

LITTLE WENLOCK PARISH PLAN 2003-2011

OUR FUTURE

Rather than merely responding to the plans of others for our parish as it develops within the Borough of Telford & Wrekin in the coming decade, we want to take the lead in guiding our own development.

We want to preserve what we believe to be really important and valuable about our parish and community.

We want to build on the things we feel are right and correct the things we think are wrong in our parish and community to make a better life for everyone - today and tomorrow.

This Plan is our community's expression of the way we want our parish to develop in the most sustainable way possible.

It provides a solid framework for our future development, allowing us to promote those things we want while resisting those we don't.

Making it happen, however, depends upon everyone playing their part, translating the Plan's guidelines into firm and sustained action towards our overall vision of

'The highest possible quality of life for all our residents within a thriving modern village community and a diverse, tranquil and sustainable rural environment.'

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The Little Wenlock Parish Plan (LWPP) is the local community's expression of how it wishes to see the parish develop within the framework of local planning policies and community strategies.

The Plan defines the state of the parish and its development in 2002; summarises existing land use and facilities; and highlights features of special architectural, historical, environmental and social value.

It sets out an agreed community vision for the future of the parish within the region, and establishes clear guidelines for the development of its housing and buildings, countryside and environment, and community and services within the Borough of Telford & Wrekin.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The Plan has three primary objectives:

- To establish an agreed community vision for the future of Little Wenlock and guidelines for the development of and developments in the parish.
- To provide a formal structure within which Little Wenlock Parish Council can consider all planning applications and initiatives within the parish on behalf of its communities.
- To identify local needs within the parish as the basis for the Parish Council and community groups to attract support from the Borough and external funding bodies for the improvement of facilities and services.

1.3 CONTEXT

The Plan has been produced against the background of a range of regional and local plans and community strategies to ensure it is as well integrated as possible with the planned development of Telford & Wrekin.

Of most direct relevance are the policies of the Wrekin Local Plan 1995-2006 and, in particular, those concerning the Rural Areas of the District.

Other key plans and strategies with which the LWPP has been designed to integrate include:

1. The Shropshire Structure Plan 1989-2006;
2. The Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Joint Structure Plan 2006-2011;
3. The Shropshire Minerals Local Plan 1996-2006;
4. The Telford & Wrekin Community Strategy 2002;
5. The Telford & Wrekin Community Safety Strategy 2002-2007; and,
6. The Local Transport Plan 2001-2006.

Running through to 2011, the LWPP is further intended to link-in with the developing Telford & Wrekin Local Development Framework 2006 - 2011 which will replace the current Local Plan.

1.4 STRUCTURE

The Plan is divided into five main sections:

- **The Parish Today**, setting out its history, situation and setting; and identifying its present communities, land use, facilities, and features of special value.
- **Parish Development**, summarising the local context and the challenges this poses; setting out the priorities identified through community consultations; and defining the parish's overall vision and key development principles.
- **Housing & Building**, detailing local housing priorities; and establishing guidelines governing new housing, conversions and extensions, non-residential developments, energy conservation and other aspects of the built-environment within the main settlements.

- **Countryside & Environment**, detailing local land use priorities; and establishing guidelines governing farming, woodland, mineral, waste and other developments in the open land between the main settlements, together with public access, wildlife conservation, habitat protection and other important aspects of the rural environment.
- **Community & Services**, detailing local community facility and service priorities; and establishing guidelines to define and support appropriate developments, together with local initiatives such as recycling, crime prevention and community care.

1.5 PRODUCTION

The Plan has been prepared by Little Wenlock Parish Council through an extensive consultation process.

This has included a detailed residents' survey and meetings with representative groups of the main sections of the population and important community groups.

A draft document was presented to the community at a major consultation event after which copies were made available to all residents on request and their feedback incorporated into the final Plan. Copies were also distributed for comment to other interested parties (including Telford & Wrekin Council, businesses in the parish, the local MP and adjacent parish councils) before being formally adopted by Little Wenlock Parish Council on March 10, 2003.

Action plans will be produced by the Parish Council each year as the basis for initiatives arising out of the plan's guidelines to be developed and implemented by the entire community.

It is intended that the Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis and completely up-dated on a 10-year cycle.

