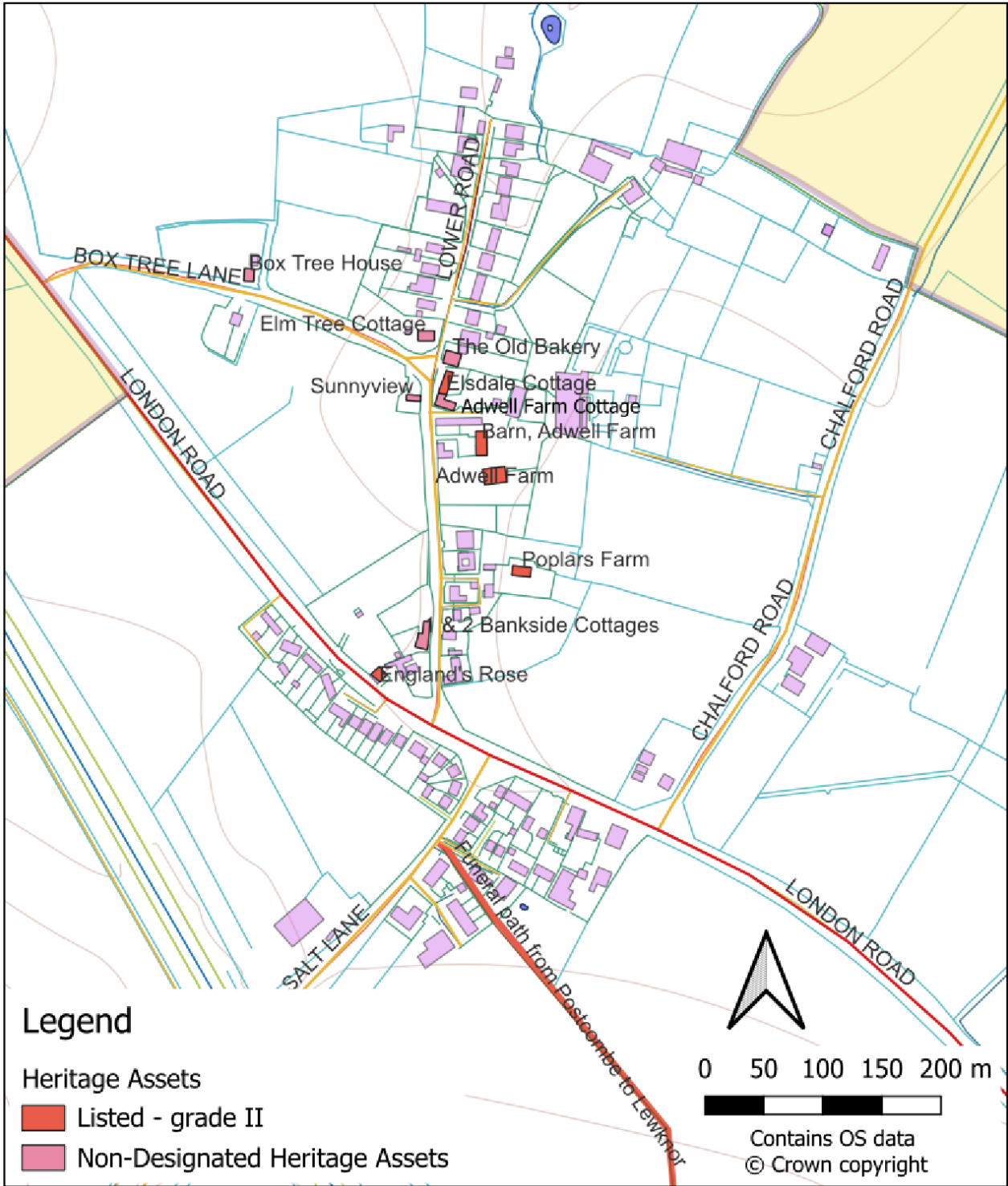
National and local policies already provide a robust context to safeguard the conservation area and the various listed buildings in the parish. As part of the preparation of the neighbourhood plan the Steering Group, on behalf of the Parish Council, has undertaken an assessment of the significance of non-designated heritage assets. Important buildings are described in Appendix 3. Policy CH1 translates this information into a policy context and in doing so identifies the various buildings as non-designated heritage assets. The buildings are shown on Maps 5 to 8.



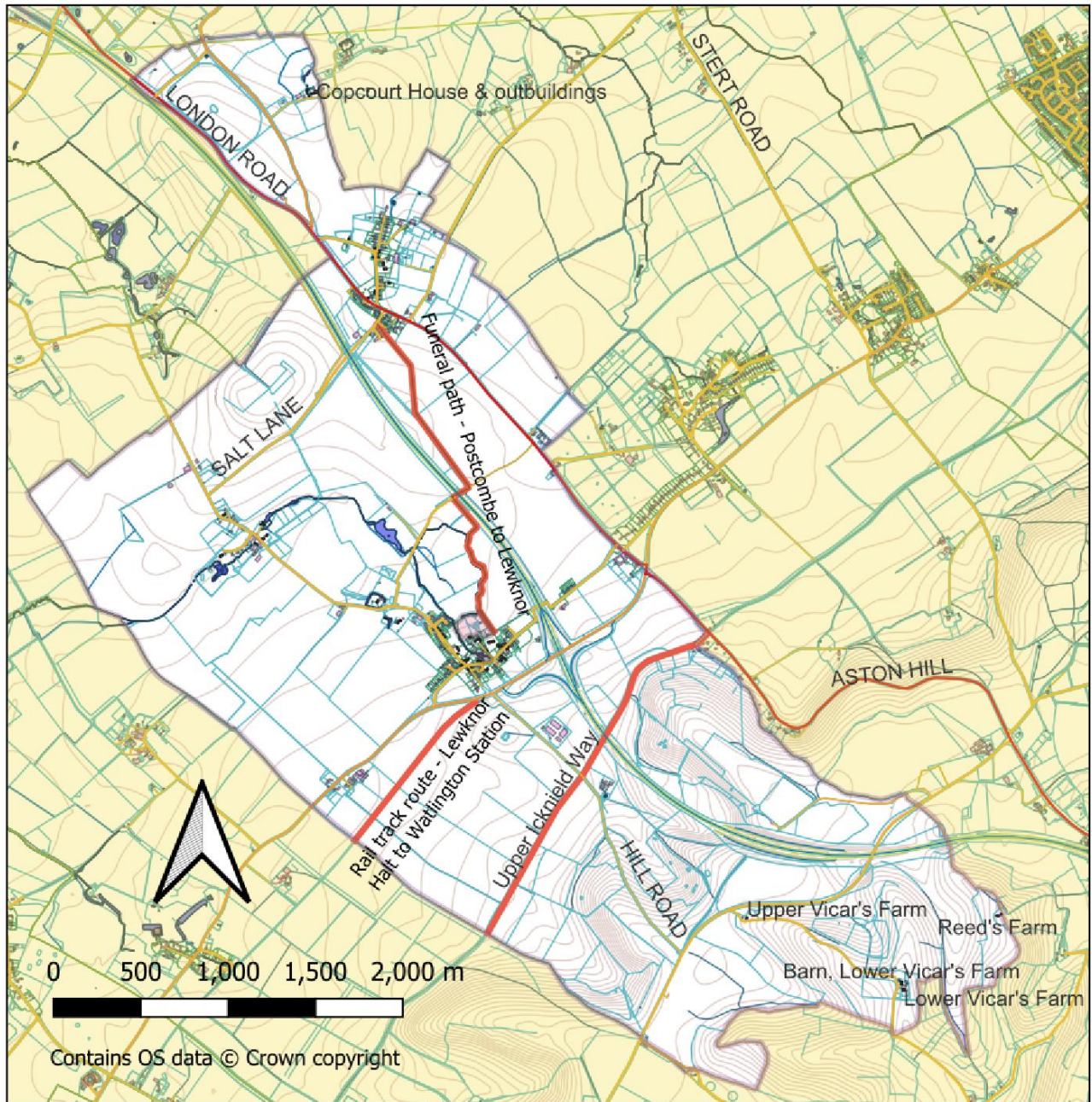
Map 5 - Heritage Assets – Lewknor



Map 6 – Heritage Assets – South Weston



Map 7 – Heritage Assets - Postcombe



Map 8 – Heritage Assets – Outside the villages

Policy CH1: Conserving Heritage

The Plan identifies non-designated heritage assets (as shown on Maps 5 to 8).

The effect of a development proposal on the significance of the identified non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining planning applications. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect an identified non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset concerned.

11.2. Landscape Character

The Neighbourhood Plan places a high priority on protecting the local environment. In Consultation 2, 76% of those who expressed an opinion preferred any new development to be either within the villages or adjacent to them. In addition, the community places a high priority on retaining the character of the open landscape and preserving local flora and fauna.

The aim of the Neighbourhood Plan is to conserve the local landscape and environment, including the local and nationally protected landscapes, and to minimise the negative impacts of development on the surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems. This respects the views of the residents of the Parish, 100% of those who expressed a view in Consultation 1 stated that its rural location was an important or very important aspect of living in the Parish.

Natural England describes landscape character as "a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse"⁵. The Parish has an intimate relationship with the surrounding countryside and sits across two distinct landscape character areas, the Chilterns Escarpment which contains the steep hills and high land, and the Eastern Vale Fringes which consists of rolling land in the north-west of the Parish. The land use in the Parish is largely agricultural with a mix of arable crops and permanent pasture. Views into and out of the villages in the Parish are largely a product of the surrounding landscape and the character of the buildings within them.

This Plan includes a policy to safeguard the landscape character of the Parish. This has regard to South Oxfordshire Local Plan policy ENV1 Landscape and Countryside:

- 1. "The highest level of protection will be given to the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)"*
- 2. "South Oxfordshire's landscape, countryside and rural areas will be protected against harmful development. Development will only be permitted where it protects and, where possible enhances, features that contribute to the nature and quality of South Oxfordshire's valued landscapes."*

Part of Lewknor Parish lies within the Chilterns National Landscape and as such is subject to the Statutory Management plan for this area and also the Conservation Target Area for the Chilterns Escarpment North. This policy, along with others covering biodiversity, is in line with this and also paras 180 and 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

All new development which could have an impact on the Chilterns National Landscape or setting of the National Landscape should be accompanied by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) following the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, latest edition, as part of an application.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

Policy CH2: Landscape Character

Development proposals should conserve and enhance the landscape character area in which it lies having regard to the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment document.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should respect:

- i. The location of the Parish as a constituent part of the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape. Any planning proposal should not detract from this relationship in which the Parish contributes to the wider setting of the Chilterns
- ii. the Chilterns National Landscape as an Intrinsically Dark Landscape⁶
- iii. the geodiversity of the Parish

11.3. Protection of Views

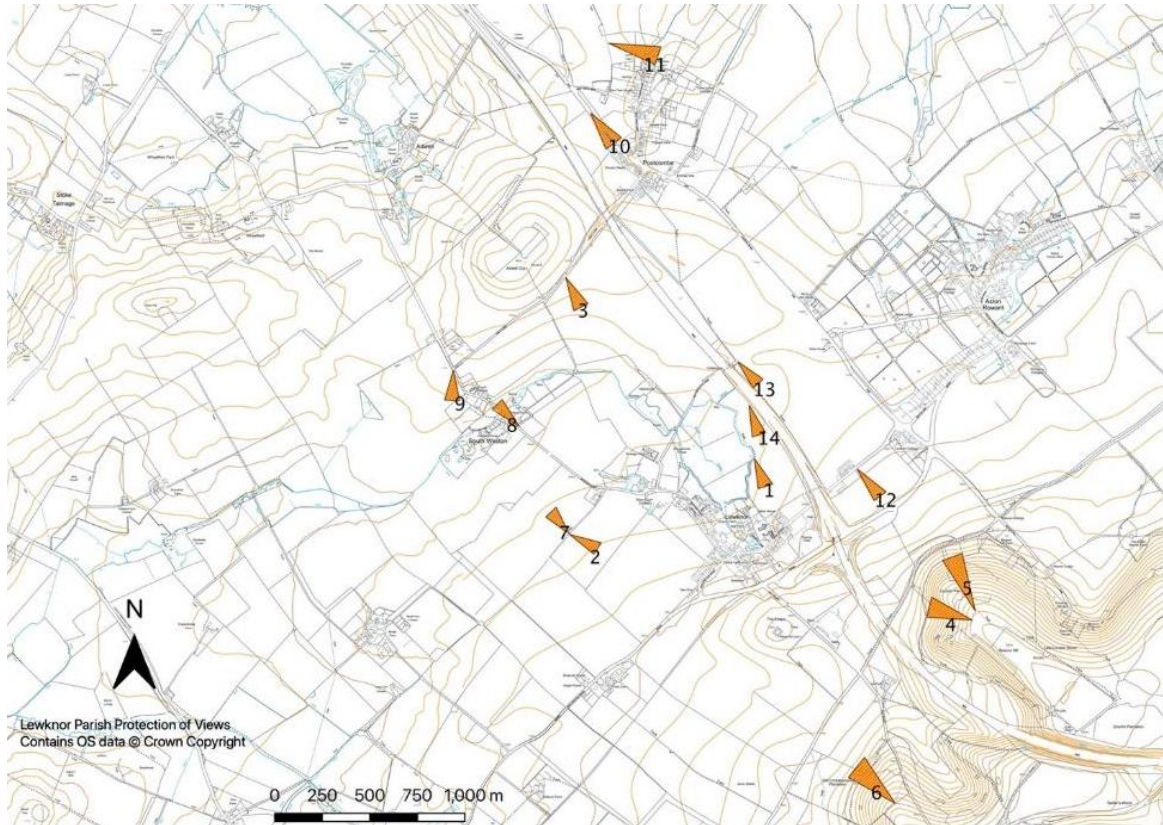
The setting of the Parish has been an important consideration in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. There are important views from the villages and into the villages, particularly from the Chilterns. Conservation of such views is a vital element of preserving the character of the villages and the surrounding landscape. To that end views which should be protected were identified, they were proposed to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group who selected a short list which was presented as a display at the Parish Fete in September 2019 for residents' opinions. All the views put forward were enthusiastically supported and no alternative views were put forward by residents for consideration. As a result, development which would obstruct the selected views or which would lead to a detrimental impact on them should not be permitted.

The Parish sits on the edge of the Oxford plain and is part of the iconic view as one drives from south to north through the cutting on the M40. This picturesque view of Lewknor is memorably captured in the opening credits of the BBC sitcom "The Vicar of Dibley" to portray a rural country landscape.

The Parish is rural with trees and landscaping softening the impact of buildings and, therefore, the setting of the villages in the wider landscape is important. Residents of the Parish wish to maintain this character and avoid unacceptable loss or detriment to the significant views which currently add so much to the setting of the communities. Certain specific views in the parish are of special significance to the local community. These include views looking into the villages from outside and views of significant landmarks from points either within the villages or from footpaths within the parish. Appendix 4 describes the importance these views.

The policy serves to conserve the character of the villages and the open country around them. Views across that open country either from or towards the villages are an important part of the character of the Parish. To conserve that character those views must be preserved. Map 9 reproduces the map from Appendix 4.

⁶ https://www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/?_ga=2.166308410.568704685.1559997937-20889023.1559997937



*Map 9 showing key views identified as worthy of protection
Apex of triangle is point at which photo has been taken*

Policy CH3: Protection of Views

i. The Plan identifies important views in the Parish (as shown on Map 9) as being of special significance for the character and setting of the parish and its villages as follows:

- 1) St. Margaret's Church, Lewknor - from the north-west
- 2) Lewknor & Beacon Hill - from the west
- 3) Lewknor - from Salt Lane
- 4) Lewknor and South Weston - from Beacon Hill
- 5) Postcombe - from Beacon Hill
- 6) Lewknor - from Bald Hill
- 7) South Weston & Adwell Cop
- 8) Entrance to South Weston - in direction of Adwell
- 9) Towards Rectory Lane, South Weston - from junction of Salt Lane and Weston Road
- 10) Beacon Hill - from the London Road at Postcombe
- 11) Postcombe & Chiltern escarpment - from the west
- 12) Beacon Hill - from Beacon View, Lewknor
- 13) Beacon Hill - from Nethercote Lane, Lewknor

14) Bald Hill - from north-west of St Margaret's Church, Lewknor

- ii. Development proposals should preserve or where practicable enhance the local character of the landscape and respond positively to the identified important views

11.4. The Chilterns National Landscape

The south-eastern third of Lewknor parish is within the Chilterns National Landscape (previously the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the rest nestles against it. The Chiltern escarpment crosses the Parish, is visible from much of the Parish and is a dominant feature of the district. It is critical to defining the character and sense of place and is an important recreational area for locals and visitors. The Chilterns National Landscape is an important and highly significant part of the landscape, as vouched by 95% of respondents, who expressed a view in Consultation 1, that it was important or very important that the countryside maintains its existing character.

- i. National Landscapes are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the finest landscapes in England and Wales are conserved and enhanced. In policy terms they have the same planning status as National Parks⁷ with the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1965 and extended in 1990 and renamed the Chilterns National Landscape on 22 November 2023. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on local authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to, or affecting, land within these areas⁸
- ii. The Chilterns National Landscape covers 13 local authorities and the Councils work together to safeguard the future of this shared nationally protected area through the Chilterns Conservation Board. The Board prepares a statutory National Landscape Management Plan which may be endorsed as a material consideration in planning decisions⁹
- iii. The Chilterns National Landscape is a nationally designated landscape and as such permission for major developments will be refused unless exceptional circumstances prevail as defined by national planning policy¹⁰. National guidance explains that whether

⁷ NPPF paragraph 182 "Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads."

⁸ [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Section 85](#)

⁹ See the Government's Planning Practice Guidance 8-004-20140306 Paragraph 004

¹⁰ NPPF paragraph 183 "When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

a proposal constitutes major development is a matter for the relevant decision taker, taking into account the proposal in question and the local context¹¹. For the purposes of this plan, 'major development' will not be restricted to the definition of major development in the Town and County Planning (Development Management Procedure)(England) Order 2015 or to proposals that raise issues of national significance, and will include consideration of whether a proposal has the potential to have a serious adverse impact on the Chilterns National Landscape

- iv. The Chilterns Hills and the North Wessex Downs are part of a broad belt of chalk upland running across England in an arc from Dorset to Yorkshire. The Goring Gap, where the River Thames carves through the chalk escarpment, forms the boundary between the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in South Oxfordshire. Although both areas are chalk upland, their character differs: the Chilterns National Landscape is a generally more enclosed and wooded landscape than the broader more open uplands of the North Wessex Downs. The Chilterns escarpment in South Oxfordshire is particularly impressive, and the beech woods are justifiably famous
- v. In determining compliance with criterion (i) in the policy below, actions to conserve and enhance the Chilterns National Landscape shall be informed by landscape assessment, having considered any relevant landscape character assessments and landscape and visual impact assessments and shall focus upon:
 - (a) the Chilterns National Landscape special qualities which include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower-rich downland, broadleaved woodlands (especially beech), commons, tranquil valleys, the network of ancient routes, villages with their brick and flint houses, chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hillforts and chalk figures
 - (b) the scope for enhancing and restoring those parts of the landscape which are previously developed, degraded or subject to existing intrusive developments, utilities or infrastructure
 - (c) locally distinctive patterns and species composition of natural features such as chalk downland, trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, rivers and chalk streams
 - (d) the locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings, including the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the edge of settlements
 - (e) visually sensitive skylines, geological and topographical features
 - (f) landscapes of cultural, historic and heritage value
 - (g) important views and visual amenity, including key views from the steep north-west facing chalk escarpment overlooking the low clay vale, and foreground views back to the Chilterns National Landscape
 - (h) Tranquillity, dark skies and remoteness and the need to avoid intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated."