2. THE PARISH TODAY

2.1 SITUATION

Little Wenlock is a rural parish stretching from the western fringe of the Telford conurbation to the Wrekin hill and the northern rim of Ironbridge Gorge (Map 1).

It is bounded to the north by the M54 motorway and the parishes of Wrockwardine and Wellington. It shares responsibility for the Wrekin to the west with the parish of Eaton Constantine. To the south lie the Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale parishes of the Gorge and Buildwas, and to the east the more suburban parishes of Lawley & Overdale and Dawley Hamlets.

The present parish includes sections of the previous Wellington Urban and Wellington Rural parishes, incorporated as part of the 1974 local government boundary revisions.

The population of some 550 is concentrated into two main settlements – the villages of Little Wenlock and New Works – with small groups of houses at Huntington, Coalmoor, Arleston Hill, Little Worth, the Steeraway, Willowmoor, Spout Lane and the Moors.

2.2 HISTORY

The Bronze Age burial mounds at Willowmoor and Iron Age hill fort on the Wrekin are the earliest evidence of human activity in the parish.

Little Wenlock derives its name from the fact that the settlement was originally an outlying estate of the religious foundation at Much Wenlock (perhaps from the Celtic 'gwyn-loch' meaning white place or monastery).

In the Domesday Book (1086) Little Wenlock is described as a manor with three hides (around 500 acres) of arable land and woods for fattening pigs and hunting. It bordered the Royal Forest of the Wrekin, one boundary of which may still be preserved in the line of New Works Lane.

The parish of Little Wenlock was included in the new Borough of Wenlock, incorporated in 1468. By the beginning of the 16th Century there were 16 tenements and a mill in the main settlement with a further four tenements at Huntington.

The manor of Little Wenlock developed more fully after the dissolution of the monasteries. Following the closure of Wenlock Priory in 1540, Little Wenlock was acquired by the Hayward family. In the 17th Century it was taken over by the Foresters of Watling Street (Wellington), descendants of Hugh le Forester, the local 12th Century protector of the Royal Forest.

Although the coal outcrops of the district are known to have been utilised by the Romans and lime-burning was recorded locally as early as the 13th Century, the mineral wealth of the parish was only really exploited from the 17th Century. Ironstone and coal-working were in existence in the 1680s; coal from local pits fuelled the Darby furnaces at Coalbrookdale in the 18th Century; three limeworks operated in the parish into the 19th Century; one of the earliest railways in the country ran from Little Wenlock to Stretthill in 1728; and basalt was quarried along the Lydebrook as recently as the last Century.

Opencast mining of coal and fireclay developed on a large scale during and after the Second World War. Pits at the Shortwood, New Works finally closed in 1970, by which time a new phase of opencasting had started, drawing to a close only from the mid-1990s.

2.3 LANDSCAPE & COUNTRYSIDE

Although it has seen considerable industrial activity in the past, little of this is immediately evident in the peaceful countryside of the parish, which combines mixed farmland with a relatively high proportion of diverse, species-rich woodland.

Including, as it does, the bulk of the Wrekin itself as well as the Ercall in the north and west, and the slopes of Ironbridge Gorge above Buildwas to the south, more than a third of the land area of the parish is wooded. Much of this woodland has particular value as a prime example of post-industrial natural regeneration. Indeed, large tracts of it are classed as ancient semi-natural woodland of a notably high conservation status.

The importance of this landscape is underlined by the inclusion of the entire north western quarter of the parish in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The thin finger of land that the AONB is in this part of the county and its close proximity to the urban area of Telford makes it especially vulnerable and valuable. The entire parish is included within the AONB Advisory Plan Area.

The value of much of the wooded area in the north and south of the parish, as well as isolated woods with fields, brooks and quarries throughout, is made greater by the fact that large areas of the original post-industrial landscape have been completely lost through widespread opencast coal mining in the past 50 years.

In addition to the AONB and ancient woodlands, the parish contains a number of recognised areas of special conservation and historical importance, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Wildlife Sites, Nature Reserves and Ancient Monuments. These are described in more detail in Section 2:10 with their locations shown in Maps 2-6.

The mixed nature of the farmland, interspersed by woodland and a large number of thick hedgerows and green lanes, not to mention several areas of open water and brooks, creates an excellent habitat for animals and birds. All the more so for the quietness and relative inaccessibility of some of the more valuable areas of land.