¹¹ Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph 005 Paragraph 041 Reference ID: 8-041-20190721

- vi. Development proposals which lie outside the Chilterns National Landscape but within its setting can also have impacts on it. Relevant authorities are required to have regard to conserving and enhancing the Chilterns National Landscape when considering any development. For example, views out of the National Landscape from key visitor viewpoints into surrounding areas can be very significant¹². The M40 motorway and its corridor exerts a considerable noise and visual impact upon surrounding landscape, which is much valued for recreational access (including the Ridgeway National Trail) and includes access to the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve. The M40 is, to some degree, ever present in the landscape that surrounds it. Any future motorway design alterations, proposals and noise mitigations by Highways England should acknowledge this issue, for example by mitigation or amelioration of the noise impact, involving surfacing or new fencing. Although it does not have a defined geographical boundary, the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape is the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design could be considered to have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the Chilterns National Landscape. Advice on development in the setting of the National Landscape is contained within guidance produced by the Chilterns Conservation Board¹³.

Any development should take account of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan Chapter 7 (Land, Woodland and Nature), so as to maximise biodiversity, through land management approaches for example grazing regimes, restoring hedgerows, reinstating ponds, reverting arable land to chalk grassland, and joining up islands of ancient woodland or chalk grassland. These may be viewed as necessary compensatory measures.

Policy CH4: The Chilterns National Landscape (previously the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

Proposals for major developments in the Chilterns National Landscape will be not be supported other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that development is in the public interest, as defined by national planning policy.

Development proposals within the Chilterns National Landscape, or affecting the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape, will only be supported where they:

- i. conserve and enhance the Chilterns National Landscape's special qualities, distinctive character, tranquillity and remoteness in accordance with national planning policy and the overall purpose of the National Landscape designation
- ii. are appropriate to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area or is desirable for its understanding and enjoyment
- iii. has regard to the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan, making practical and financial contributions towards management plan delivery as appropriate

¹² [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Section 85:](#)

¹³ [Position Statement on Development affecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB](#)

- iv. comply with the Chilterns Building Design Guide and technical notes by being of a high-quality design which respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, its traditional built character and reinforces the sense of place and local character
- v. are designed to avoid unacceptable impacts (including cumulative effects), unless any harm can be satisfactorily mitigated

12. Design and Character of Buildings

12.1. Character of Developments

Throughout the Parish as a whole it is important that the scale of any development does not dwarf neighbouring properties or set a precedent for an increase in building size. Policy DC1 sets out the Plan's approach to this important issue. It operates in parallel with policy DC2 which addresses the design and character of any development.

The Plan policies call for high quality design and high sustainability standards, which complement local distinctiveness. This accords with Chiltern Conservation Board and South Oxfordshire District Council published Design Guides. The Local Plan policies and the Design Guides contribute towards achieving Objectives 1.2 and 1.4. but an additional local policy helps define what is required of good design within the Parish.

The Character Assessment (Appendix 1) identifies what is important about the Parish, both in terms of its setting and individual character areas within the settlements. The character assessment fully documents the existing character, including the prevalence of two storey dwellings and the natural rhythm of front gardens and curtilages, particularly the open feeling as houses are not built close to both sides of roads. This Plan seeks to retain these features in any new building. Each village within the Parish has a strong sense of its particular identity which is, in part, created by the community itself but also by the shape and form of that village, its resources and infrastructure. An important part of this character is the way the villages have evolved over time to create a place which has several different and distinctive architectural styles, historic buildings and public and private spaces. These combine to create a unique character.

Any new development, whether a small development or an infill plot, must respect the heritage of the village concerned and not jar with its rural character. This was supported by 96% of respondents who expressed a view in Consultation 1 describing this as important or very important. The Character Assessment records the existing shapes and characters of each village including the mix of building sizes, styles and materials, gardens and spaces between buildings as well as back lanes, the open countryside settings and views.

A policy on design is considered essential to manage any proposal, including redevelopment of a single house on a large plot into multiple housing. This policy is not intended to create a copybook approach to design or limit innovation in the type or range of development. Innovative design, where appropriate, is not precluded. Any departure from the traditional approach would need to demonstrate why this approach should be set aside.

The policy recognises the value of the South Oxfordshire District Council Design Guide and supports its approach to quality at every scale. Such design guidance is more easily applied to larger sites, however development which impacts on the street scene is considered to be very important locally. The Chilterns Buildings Design Guide, the recommendations of which are supported by the Plan, provides practical advice on how to build or restore buildings in keeping with the special qualities of the Chilterns National Landscape.

In consultation 1, 79% of respondents who expressed a view indicated that they were against higher housing density. Proposals must show clearly how the scale, mass, density, layout and design of the site, and its building or extension fits with the character of the immediate area and wider context within its village and, where appropriate, the setting of the conservation area and its environs.

Access to new development should ideally not generate a significant increase in traffic on the villages' back roads which are unsuitable for higher volumes of traffic. Direct access to and from the main village roads is much preferred.

Policy DC1: Character of Developments

New developments and extensions to properties should be in harmony with the rural character of the Parish and its landscape and where practicable enhance the sense of place and local distinctiveness. Development proposals will be supported where they meet the following criteria:

- i. implement the best practices set out in the Joint Design Guide; and have regard to the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide
- ii. where a Design and Access Statement is required and the development is in the Chilterns National Landscape or its environs, it should explain how it complies with the Joint Design Guide and has regard to the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide
- iii. the density, scale and arrangement of buildings should reflect that of the respective settlement area
- iv. where building(s) on one side of a road are close to the roadside, any building(s) on the opposite side of the road should be set well back from the roadside in order to maintain a sense of openness
- v. preserve historic plot boundaries, hedgerows and enclosure walls

12.2. Design Principles

It is possible through good design that future development can integrate well with existing settlement scale and character as well as creating inclusive and accessible buildings which enhance the quality of life.

Development proposals should complement, enhance and reinforce the local distinctiveness of this rural parish, the appearance of its villages and its landscape setting. 100% of those who expressed a view in Consultation 1 stated that its rural location was an important or very important aspect of living in the Parish. It should be noted that in the Conservation Area the predominant vernacular style is brick and flint.

This policy identifies a number of key design principles of special importance to managing future development proposals in the Parish. The policy expects applicants to show how they have taken these principles into account in their proposals; where the policy permits, an explanation should be provided as to why any principle has not been adhered to.

There is no through traffic along the High Street of Lewknor. The A40 bisects the village of Postcombe into two distinct parts, the north side of which also has no through traffic. Movements within the Parish are still largely via lanes with few pavements or raised kerbs. These narrow and winding lanes help create a strong and special sense of place. Curving streets of varying widths, flanked by

combinations of banks, cottage gardens, hedges and traditional walls maintain the rural character and, on the whole, do not dominate the buildings beyond, but are in scale with the style, period and setting of any given location.

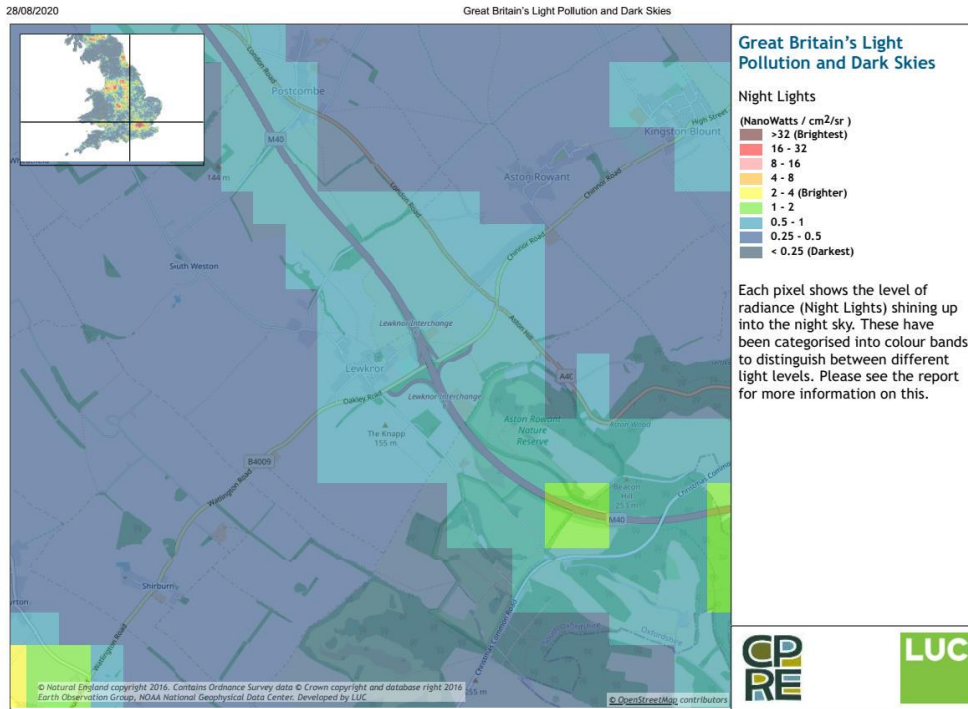
i. Lighting and Dark Skies

One of the less tangible qualities of the Parish is the night-scape. Dark skies contribute to the quality of the night time character and environment of the Parish. As well as adding greatly to its rural identity, the dark skies provide particular benefits for nocturnal wildlife - owls and bats are a common sight during the summer. Street lighting is absent in nearly all of the Parish and it is, therefore, an excellent location from which to enjoy the night sky. When surveyed there was very little support from the residents for the provision of street lighting. Consultation 2 revealed that 79% of respondents, who expressed an opinion, did not support further street lighting indicating that this is, therefore, something which the community feels strongly about and for which there is clear evidence to support a rigorous approach in the determination of planning applications.