Several recent open cast mining sites have been very poorly reclaimed, reducing the land's potential contribution to the flora and fauna of the parish.

2.4 ROADS & RIGHTS OF WAY

No trunk routes or A roads pass through the parish, which is almost exclusively served by narrow country lanes with sharp bends, steep hills and limited visibility.

The parish contains one of the highest numbers of public rights of way in the Telford & Wrekin area - a total of 74 separate paths, of which seven are Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPs) and four are bridleways.

In addition to two long-distance footpaths - the Shropshire Way and Hutchison Way - the Much Wenlock loop of the National By-way heritage cycle route also passes through the parish.

The main current rights of way are detailed in Map 7.

2.5 SETTLEMENTS

Over the centuries, the settlements of the parish have changed considerably, reflecting changes in local industry and employment.

A church built to serve the original settlement of Little Wenlock was probably in existence by the late 12th Century; the list of incumbents goes back to 1260. The original chancel and north aisle of the present building are obviously medieval in origin. The church was enlarged in 1822 and 1875/76 to accommodate a substantial increase in the population.

The oldest surviving domestic building in Little Wenlock village (Rose Cottage) dates from the late 15th Century. A fine group of buildings (including the Old Hall, Stone House and Manor House) reflect the development of the late 16th and early 17th Centuries. Home Farm, the original workhouse (Little Worth), the school (Church Lane) and the parish rooms (Wenboro Cottage) date from the 18th and 19th Century agricultural and mineral exploitation of the parish. In the early 19th Century there were a total of five public houses in the village alone.

An area of Huntington Heath was already known as New Works by the early 18th Century, with the present settlement developing from a group of squatters cottages associated with the local mineral workings.

Individual farmhouses across the parish (Upper and Lower Huntington Farms, Upper and Lower Coalmoor Farms, Steeraway Farm, Willowmoor Farm, Wrekin Farm, Gibbons Farm, Spout Lane Farm, Moors Farm and Leasowes Farm) mainly date from the 17th and 18th Centuries. As recently as the 1950s the parish supported 24 working farms .

The majority of houses in Little Wenlock village are of 20th Century construction, as are those in most of the rest of the parish.

There are currently a total of 221 houses in the parish - 135 in Little Wenlock, 54 in New Works and 32 in the outlying settlements. Of these over 80% are detached, and under 20% semi-detached or terraced.

The majority of the houses are relatively large, with half having four or more bedrooms, a third three bedrooms and only around 10% two bedrooms or less.

Not surprisingly, given the location and relative size of properties, more than 60% of them are Council Tax rated Band D or above. This compares with around 20% in the Borough as a whole.

The balance between owned and rented properties is approximately 90:10, with the overwhelming majority of houses having central heating and mains drainage.

While mains gas supplies are available in New Works, the lack of gas means most central heating in Little Wenlock is oil-fired, although a number of properties have electric heating systems or LPG.

Apart from six working farms and a further agricultural holding converted to a contracting business there are less than 10 business premises in the parish.

2.6 POPULATION

Of the 550 people living in the parish (estimated from the 1998 Population survey) 66% are of working age, 18% are under 15 years of age and 16% are pensioners.

The children are almost equally divided between the 0-4, 5-9 and 10-14 age groups; the working age population is skewed in favour of the over 40s; and there are more pensioners in the 60-70 age group than in the over 70s (Figure 1).

The proportion of males to females in each age group is very similar. While the proportion of working age people is identical to that of Telford & Wrekin as a whole, the parish contains a relatively higher proportion of pensioners and lower proportion of children under 15 than the Borough.

The average household size is 2.72, with around a third of households having three or more people, more than half two people and approximately one in 10 just a single person.

2.7 EMPLOYMENT

Employment opportunities within the parish are limited to the working farms, the agricultural and industrial contractor, several small building and haulage businesses, two golf courses, several B&Bs, a pub/restaurant and a landfill site.

Reflecting both the lack of employers in the parish itself and the proximity of Telford and Wolverhampton, the majority of employed people work in or beyond the Telford & Wrekin area rather than within the parish.

Of the working age population, the majority (60%) are employed full time, with 20% self employed and 10% in part-time employment. A sizeable minority of the employed people (around 10%) work from home.