The beneficial side-effect of a lack of lighting at night is that the night sky is highly visible from the darker parts of the Parish. This makes the Parish one of the diminishing locations within Oxfordshire where a wider than usual range of stars and celestial objects may be seen at night both with the naked eye and through a telescope. As surrounding new and planned developments consolidate the existing sky glow, this will inevitably alter the degree to which the Parish experiences dark skies in future.

Evidence from the Campaign to Protect Rural England's online mapping website, (see Map 10 below) showing England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies, indicate that Lewknor Parish as a whole enjoys very low light pollution levels and consequentially dark skies at night, as demonstrates. As can be seen light levels in the Parish vary in the main between 0.25 and 1 nanowatt/cm²/steradian. (Data from the CPRE: <http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/>).

The policy introduces a graded hierarchy of light pollution minimisation or avoidance, against which all development proposals will be assessed. Reduction or total avoidance of light pollution is the goal of the policy, but it reflects the fact that this may not always be possible, albeit it should be the over-arching objective in every instance.



[https://www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/print.html?Q\[5946.797290762913,5997.899755559559,4787.892368668373,4813.013307658224,0\]\[thBl=1,th0=0,th1=0,th2=0,th3=0,th4=0,th5=0,th6=1,th7=0,th8=1\]\[thBl=Ope...](https://www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/print.html?Q[5946.797290762913,5997.899755559559,4787.892368668373,4813.013307658224,0][thBl=1,th0=0,th1=0,th2=0,th3=0,th4=0,th5=0,th6=1,th7=0,th8=1][thBl=Ope...) 1/1

Map 10 - Light Pollution and Dark Skies for Parish

ii. Parking

Off-street parking is common and should be encouraged. The design of access to driveways is an important consideration and open plan frontages to properties with large car parking areas are not in keeping with the village character.

A range of materials, styles and types of building in the Parish sit well next to each other. Whether new development is of traditional style or is more modern, it is the quality of design, use of materials, scale, density and landscape details that is important. New developments and extensions need to suit the character and scale of their immediate setting. Careful matching of building style and scale that use traditional materials and locally distinctive details should be sought. When surveyed in Consultation 2 97% of residents who expressed a view were concerned to ensure that developments were in keeping with the existing styles, layout and materials of the villages. The way in which a development fits in to the streetscape is important, requiring sensitive boundary treatment and landscaping which respects the local vernacular.

Policy DC2: Design Principles

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should incorporate designs and layouts that respond positively to the local character of the area and address the following principles:

- i. provision of a high-quality design
- ii. have regard to how their landscape schemes, layouts, access and public open space provision and other amenity requirements may contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the surrounding area

- iii. Existing arboricultural features should be incorporated into design schemes wherever possible so that they are set off as an attractive asset to the development
- iv. boundary treatments to highways and village lanes should comprise, where practicable, native hedgerow (or species appropriate to the site's growing conditions), or stone, brick or flint boundary walls as appropriate to the immediate context of the site
- v. boundary treatments to the front of properties should be soft (lawn, low hedges, trees, planting) and/or low stone/brick walls/picket fencing
- vi. proposed lighting should conserve and enhance relative tranquility, in relation to light pollution and dark night skies, and comply with other relevant policies. All new lighting should demonstrate that it meets or exceeds the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance and other relevant standards or guidance (CIE 150:2017 Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations) for lighting within environmental zones, and have regard to the following hierarchy:
 - a) The installation of outside lighting is avoided
 - b) If lighting is installed it is necessary for its intended purpose or use and any adverse impacts are avoided, and
 - c) If it is demonstrated that (a) or (b) is not achievable, then adverse impacts are appropriately mitigated
- vii. proposed lighting for development proposals should ensure all of the following:
 - a) The measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not reduced
 - b) Lighting is not unnecessarily visible in nearby designated and key habitats
 - c) The visibility of lighting from the surrounding landscape is avoided
 - d) Building design that results in increased light spill from internal lighting is avoided, unless suitable mitigation measures are implemented
- viii. proposed parking arrangements for residents and their visitors incorporate solutions that avoid large expanses of communal parking or the loss of vegetation along the roadsides and do not necessitate parking on village lanes and have a minimal impact on the street scene. All new residential developments should provide for the parking of vehicles in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's parking standards, unless specific evidence is provided to justify a departure from those standards
- ix. unless impracticable, garages must be built in direct association with the houses whose inhabitants may be expected to use them. They must be spacious enough to accommodate modern cars and bicycles. Proposals for separate parking areas would not be supported unless alternative provision is impracticable. In such instances they should be small, discreet and located out of view of the road
- x. provision must be made for adequate storage space for bins and this should not detract from the street scene
- xi. any new road is in keeping with the form of existing roads and lanes within its village
- xii. roads and footpaths should not feature street and/or path lighting unless it is a requirement of a statutory body, in which case renewable energy solutions (such as solar lighting) are encouraged
- xiii. it should avoid the installation of kerbs to new or existing village lanes or roads. Where such an approach is impracticable, the use of more sympathetic materials / construction design, as identified in Oxfordshire County Council's Residential Road Design Guide, should be used in preference to the installation of precast concrete kerbs
- xiv. developments should contribute to the provision of cleaner air and reduce pollution by adopting techniques which minimise or avoid carbon emissions and dust

12.3. Sustainable Design

The Chiltern Buildings Design Guide promotes inclusive, sustainable development which can help the Parish to become a future-proofed and 'green' parish. Rainwater harvesting is encouraged to reduce reliance on mains water supply and improve surface water management. The aim is to encourage only the best in sustainable design rather than to accept the lowest common denominator. In Consultation 2, 67% of respondents who expressed a preference wanted to see energy efficient design.

Policy DC3: Sustainable Design

Proposals for new buildings and, where practicable, changes to existing buildings should demonstrate:

- i. the provision of energy and water efficient, environmentally sensitive construction, using sustainable and recyclable materials, and including renewable energy sources which have been informed by and which complement the local character and rural surroundings
- ii. how the development has been future proofed for the provision of modern technology, such as high-speed broadband, electric vehicle charging points and ground or air source heat pumps

13. Environment

13.1. Wildlife and Biodiversity

The Parish has much to cherish in nature conservation assets. It is a parish in a rural setting and the presence of wildlife is a notable feature both within and around the settlements. Surrounding the villages is a network of fields, woods and meadowland, including the remnants of old orchards. Traditional orchards are beginning to be recognised nationally as an important feature, contributing to the biodiversity of the countryside. Kingfishers and herons fish along the chalk stream which flows from the centre of Lewknor village towards Nethercote Lake and onwards through South Weston; the lake is home to wild brown trout, many species of water fowl, and numerous invertebrates. Tawny owls hoot at night-time, especially in the vicinity of Lewknor churchyard and barn owls hunt in the grass meadows; swifts scream and career over rooftops and red kites soar overhead in significant numbers. The green infrastructure includes established green spaces which surround the built environment and connect the villages to the wider countryside. Streams, footpaths, gardens, trees, hedges, ponds are all equally important. Many of the hedges follow historic enclosure lines and provide a distinct local vernacular, as well as providing food for pollinators, birds and mammals. Wildlife uses these traditional features to move through the villages and connect with the surrounding open countryside, notably roe deer migrate between the Chilterns National Landscape and Adwell Cop. Areas of green space support a variety of species: wildflowers, including orchids, appear in abundance and the fields surrounding the built settlements are important for populations of farmland birds. A recent survey by the Chilterns Conservation Board recorded 59 different species of bird on Chilterns farmland and woodland. The National Nature Reserve hosts 30 species of butterfly as well as the rare Chiltern gentian. Many of the Parish's residents take pleasure from their day-to-day contact with wildlife and many visitors travel to the Parish to enjoy the varied opportunities for walking, cycling, bird watching etc.

The Parish contains the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, designated as a European Special Area of Conservation. A large portion of the Parish has been designated as an National Landscape and there are several Sites of Specific Scientific Interest. The Lewknor Brook, which flows from the heart of Lewknor village, is a chalk stream which is a globally endangered habitat and a biodiversity and aesthetic highlight. The nearby Chiltern Beechwoods are also designated as a Special Area of Conservation.

This plan recognises Lewknor Parish's biodiversity assets. It seeks to ensure that any new development sites are permeable to wildlife, leaving connecting green spaces where possible, creating spaces for nature and enabling species to move around. It is important when considering new developments that these connections are not compromised or habitats adversely affected. The Plan policies will:

- i. Protect existing assets, particularly trees, hedges and associated margins
- ii. Influence the location and type of green space secured through any new developments
- iii. Require developers to build biodiversity net gain into their developments, in particular, providing wildlife corridors and habitats for birds, mammals and pollinators including butterflies and moths

In support of biodiversity objectives, the Plan requires any new paths to be designed to perform as wildlife corridors as well as routes providing pedestrian access. The Plan requires contributions from developers to fund the maintenance of green infrastructure within new developments.

Policy EN1: Wildlife and Biodiversity

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should comply with the following biodiversity principles:

- i. Loss of mature trees, hedgerows or other form of wildlife corridor should be avoided, either as part of a landscape scheme and layout or as part of the construction works of a development scheme. Where the loss of a mature tree or hedgerow is unavoidable, the proposals should make provision on site for species appropriate to the site's growing conditions. Development proposals affecting trees and woodlands should, where appropriate, be supported by adequate tree survey information; tree constraints should be identified by a qualified arboricultural consultant, based on a Tree Survey completed in accordance with the current edition of British Standard 5837. Development proposals are encouraged to replace trees which are not being retained as a result of the development at a ratio of at least 2:1 or in an approved alternative location in accordance with a compensation scheme provided as a condition of planning permission
- ii. Where appropriate, incorporate landscape schemes which use species appropriate to the site's growing conditions
- iii. On-site biodiversity enhancements such as new roosting features for bats or nesting features for birds (including for use by swifts, swallows and house martins) should be incorporated into the fabric of the development
- iv. Fences, walls or hedges should be designed to incorporate features which allow safe dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and gardens
- v. Development proposals should be planned so as to avoid deterioration in the ecological status of the Parish's chalk streams
- vi. Development should retain or provide a buffer adjacent to the watercourse of natural or semi-natural habitat, free from built development and parking areas
- vii. Wherever possible, piped water courses shall be re-opened and existing open water courses retained
- viii. Any flood attenuation ponds and new areas of recreational green space required as part of any new development shall be designed to encourage nature conservation and biodiversity
- ix. Proposals for new development must include details of how the biodiversity and wildlife environment of the site would be enhanced
- x. Development on land within or adjacent to the Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the Parish, the areas of Ancient Woodland and the Special Area of Conservation, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it any of them (either individually or in combination with other developments), will not be supported. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Note: Biodiversity net gain should be assessed using a recognised assessment method, such as the DEFRA biodiversity offsetting metric

13.2. Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve

Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, and Site of Special Scientific Interest is one of the largest surviving complexes of beech woodland, mixed scrub, juniper and chalk grassland in the Chilterns. These habitats were once widespread in the Chilterns but are now largely fragmented by agricultural improvement, the cessation of traditional grazing systems and afforestation. The nature reserve falls wholly within the Parish and has an area of 159.1 hectares. Most of it is a 128.5 hectare biological Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is a European Special Area of Conservation.

Much of the site is on Upper Chalk, while the harder Middle Chalk has eroded to produce the steep slopes of Beacon Hill and Bald Hill. The hill tops are covered with a layer of Clay-with-Flints up to six metres in depth. The grasslands on the steep slopes are on shallow rendzina soils of the Icknield series whilst deeper fine calcareous silty soils of the Coombe series are present in the valley bottoms.

The woodland is dominated by beech, together with pedunculate oak, wild cherry, whitebeam, ash, hazel and holly, particularly on the deeper soils of the plateau. The ground flora includes sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum*, wood dog-violet *Viola riviniana*, yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. in the open areas. The woods also contain a number of uncommon plants characteristic of the Chilterns beechwoods including violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*, white helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium* and wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus*.

In the dry coombes there are stands of open scrub dominated by juniper *Juniperus communis*, intermixed with grassland. Ring counts indicate that the older bushes are between 80 and 90 years old. Mixed scrub of elder, privet, hawthorn, wayfaring tree, buckthorn, yew, whitebeam, dogwood and bramble are present on Beacon Hill and on the margins of the juniper scrub. The scrub also contains heavily rabbit-grazed areas with bare ground colonised by wild candytuft *Iberis amara*, a species with a British distribution centred on the Chilterns.

The management history and soil type have combined to produce a series of discrete grassland types, each of which is confined to calcareous soils and is of restricted national distribution. The tightly-grazed pastures on Beacon Hill have a combination of communities typical of both the western and south-eastern chalk downs. The more exposed and northern slopes, which have a sward characterised by the moss *Dicranum scoparium* and are maintained by rabbits and human trampling, have an impoverished flora which includes heath speedwell *Veronica officinalis*, hairy violet *Viola hirta* and common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*. Elsewhere on the plateau and the south-facing scarp sheep grazing maintains a more species-rich sward which includes clustered bell-flower *Campanula glomerata*, squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica* and stemless thistle *Cirsium acaule*.

The rough, more lightly grazed areas on deeper soils at the base of Beacon Hill and to the south of Bald Hill have communities dominated by upright brome *Bromus erectus*, typical of many calcareous soils in south and south-east England. At Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve these areas contain Chiltern gentian *Gentianella germanica*, a plant largely restricted to the Chilterns, and mat grass fescue *Vulpia unilateralis*, a species of very local distribution. There is a thick moss layer which includes *Camptothecium lutescens*, *Fissidens cristatus*, *Campylium chrysophyllum* and *Rhodobryum roseum*. Several species of orchid are found including butterfly *Platanthera chlorantha*, bee *Ophrys*

apifera, early purple *Orchis mascula*, common spotted *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, pyramidal *Anacamptis pyramidalis* and frog *Coeloglossum viride*.

The various grassland types and structures have associated invertebrate communities. Over 500 species of invertebrate have been recorded including several which have an extremely restricted distribution nationally. The short, heavily grazed grassland supports the nationally uncommon light feathered rustic *Agrotis cinera* and chalk carpet moths *Scotopteryx bipunctaria*, silver-spotted skipper butterfly *Hesperia comma* a species confined to only 55 colonies (most of them very small) on the chalk and limestone of southern England, the leaf beetle *Longitarsus obliteratus* and the rare bugs *Piesma quadratum* and *Taphropeltus hamulatus*. In the longer, less intensively grazed vegetation the dotted rustic moth *Rhyacia simulans*, marbled white butterfly *Melanargia galathea* and ground beetles *Amara nitida* and *A. equestris* occur. Other notable species include the beetles *Leiodes badia* and *Meligethes bidentatus* and the harvest spider *Homalenotus quadridentatus*.

The mixed scrub contains several nationally uncommon invertebrates, including the beetles *Brachysomus hirtus*, *Osphya bipunctata*, *Ptomophagus varicornis*, *Rhagonycha lutea*, *Badister sodalis* and the spider *Ceratinopsis stativa*. There is a specialised fauna restricted to the juniper scrub, including juniper shield bug *Cyphostethus tristriatus*, the bug *Dichrooscytus valesianus* and juniper pug moth *Eupithecia pusillata*. The woodland supports the nationally uncommon moths, white marked *Cerastis leucographa*, barred hook-tip *Drepana cultraria* and square spotted clay *Xestia rhomboidea*.

The site has 50 species of breeding bird recorded, including sparrowhawk, woodcock, tawny owl, great spotted and green woodpeckers, marsh and willow tits in the woodland and turtle dove, cuckoo, nightingale, garden warbler, whitethroat and lesser whitethroat in the scrubby areas. Overhead, reintroduced red kites are a familiar sight.

Any development should take account of the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan Chapter 7 (Land, Woodland and Nature), so as to maximise biodiversity, through land management approaches for example grazing regimes, restoring hedgerows, reinstating ponds, reverting arable land to chalk grassland, and joining up islands of ancient woodland or chalk grassland.

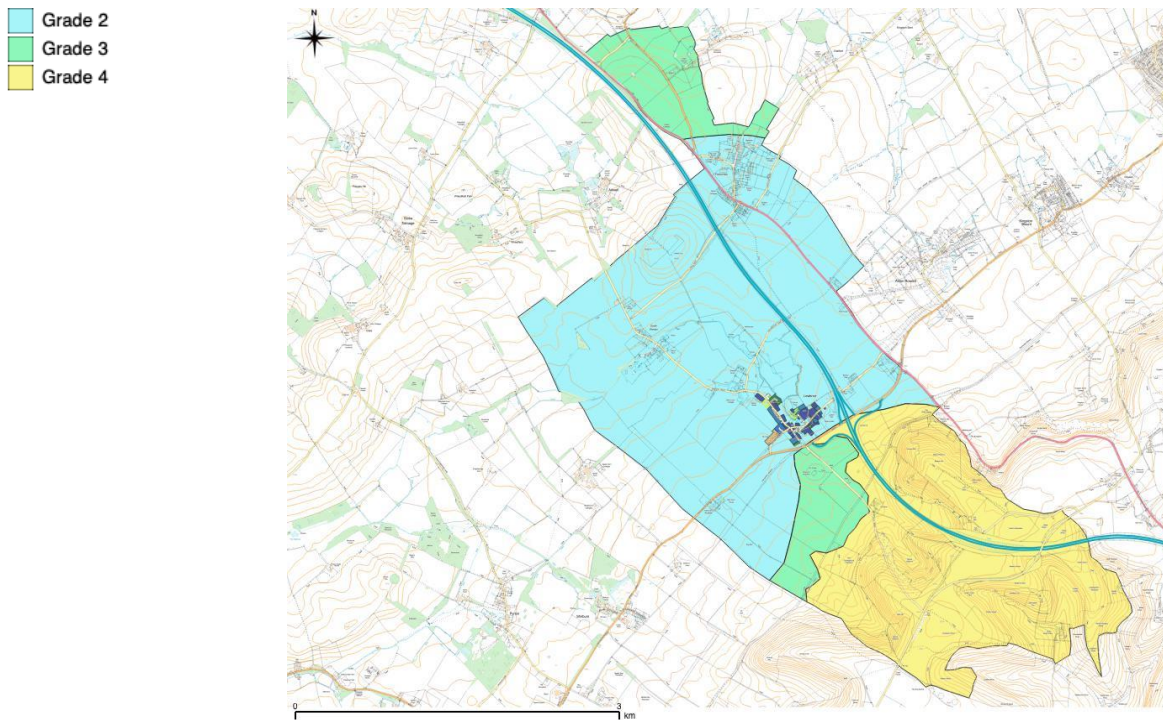
Any development should aim to reduce trip generations reliant on the M40 and/or other routes close to the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve.

Policy EN2: Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve

Development proposals at the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve should conserve and where practicable enhance its status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest/Special Area of Conservation. In addition, any development proposals within the Reserve should result in a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% through the incorporation of measures including land management approaches such as grazing regimes, restoring hedgerows, reinstating ponds, reverting arable land to chalk grassland, and joining up islands of ancient woodland or chalk grassland.

13.3. High Grade Agricultural Land

Agricultural Land Classifications are published by Natural England. The majority of the land in the Parish is classified as Very Good (Grade 2) and lies to the north-west of the B4009 which roughly bisects the parish. A small proportion of the other land is classified as Good to Moderate (Grade 3) with the remainder being Poor Quality (Grade 4) and located almost entirely within the Chilterns National Landscape (Map 11 below).



Map 11 - Lewknor Parish Agricultural Land

National policy (NPPF 180) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils. It also requires local planning authorities to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services - including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. The Local Plan (Policy DES8) also states that any new development is required to make provision for the effective use and protection of natural resources where applicable, including: *inter alia* avoiding the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, unless it is demonstrated to be the most sustainable choice from reasonable alternatives, by first using areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

The policy below is there to safeguard the best and most versatile agricultural land in the Parish. This approach has regard to both National Planning Policy (NPPF 180) and the Local Plan policy DES8. Its effect will be to safeguard an important and non-renewable land resource and to assist in agricultural related employment opportunities.