2.8 FACILITIES

Little Wenlock is the only settlement in the parish to have community facilities. The village school closed in the early 1960s and the shop and post office in the late 1980's. A pub/restaurant (the Huntsman) remains, together with St Lawrence Church (Church of England) and a village hall (rebuilt in 2002 courtesy of substantial grants from the National Lottery Community Fund and Onyx Landfill Trust).

Little Wenlock village also has a playing field with a small football pitch and hard surface tennis court with multi-sport play wall plus a small amount of out-dated children's play equipment.

A bottle bank is located at the Huntsman pub and paper and cans banks at the village hall.

2.9 TRANSPORT

As might be expected in a rural area with limited facilities, car ownership is relatively high, at an average 1.8 cars per household. Only a minority of households (less than 5%) have no car, 30% have one car and two thirds have two or more cars.

Bus services have declined substantially over the years to such an extent that only Little Wenlock village is currently served; and even then by just three non-school buses to and from the village each week.

This, and the large proportion of residents working outside the parish, means that the significant number of families with only a single car can suffer serious transport difficulties during the working week.

2.10 COMMUNITY

Despite the lack of employment and facilities, an excellent sense of community has been preserved throughout the parish. A number of active community organisations and groups continue to thrive, including the Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall and Playing Field Committee, and the Women's Institute. Less formally, a gardening club, indoor bowls club and tennis club organise regular activities in which young and old alike participate. Together with the community organisations, these clubs also run a large number of social and fund-raising events throughout the year, involving large sections of the community.

2.11 LAND USE

The majority of open land in the parish is devoted to mixed farming. It comprises grassland, forage crops for livestock feeding (primarily maize) and some arable cropping (cereals, sugarbeet and potatoes). With such a large proportion of the land previously opencasted for coal, much is of rather intermediate agricultural quality with particularly poor drainage.

The substantial area of tree cover is primarily mixed deciduous woodland which has regenerated on sites of old industrial activity. The bulk of it is not commercially exploited, although relatively large numbers of game birds are reared within it for local shoots.

The legacy of old industrial activity is evident in several abandoned stone and lime quarries, most of which are in an advanced state of natural regeneration. Others have formed pools and bodies of open water, the largest of which have been stocked for coarse fishing.

More recent opencast coal mining has created a number of voids which have been exploited for waste disposal over the past 50 years. A single landfill site continues to operate in the last remaining void (Dog in the Lane). This has an anticipated lifetime of a further 4-5 years, after which it will be reclaimed to a mixture of agricultural land and amenity woodland.

Relatively large areas of the woodland within the parish are extensively used for public access by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.

Recreational land use includes two golf courses - the long-established private Wrekin Golf Club abutting the Ercall on the northern edge of the parish, and the newly-created public Horsehay Golf Centre on reclaimed opencast land on its eastern fringe.

With the exception of the landfill site, there is no longer any industrial activity within the parish. Almost uniquely in the Borough of Telford and Wrekin, this and the complete absence of major roads ensures it remains a tranquil and relatively unspoilt rural area.

2.12 FEATURES OF SPECIAL VALUE

The parish contains a relatively large number of designated nationally and locally important areas and sites of landscape, wildlife and historical value, together with many listed buildings. The locations of the main environmental features are identified in Maps 2-5.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Wrekin and adjoining Ercall hills, together with Gibbons Coppice, Wenlock Wood, Maddocks Hill, Limekiln Wood, Black Hayes and Birch Coppice on the edge of New Works are included within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Map 2). The whole parish is, further, included within the AONB Advisory Plan, recognising the importance that the setting plays in preserving the Area itself.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

The parish contains three SSSIs - the **Wrekin**, the **Ercall** and **Lydebrook Dingle** (Map 3).

The prominent ridge that is the Wrekin and Ercall has a combination of geological and biological importance that justifies its designation as a SSSI. The deciduous woodland flora varies with the underlying geology and levels of drainage. Sessile oak dominates on the thin acid soils overlying the Wrekin Quartzite, accompanied by holly, downy birch and rowan. The ground flora includes wavy hair-grass, heather, bilberry, creeping soft-grass and the uncommon climbing fumitory.

Oak and hazel occur on the more fertile soils whilst ash and wych elm are found on the damper, richer, less acidic land. Where the ground is permanently wet alder dominates. In the more fertile areas ransoms, yellow archangel, woodruff, dog's mercury and sanicle make up the ground flora.