Policy EN3: High Grade Agricultural Land

Proposals for development on land outside the built-up part of the Plan area in the areas shown as Excellent and Very Good Agricultural Land will not be supported, unless the development is necessary and suitable for that specific countryside location.

14. Facilities and Infrastructure

14.1. Local Green Spaces

National Organisations have recognised the importance of green spaces as contributing to the quality of place as part of the mosaic of buildings, infrastructure and general public environs. Quality of place is important in making a place attractive to live, work and spend leisure time.

Para 105 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides that “The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them.”

Para 1051 also includes the caveat that “Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.”

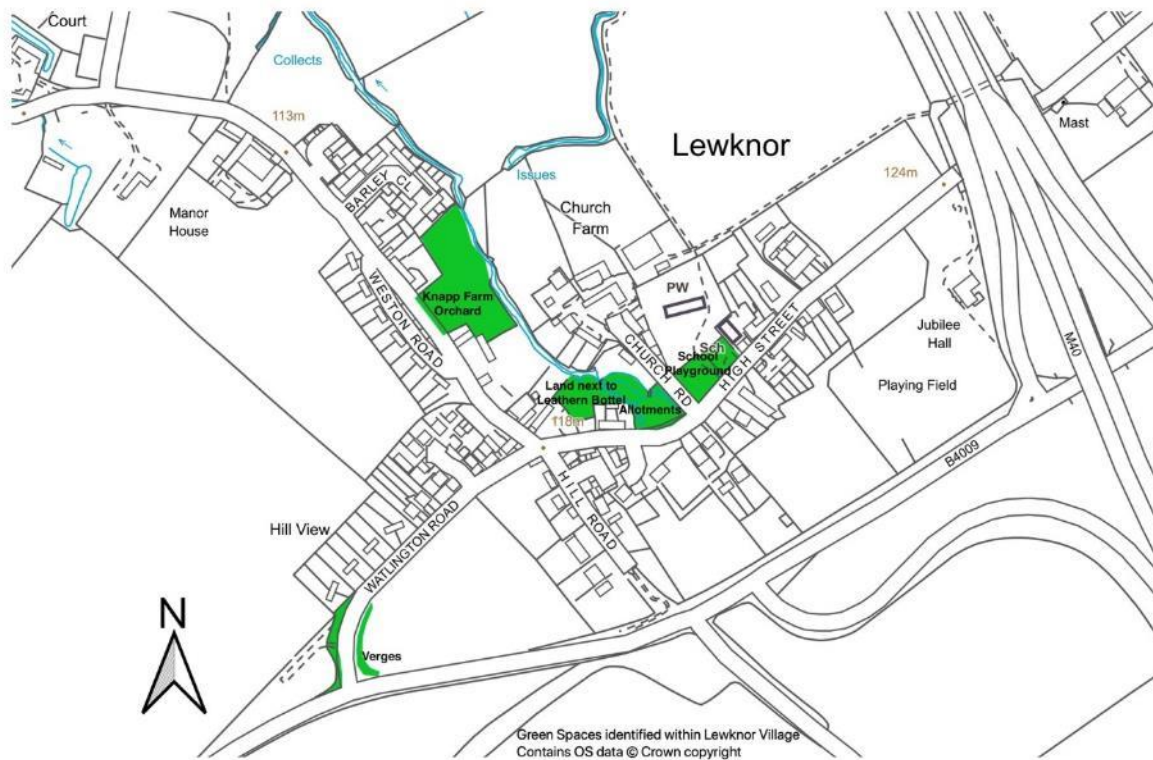
Para 106 offers the guidance that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- i. in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves
- ii. 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
- iii. local in character and is not an extensive tract of land

Para 107 states that Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.

While many properties in Lewknor parish have views of open countryside, there is still scope for the network of green spaces within the settlement areas to extend the countryside feel into the heart of the settlement areas enhancing the rural, tranquil feel of the Parish for residents and visitors. Those green spaces which play an integral part of the community’s enjoyment of the Parish include informal open space, allotments, private gardens, playing fields, the school playground, children’s play areas and footpaths. Some of the green spaces have a biodiversity value providing habitat for protected species.

The neighbourhood plan proposes the recognition of six important green spaces listed in Appendix 2, which are in and around the edge of the settlement areas, are protected from development by their designation as Local Green Spaces in accordance with paragraphs 105 to 107 of the National Planning Policy Framework.



Map 12 – Designated Local Green Spaces

Policy FI1: Local Green Spaces

New development will not be supported, except in very special circumstances, on the following designated Local Green Spaces (as shown on Map 12):

- i. Knapp Farm Orchard
- ii. School Playground
- iii. Allotments and former watercress beds
- iv. Land between Leathern Bottle and the watercress beds
- v. Verges at entrance to Lewknor village

These are detailed in Appendix 2

14.2. Community Facilities

Within the Parish, three community buildings exist, namely St Margaret’s church in Lewknor, St Lawrence’s church in South Weston and the Jubilee Hall in Lewknor. There is a primary school in Lewknor, although the layout of the school does not lend itself to community use. The Jubilee Hall and surrounding recreation area currently provide for a reasonable number of community activities and meetings whilst the proposed ‘Lewknor Community Spaces’ project based on an extensive refurbishment of St Margaret’s will enhance community use of the church. A pamphlet detailing the proposals was circulated to parishioners by Lewknor Community Spaces Group in the summer of 2019. The project has been approved by the Oxford Diocese and work on the next stage of the process is being undertaken.

From the Consultations conducted in 2018, it was clear that residents feel that community facilities are important to maintaining and improving the quality of life in the Parish.

The following data has been extracted from the first, wide ranging Consultation conducted in January and February 2018:

Issue	Very Important and Important (% of those that expressed an opinion)
Place to meet for social purposes	96
Thriving Primary School	96
Feeling Part of the Community	96
Places in Parish for Sport and Fitness	91
Having a Village Hall	92
Church in Regular Use	90
Good Pre & Primary School Education	89

Source: Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan Consultation 1

Policy FI2: Community Facilities
i. Proposals which include development of new or the extension of existing community facilities including the support of community learning and wellbeing will be supported
ii. Support will be given to proposals to improve ease of access for all residents to community facilities
iii. Support will be given to schemes which conserve existing community buildings in order to maintain, extend or develop new community facilities and services

14.3. Sustainable Movement

Within the Parish there is a local green infrastructure of paths and tracks, including some which are parts of nationally recognised trails. In Consultation 1, 98% of respondents who expressed a view said that the local network of paths was important. Evidently, they considered them a useful natural asset encouraging exercise and recreation with the added bonus of enjoyable countryside views and the opportunity to observe flora and fauna, some unique to the Chiltern Hills. Many people visit the area to walk the major paths, contributing to the local economy. Additional stretches of footpath could be added to link existing footpaths creating more circular routes. This, along with improved signposting, could increase utilisation. A footpath could be created to provide safe walking routes from the outskirts of Lewknor to the primary school. Some of these local opportunities are shown in the table below.

Place	Description	Improvement required
Track bed of former railway line to Watlington starting from junction of Hill Road and B4009	Create a new right of way along the disused railway line towards Watlington	Provision of a safe route between the communities of Lewknor, Pyrton and Watlington

Burial Path from Postcombe to St Margaret's, Lewknor	Footpath linking Lewknor and Postcombe	Better signage and identification would encourage greater usage of this historically significant path
Create a new path from Barley Close to St Margaret's Churchyard	No existing Path	Create a safe alternative to using narrow, busy Weston Road, particularly for those heading to and from the school with young children
Hill Road from the B4009 toward the Hills and Cowlease Woods	Signposts and Information Board required	Hill Road links the bus stops and the village to the Ridgeway and the Chilterns National Landscape. At the point Hill Road leaves the B4009, there are poorly sited signs to guide people without local knowledge
Track by Moorcourt Barns (TVR Garage)	Part of Lower Icknield Way which has disappeared and does not show on recent OS maps	Reinstate the sections of footpath needed to link this track through to the route within the Shirburn and Pyrton Parishes

This policy aims to prevent development from undermining the established and popular network of rural footpaths and bridleways and maintain the potential for increased use. Their functionality and character should be maintained so that they do not become alleys between new developments. In particular, the network of paths and bridleways which pass through open countryside should retain their rural character and preserve the ability to enjoy the countryside views.

Policy FI3: Sustainable Movement	
i.	Proposals for development adjoining a public footpath or bridleway should maintain their rural character
ii.	Proposals which improve disabled access to the villages including the provision of dropped kerbs in existing kerbs where needed will be supported
iii.	Support will be given to proposals which deliver good pedestrian and cycle connections by creating new, improved or extended footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths
iv.	Proposals which provide safe pedestrian routes to the village school and pre-school avoiding areas of the villages where no pavement exists will be supported

14.4. Green Energy

It is recognised that the use of renewable energy is a key to future sustainable development. Proposals for new renewable energy structures requiring planning permission will, however, be required to demonstrate that they do not have a harmful impact on the surrounding landscapes, and do not use the highest grades of agricultural land.

Extract from National Planning Policy Framework Section 2 - Sustainable Development:

“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet

their own needs⁴. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection⁵.

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

As stated in section 14.5 below there are limitations as to what can be achieved to improve or add to available utilities. The design principles highlighted in section 12.3 promote energy saving. The adoption of green energy solutions could provide alternative solutions to providing power.

Energy saving is encouraged, and energy generation is welcomed when sited in visually unobtrusive locations. Renewable energy technologies are developing constantly and becoming smaller and more efficient. Large-scale installations, however, have the potential to cause harmful impact on the rural scene. Any applications for installations made, will need to demonstrate that their impact does not detract from the rural character of the Parish.