Towards the summit of the Wrekin there are areas of heather and acidic grassland with wavy hair-grass, early hair-grass, sheep's sorrel and heath bedstraw. The bird population includes sparrowhawk; woodcock; all three woodpeckers; seven species of warbler; redstart; and, pied flycatchers.

The Wrekin ridge provides the best and most varied exposures of Uriconian rocks in England and is of great historical importance as the place where the uncomformable relationship between the Uriconian and Cambrian and the volcanic nature of the Uriconian were first demonstrated.

Lydebrook Dingle is a narrow, steep-sided, wooded dingle on coal measures and basalt, through which flows the Lyde Brook, a tributary of the Severn. It is valuable as one of the best examples of ancient, relatively undisturbed woodland in this part of Shropshire.

Lower down it merges into the equally valuable Loamhole Dingle - originally a source of loam for the Iron foundries of Coalbrookdale - which emerges by the Museum of Iron and Abraham Darby's first furnace.

The woodland vegetation consists of three distinct stand types - ash and wych elm; oak and birch; and alder - depending upon the underlying geology.

The oak/birch stands are characterised by a flora of abundant great woodrush, wavy hair-grass and bilberry. The areas of ash/wych elm (the latter badly affected by Dutch elm disease) have dog's mercury, tufted hair-grass and woodruff. The alder stands have pendulous sedge and giant horsetail together with opposite-leaved golden saxifrage.

The lime-rich water from the springs along the valley sides have caused the accumulation of large deposits of tufa. Other particularly interesting plants in the Dingle include uncommon species like wood barley, wood horsetail and the moss *Hookeria lucens*. Small-leaved lime, yew and field maple trees are present too.

Nature Reserves

The **Wrekin** is also designated as a Telford and Wrekin Council Nature Reserve, while the **Ercall** is a Nature Reserve run by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust. (Map 4).

The other official Nature Reserve in the parish is **Limekiln and Black Hayes Wood** which is a extensive area of mixed ash and hazel woodlands on alkaline soils with particularly rich ground flora and grassland around old limekilns.

Wildlife Sites

The entire area surrounding the Wrekin nature reserve from Wrekin Farm at Cluddley to the north, including Neves Castle to the south west, Morrells Wood, Gibbons Coppice and Wrekin Farm to the south is also designated as a Wildlife Site (Map 5).

This is effectively a buffer area around the Nature Reserve which, in part, reflects the habitats found within the SSSI. Several of the woodlands are on the Ancient Woodlands Register.

Limekiln Wood and Black Hayes - including the bulk of Maddocks Hill quarry is a Wildlife Site too. The disused quarry with some geologically interesting exposures was previously a SSSI but remains on the Wildlife Site register pending re-assessment.

The two further Wildlife Sites in the parish are **Marmers Covert** (on Spout Lane) and the north western arm of **Lydebrook Dingle** stretching towards Little Worth.

Marmers Covert is an area of scrub (primarily hazel, wych elm, hawthorn and elder) which is very bare below with patches of common nettle. It also has areas of open, less dense scrub with much silver birch and dog rose which is grassy below and grazed. There are small tufa formations.

The arm of Lydebrook Dingle represents a species-rich continuation of the SSSI considered worthy of Wildlife Site status.

Ancient Monuments

The **Wrekin** has long been designated an Ancient Monument as one of relatively few local examples of a large, prominent hill fort. It has evidence of domestic Iron Age occupation over several hundred years up to the 1st Century AD.

More recently English Heritage has also designated an area of historic coal mining remains to the north and north west of New Works village (primarily **New Works Wood**) as an Ancient Monument (Map 6).

This is designed to preserve an area which has been worked for coal intensively but on a relatively small scale over a period of at least 500 years as a representation of the coal industry's development up to the 20th Century.

Other Areas of Historical Interest

Extensive opencast mining has destroyed most of the unprotected historic features of the landscape to the north and east of the parish.

One particularly interesting area, however, remains on the eastern slope of Little Wenlock village at **Spread Eagles** (Map 6). A field survey of this site identifies three bell-pit mounds likely to be survivors of late 17th to mid-18th century mining and suggests that it is probably the last place in the parish in which remains of the 1728 Little Wenlock to Strethill timber railway may be found.

Listed Buildings

There are a total of 15 listed buildings in the parish, as follows:

Grade II *	St Lawrence Church, Little Wenlock
Grade II	Rose Cottage, The Alley, Little Wenlock White Cottage, The Alley, Little Wenlock The Old Hall, Little Wenlock The Old Rectory, Little Wenlock The Old Rectory gatepiers, Little Wenlock Manor House, Little Wenlock Home Farmhouse, Little Wenlock Home Farm Buildings, Little Wenlock The Stone House, Little Wenlock The Moors, Braggers Hill Upper Coalmoor Farmhouse, Coalmoor Lower Coalmoor Farmhouse, Coalmoor Lower Huntington Farmhouse, Huntington Upper Huntington Farmhouse, Huntington

3. PARISH DEVELOPMENT

3.1 LOCAL CONTEXT

Little Wenlock occupies a unique position within the Borough of Telford & Wrekin as a rural area with great recreational attractions and some of the locality's most valuable and vulnerable environmental assets.

3.2 ADVANTAGES

Being right on the edge of Telford, Little Wenlock enjoys a number of advantages not normally associated with such a rural parish. These include proximity to major sources of employment, as well as substantial shopping, entertainment, education and healthcare facilities.

As a direct consequence the provision of many such facilities within the parish is nowhere near as vital as it is in more remote rural communities.

However the accessibility of the facilities offered by Telford to many parish residents is limited by distances too great for walking, terrain not conducive to cycling and an almost total lack of public transport.

Road (and to a certain extent also rail) links to the region and beyond are also particularly good, given Telford's modern transport infrastructure. Again, though, parishioners' access to both is restricted by the generally poor standard of local road maintenance and extremely limited winter gritting and snow clearance.

3.3 DISADVANTAGES

Proximity to the conurbation also with it carries a number of clear disadvantages for the parish. Most notable amongst these are:

- The spread of crime (particularly car crime) from the more disadvantaged parts of the urban area;
- Littering and fly tipping (which has become noticeably worse with the reorganisation of the region's public amenity sites); and,
- Excessive traffic movements and speeds (particularly by those using the Wellington to Horsehay road to avoid local urban congestion);

With its natural beauty, landscape value, tranquility and environmental richness so conveniently located, the parish has obvious recreational attractions for the people of Telford. Within this context, one of the community's single greatest challenges is to ensure the parish remains open and accessible to these visitors while preventing the pressures they create spoiling the natural environment or interfering with either the amenity of residents or the business needs of the farming community.

In preserving its rural character, everything possible needs to be done to protect the parish from creeping 'sub-urbanisation' from the expanding town on its doorstep. All the more so with the extent to which the communities have become 'residentialised' over the past 50 years through a combination of housing development and the progressive decline in local employment.

3.4 VISION

Against this background, the parish has agreed the following simple vision to guide its development over the Plan period.

Little Wenlock wishes to maintain the highest possible quality of life for all its residents within a thriving modern village community and a diverse, tranquil and sustainable rural environment.

3.5 COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Extensive consultation with parishioners has identified a number of key priorities to be addressed in parish development.

Roads

There is considerable concern over the speeds at which many vehicles move through several parts of the parish. The recent introduction of speed limits in Little Wenlock village may help to reduce this problem, but the community is keen to explore ways in which traffic speed reductions can be further encouraged both within the main settlements and in the narrow country lanes around them. There is strong support for appropriate forms of traffic calming in the main settlements, together with the designation of local roads as Quiet Lanes.

The lack of sufficient quality road and verge maintenance, gully and surface cleaning and snow clearance and gritting are also major highway concerns amongst all sections of the community.

An extension of pavements within the main settlements is considered inappropriate by most people, as is the use of yellow lines to encourage off-road parking. Opinion is divided on the need to improve the standard of village street lighting.

Transport

Public transport is seen as clearly insufficient, with older residents, young people and families with only one car keen to achieve better access to shopping, healthcare and entertainment facilities within the town centre and the other urban areas.

Some people would like to see a better bus service, while others would welcome facilities to encourage cycling and/or car sharing.

However, there is particular interest in a more flexible taxi voucher scheme for those needing public transport instead of any improvement in bus services.

Housing & Development

While the majority of residents believe we need more job opportunities within the parish, opinion is divided on the extent to which appropriate local small business developments should be allowed or encouraged. Opinion is equally divided on the desirability of new housing in the parish, with a significant minority of residents strongly against any new development.