Policy FI4: Green Energy

Proposals for individual and community scale renewable energy schemes will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- i. the siting and scale of the proposed development does not detract from the setting and its position in the wider landscape
- ii. the proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of local residents
- iii. the proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural and biodiversity importance
- iv. Siting of green energy sites will not have an unacceptable impact to the views detailed in Policy CH4 “Protection of Views”

14.5. Utilities

There are limitations as to what can be achieved to improve or add to available utilities, such as mains gas, caused by the distance from existing connections which would result in excessive per property connection charges. Provisions should be made, however, to minimise the future impact of providing and maintaining utilities, and ensure that there is no deterioration of services to existing consumers as, for example, the Lewknor waste treatment plant is understood to be near capacity. Pump failures are already a regular problem, leading to the discharge of untreated sewage into Nethercote Lane and, from there, into the waterways.

i. Water and Flooding

In general, Lewknor Parish does not suffer from widespread or serious flooding although there are some specific areas which can suffer from surface water flooding in periods of high rainfall. Areas close to streams and where springs emerge are prone to local flooding, but this does not constitute a significant area. To the west of South Weston there is small area that is marked as Flood Zone 3 but the rest of the Parish has no indicated flood zones¹⁴.

Lewknor Village sits on the spring line at the foot of the Chiltern Hills and the water table is therefore very close to the surface which results in regular flooding of village cellars. Indeed, the church vault had to be sealed off as historic flooding resulted in interred remains floating around. Springs within the village give rise to pristine chalk streams which run north-westerly from their source before running westward. The former watercress beds, in the village centre are a good indication of the purity of the water.

The village of Postcombe currently suffers from surface water flooding to Box Tree Lane and Lower Road during periods of high rainfall due to the absence of any suitable drains.

Given the nature of the watercourses and the wildlife they support any development should take care not to upset the balance of such streams through the discharge of surface water drainage from any future development¹⁵.

It is important that, in order to mitigate flood risk in a sustainable manner, any development complies with the Local Plan policy EP4. Proposals which result in the run off of surface water into the stream network of the village shall ensure the water flows through an appropriate sustainable drainage system. Actions to mitigate flood risk should not damage the natural environment in the process of ensuring that waterways have sufficient capacity.

To protect the biodiversity of the streamside areas it is important that development proposals should not result in the runoff of surface water directly, or via combined sewers, into sensitive waterbodies e.g. water bodies with local, national or international habitat designations. This view is supported by the Local Plan policy EP4, which suggests that developments are restricted within close proximity to waterways. There are indicators as to what constitutes good status for bodies of water:

¹⁴ <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk>

¹⁵ The SuDS Manual, 2016. Woods Ballard, B, Wilson, Udale-Clarke, H, Illman, S, Scott, T, Ashley, R, Kellagher

Good status for surface water bodies depends on biological quality (such as fish), physico-chemical conditions (for example oxygen or ammonia) and hydromorphological conditions (physical characteristics, such as size, shape and structure of a channel, and hydrology - the flow and quantity of water). Good status for groundwater bodies takes account of quantity and chemical status.

ii. **Communications**

Of respondents to Consultation 1 who expressed an opinion 98% said that mobile phone network coverage was important and 95% said that fast broadband was important.

Policy FI5: Utilities

i. **Water supply**

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate that:

- the sewer network can accommodate the additional demand for sewage disposal either in its existing form or through planned improvements to the system in advance of the construction of the development; and
- they will not increase risk from fluvial flooding or any other source of flooding, including surface water flooding
- developers have considered the net increase in water and waste water demand to serve their developments and also any impact the development may have off site further down the network, to avoid no/low water pressure and internal/external sewage flooding of property

ii. **Communications, Broadband & IT services**

Support will be given to development proposals which enhance access to the current and future generation of landline, mobile and broadband networks, where they respond positively to the character of the immediate locality of the site, the key views identified in Policy CH3 of this Plan, and to the biodiversity of the site and its immediate surroundings.

14.6. Employment, Economic and Commercial Development

This rural parish has naturally evolved towards residential properties and so, today, employment is typically to be found outside the Parish. Within the Parish there are a number of service-based enterprises, e.g. pubs, small offices, a filling station, garages (offering both sales and repairs) and a soft furnishings store, a few of which are regularly utilised by the community. In line with a national trend, many residents work from home.

When surveyed in Consultation 1 respondents were roughly split half and half as to whether employment opportunities in the parish or attracting new businesses were important.

The scale of premises envisaged as being in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood plan area include:

- i. Conversion of barns or other existing buildings into offices and/or small workshops, or other small sized units
- ii. New buildings should not be more than two storeys in height and on a similar scale to (i)

Larger scale purpose-built premises such as business centres i.e. a place where businesses can rent rooms as offices, meeting rooms or event locations, and which comprise 5 or more units, would be out of scale for the neighbourhood plan area. Any development whose operations would bring additional heavy goods traffic to the village roads would not be supported.

Development proposals should be designed in a way which would not result in an adverse impact on the villages' character and natural environment.

Proposals for community-based uses will also be expected to set out the value of the proposed new use to the wider community.

The Parish contains part of the Chilterns National Landscape and the Ridgeway long distance path. It has been used as a location for TV and film productions including the Midsomer Murders and Endeavour TV series. Proposals to appropriately and sensitively extend the tourism opportunities in the Parish will be supported. Where appropriate proposals should show how they meet the requirements of the other policies on transport and parking.

Policy FI6: Employment, Economic and Commercial Development

- i. Development proposals for employment, economic and commercial development will be supported subject to the following criteria:
 - where they are compatible with the character of the Parish would be particularly encouraged
 - they reflect the character and appearance of the immediate locality in terms of its height, scale, design and density
 - they protect the amenities of neighbouring properties, for example residents' quiet enjoyment of their properties
 - do not have an unacceptable residual cumulative impact on the road network or give rise to unacceptable effects on the environmental quality of the rural areas and villages within the neighbourhood area and should identify the way in which they would be satisfactorily accommodated within the local highways network
 - they provide adequate parking, servicing and access arrangements in accordance with the most recently published standards of Oxfordshire County Council
- ii. Proposals which consolidate the area's tourism industry and conservation led initiatives will be supported provided they:
 - respond positively to their immediate locality
 - are located, and designed to respect the character of the local landscape and
 - respond positively to the scenic beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape and its setting and the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas

15. Housing

Where a need for development is identified and complies with Neighbourhood Plan policies, such development should adopt a sustainable approach which is in keeping and character with the surrounding built environment and the adjacent open rural landscape.

The Local Plan does not require new houses to be built in the smaller or other villages in South Oxfordshire. Neighbourhood Plans can, however, allocate potential sites for small scale or shared ownership schemes if a local need has been identified. In the Parish surveys carried out in 2018 there were 9 residents who stated that they would like to move house within the Parish in the next five years, and 15 more who might wish to do so. It is anticipated that this need will be fulfilled by existing residents moving away and by new housing developments already in progress (39 houses were sold in the Parish in the three years 2020 to 2022). Lewknor parish has already increased the supply of new houses since 2011 by more than the 5-10% that the Local Plan considers would be commensurate with the scale of a smaller village, if a Parish Council wished to make housing allocations which Lewknor Parish Council does not wish to do. Furthermore, since the Parish surveys were completed, 19 more new houses have been given planning permission and have been built or are in the process of being constructed (March 2020). Some residents have built extensions to their houses in order to deal with their changing needs without necessitating a house move. We consider that these recent developments have met our identified need and therefore we are not making an allocation. It is, therefore, not intended to select sites for development within this Neighbourhood Plan.

The expectation is that there will be organic growth as a result of development on suitable infill or other sites within the villages' boundaries. Infill development would, by definition, comprise development within the villages of Lewknor and Postcombe.

15.1. Housing Mix

The current housing stock, as shown in the character assessments (Appendix 1) is mixed in size. The Parish surveys undertaken in 2018 point to a predominant need for more two or three bedroom houses, with a lesser need for houses or flats with 4 or more bedrooms, which mirrors the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Although a small number of respondents wished to move to a larger house within the Parish, this need can be met either from the new housing which is already being built, or from houses being vacated by those in the surveys who expressed a wish to move away from the Parish.

Thus, this Neighbourhood Plan encourages the building of more two and three bedroom houses and discourages new four or more bedroom houses. In common with many other villages in Oxfordshire, there is a desire to make houses less expensive, particularly for younger people. Although the pricing of houses is market led and therefore beyond our control, we would encourage measures which seek to limit the price of houses, whilst also achieving good standards of design and materials. This approach reflects the details of Policy H11 of the adopted Local Plan.

Of the respondents who expressed a preference in the 2018 Consultation 2, 74% felt the developments of greater than five to nine houses were unacceptable. They also wish to promote a mix of house types in any new development - detached, semi-detached and terraced.

i. Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing is defined in the National Policy Framework as ‘housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market’ (NPPF, September 2023, p. 67). Social or affordable rent, shared ownership, starter homes, and discounted market sales housing are all types of affordable housing (ibid. p. 67).

The National Planning Policy Framework defines Rural Exception Sites as ‘small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority’s discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding. p. 74’

ii. Development of existing dwellings

Much of the existing housing stock of the Parish has been converted or extended over the years. Development policies continue to permit, where appropriate, the sub-division or conversion of dwellings to multi-occupancy, and replacement or extension of dwellings. Many proposals for the extension of dwellings are likely to be Permitted Development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended, and therefore unlikely to need planning permission. Consultation 2 strongly supported that development should not detract from the rural character of the Parish and should not significantly differ in scale and size from the surrounding buildings. This is in line with the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan.

iii. Safe Access to and from any new developments

This plan supports connectivity to the centre of the villages for new and existing developments, which includes safe walking routes, where practicable and in keeping with the local context/street scene.

There are a number of locations in the Parish where the provision of safe access to a particular site would be problematical, due to narrow lanes and limited sight lines, or proximity to public buildings, e.g. Lewknor Church of England Primary school. Local Plan policies require that all types of development provide for a safe and convenient access for all users of the highway network.

The Consultation 2 results show modest support for self-build projects, defined by the National Planning Policy Framework as housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual.

16. Transport and Highways

16.1. Parking and Sustainable Transport

As part of the Consultation process, many respondents raised concerns regarding the parking problems in and around the Parish. These relate to the parking associated with the long-distance coach services which stop near Junction 6 of the M40 and the potential for the parking to spill into Lewknor village itself. Parking alongside the B4009 is tolerated, as many in the Parish value the long-distance bus and coach services to London, Heathrow, Gatwick and Oxford. Respondents are, however, almost unanimous in opposing any additional parking which would directly impact the settlement areas. Discussions with parishioners at public events revealed hostility towards the idea of land being used to provide additional parking areas for the bus services. There is also concern about the impact of measures that Oxfordshire County Council Highways Department may impose to improve safety and security of cars parking on the B4009.

Equally, the respondents clearly stated that they do not want the ambience of Lewknor village centre spoilt with visible parking restrictions such as resident parking zones, yellow lines or signs which would not be appropriate to the rural character of the area or heritage conservation areas.

Parking in Lewknor High Street at school start and finish times is a further concern despite the school introducing a voluntary code encouraging parents to park further away and walk the remaining distance.

The situation could be eased by giving further encouragement to the increased use of alternative sustainable transport solutions, which could include use of the new footpaths and cycleways proposed in section 14.3. Any developments which may lead to a significant increase in pupil numbers at either the school or pre-school from outside Lewknor village should be accompanied by a Transport Plan which seeks to maximise the use of sustainable modes of transport, thereby minimizing the traffic passing along or parking on the High Street. These matters are addressed in Policy TH1. Development proposals which would lead to a significant increase in traffic should be accompanied by a travel plan.

Policy TH1: Sustainable Transport

Development proposals should seek to maximise the use of sustainable modes of transport and minimise the additional traffic within the neighbourhood area. Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on the capacity and/or the safety of the local highways network will not be supported.

16.2. Vehicle Traffic

Within the Parish there is a mix of road types from wide nationally classified roads to single track; some following historic routes, others created to link properties and settlement areas. The majority of Parish roads are rural in nature, many lacking pavements and kerbs and bordered by hedges denoting field boundaries rather than the end of peoples' gardens. The view of many parishioners that they want the rural nature of the parish conserved extends into their thinking on traffic,

transport and highways. Notes taken during public consultation events indicate a number of concerns and ideas for improvements: reduced motorway noise and pollution; reduced or slower traffic in the villages; inclusion of village roads in the gritting and snow clearance routings; safer exits from the village roads onto main roads; safe crossing points on the A40 at Postcombe without street lighting; whilst traffic control measures such as yellow lines, resident parking signs and raised humps are not felt to be in character with the rural nature of the Parish.

It is a concern that future developments would add further traffic on local roads.

For example, the Watlington Edge Road will result in increased development and therefore increase traffic on the B4009 and the likelihood of increased traffic from other nearby villages to access the M40.

If the proposed development of 3,500 homes on Chalgrove Airfield goes ahead, placing an even higher number of additional vehicles in the area, it is likely that those intending to head in a southerly direction on the M40 would drive towards Junction 6, either via Watlington on the B4009 or through the rural lanes.

The Plan is supportive of Highways Department proposals to mitigate the impact of increasing traffic, including improvements to the junctions linking village and rural roads to nationally classified A and B roads without resorting to measures which are out of character with the rural nature of the Parish.

The rural roads currently have sufficient capacity for the volume of local traffic, however, whenever the traffic flow is diverted from the M40, the local roads are demonstrably overloaded. Recent developments outside the Parish in Thame and Chinnor have already increased traffic on the B4009 and A40. Future developments in the area around Lewknor would increase the traffic on local roads and parking pressure on the B4009.

Policy TH2: Vehicle Traffic
As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should mitigate the impact of vehicular traffic by incorporating land for natural screening including tree planting and hedgerows, and designing their layouts to reduce the impact of noise from the M40 motorway and other main roads.

17. The Balanced Community

17.1. Community Facilities

Community Facilities are an important element of the balanced community and have been considered in Section 14.2.

17.2. Open Spaces, Roads and Transport, Wildlife and Water Courses

Open and Green spaces are important to the community and are addressed in Section 14.1 with detail in Appendix 2. Sustainable Movement is highlighted in Section 14.3. Roads and transport have been considered at length in Section 16.2. Wildlife habitats including watercourses have been addressed in Section 13.1. Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve is addressed in Section 13.2.

17.3. Health and Well-being

A balanced community makes provision for healthy living and supports the wellbeing of its residents. Many of the steps that can be taken lie outside the remit of the planning system as such but the following measures within this Neighbourhood Plan support healthy living and the well-being of residents:

- i. Maintenance of the rural character of the Parish
- ii. Conservation of open spaces, local green spaces (including allotments), local footpaths, Chilterns National Landscape, the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve and the local environment
- iii. Sustaining and developing key community facilities, including the village hall, pubs, children's play area and seating areas to encourage social interaction

Community Facilities are an important element of the balanced community and have been considered in the Section 14.2 on Infrastructure.

The villages of this rural Parish are embedded in the agricultural landscape, and the area is largely peaceful and tranquil. It is important that agriculture continues to be a key feature so as to maintain a balanced community. Any new development should respect and take account of the ambience of this environment and not give rise to adverse levels of noise, traffic and odour. Any developments should not have an adverse effect on air and light pollution and the Plan supports South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan policy DES9 on the use of low-carbon and renewable energy sources.

There are a variety of leisure activities covering a range of interests held at the Lewknor village hall and recreation ground. There are allotments in the centre of Lewknor village. Residents and visitors have a choice of footpaths to walk both locally and further afield. The setting of the Chilterns National Landscape and Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve with its criss-crossing footpaths, together with the Ridgeway, provide for hiking, cycling and horse riding. A programme of activities is organised by Natural England within the Nature Reserve.

The Plan seeks to maintain, conserve and enhance the green space and green infrastructure for the multiple benefits this provides for people including recreation, health and well-being, access to nature and resilience to climate change.

It has been recommended by the Glover review, supported by the Chiltern Conservation Board, that the Chilterns National Landscape should become the newest National Park. New developments which broaden and extend the accessibility and use of sporting and leisure facilities by residents and visitors will be supported where they respect this potential status, retain the character and appearance of the Parish and respectfully preserve its natural environment.

18. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Priorities

The Community Infrastructure Levy came into force in April 2010. It allows local authorities in England and Wales to raise funds from developers which are undertaking new building projects in their area. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure which is needed as a result of development.

The charging authority sets out its levy rates expressed as pounds per square metre. These figures are applied to the gross internal floorspace of the development liable for the levy. South Oxfordshire District Council has set rates (from 3 January 2023) for residential development at £260 per square metre in Lewknor Parish, classed as Zone 3. The average 3 bedroom house is 110-120 square metres. These rates may change within the life time of this Plan. 25% of the Levy comes to the Parish Council if there is a Neighbourhood Plan in place; otherwise 15%, subject to a cap of £100 per existing council tax dwelling per year.

Local authorities are required to spend the levy's funds on the infrastructure needed to support the development of their area and they will decide what infrastructure is needed. The levy is intended to focus on the provision of new infrastructure. If it is necessary to support development the levy can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing existing infrastructure. The levy should not be used to remedy pre-existing deficiencies in infrastructure provision unless those deficiencies will be made more severe by development.

The Planning Act 2008 provides a definition of the infrastructure which can be funded by the levy, as "roads and other transport facilities, flood defences, schools and other educational facilities, medical facilities, sporting and recreational facilities, open spaces, and affordable housing". This definition allows the levy to be used to fund a very broad range of facilities such as play areas, parks and green spaces, cultural and sports facilities, district heating schemes and police stations and other community safety facilities. This gives local communities flexibility to choose what infrastructure they need to deliver their development plan.

The money available at any one time is impossible to predict. The levy raised on a single house development would be relatively small. However, developments of up to 9 houses may take place within the lifetime of this Plan. Thus, no hard and fast policy for the total investment of the levy can be decided in advance. Priorities will change over time. It is, therefore, appropriate that the Parish Council maintains a 'live' list of projects for consideration.

19. Implementation and Monitoring

Implementation

Implementation of the Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan will be ongoing. Responsibility for determining planning applications rests with the South Oxfordshire District Council (or any subsequent planning authority). However, when consulted on planning applications within the Parish, the Parish Council will use the Plan policies to assist in determining its response to applications.

Monitoring

Following its approval by a community referendum and adoption by South Oxfordshire District Council, the Plan will be reviewed annually by the Parish Council. The primary purpose of each review will be to assess the extent to which the Plan objectives have been implemented in practice, and the contribution of the policies and projects contained within it towards meeting the Plan objectives; and secondly, to identify any errors and omissions.

Five Year Review

Policies in a neighbourhood plan may become out of date, for example if they conflict with policies in a local plan which is adopted after the making of the Neighbourhood Plan. In such cases, the more recent plan policy takes precedence. In addition, where a policy has been in force for a period of time, other material considerations may be given greater weight in planning decisions as the evidence base for the plan policy becomes less robust. Therefore, as the situation demands, or at the latest no more than five years after adoption, the Plan will be formally reviewed, such review to be led by Lewknor Parish Council.

End of Plan Period Review

At least two years prior to the expiry of the Plan, a full review will be undertaken to gauge the success of the Plan in meeting its objectives and to put in place a succession plan.

Updating the Evidence Base

The evidence base is an important element of the neighbourhood planning process. Thus, as well as monitoring and reviewing the Plan itself as outlined above, the evidence base should also be included in the process.

20. Steering Group Members and Consultants

Steering Group Members

Peter Gardner (Chairman)
Duncan Boulton
Kayti Foster
Peter Freeman

Resident
Parish Councillor
Resident
Resident

Consultants

Community First Oxfordshire

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