Accepting that some new housing is inevitable within the Plan period and in the context of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan, the community is heavily against concentrating residential development into estates. Instead, there is a strong feeling that new housing should be confined to individual units within the parish as a whole rather than just its main settlement.

There is also a strong desire to make adequate provision for affordable housing for local people.

Further open cast mining and waste disposal are developments the overwhelming majority of residents feel should be resisted within the parish.

Recreation & Village Facilities

A substantial majority of parishioners see a need for better children's playing facilities within the parish. Better facilities are sought for both younger and older children, with improved sports facilities also considered a priority.

Opinion is divided on the desirability of extra public footpaths or bridleways within the parish. However, there is a strong desire for better signage and maintenance of existing rights of way.

Although some people would be keen to see a Post Office and village shop re-established within Little Wenlock, there is a general feeling that the level of usage would be unlikely to justify this; especially so with Horsehay Post Office nearby and the relative richness of shopping facilities on the edge of and within Telford.

In view of the development of home-working, interest is also expressed in ensuring the telephone system is updated for IT use. A local produce market in the new village hall has some appeal.

A strong desire is evident for better tasting drinking water, improved recycling facilities and a regular parish rubbish skip service.

Energy Conservation

The vast majority of parishioners believe more should be done to encourage improvements in home energy efficiency and the use of solar panels, in particular.

This is also clear enthusiasm for encouraging more local renewable energy production, although the balance of opinion is marginally against local wind energy generation.

3.6 DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

To guide the development of the parish, seven key principles have been identified:

- 1. The mixed farming and woodland character of the parish should be preserved.**
- 2. Residential development should be small in scale, appropriate in design and spread through the settlements.**
- 3. Non-residential development should be controlled to preserve rural tranquility and protect residents from disturbance.**
- 4. The countryside should be maintained and enhanced, with the emphasis on wildlife and habitat conservation and a tranquil and safe rural environment.**
- 5. A diverse community mix should be encouraged, with housing and facilities suited to a range of family types and circumstances.**
- 6. Community spirit and responsibility should be fostered with facilities and activities attracting and involving as many residents as possible.**
- 7. Initiatives which improve the quality of local life and sustainability of the environment should be actively promoted.**

4. HOUSING & BUILDING

4.1 KEY PRINCIPLES

Residential development should be small in scale, appropriate in design and spread through the settlements.

Non-residential development should be controlled to preserve rural tranquility and protect residents from disturbance.

A diverse community mix should be encouraged with housing and facilities suited to a range of family types and circumstances.

4.2 LOCAL CONTEXT

Little Wenlock is designated in the Wrekin Local Plan 1995-2006 (Policy H9) as one of only 13 'suitable settlements' in the rural area in which new residential developments will be permitted, with a maximum allocation of 150 additional dwellings set for the entire area over the Plan period.

Despite this average allocation of 12 dwellings per settlement up to and including 2006, a total of 17 new houses were completed or approved in the village in the period 1995-2002. This primarily resulted from a single major development resisted by the Planning Authority but granted by Government on appeal.

Excluding this estate development (which clearly flew in the face of a number of Local Plan policies) a total of five new dwellings were added to the parish between 1995 and 2002. This demonstrates an underlying rate of development of around six or seven new dwellings in the 10 year Plan period.

4.3 NEW HOUSING NUMBERS

Given the over-provision of new dwellings in Little Wenlock under the existing Local Plan, the underlying level of new building demand evident in recent years and the desire of the community to avoid spoiling the rural area with excessive extra housing, the parish believes new residential development should be strictly limited over the coming decade.

GUIDELINE H 1: NEW HOUSING NUMBERS

The Parish will seek to limit residential development to the same underlying rate of recent years.

4.4 NEW HOUSING LOCATION

Housing development with the past decade has almost exhausted the available 'infill' space within Little Wenlock village. At the same time, restrictions on new dwellings outside the 'suitable settlement' designation have led to a growing imbalance between Little Wenlock village and the other settlements within the parish.

The parish considers the vitality of its community lies in maintaining the balance of settlement between the two main villages and outlying hamlets. On the one hand this will minimise the extent to which the larger settlements become dominant residential suburbs, while on the other preventing the smaller settlements from falling further into decline.

The fact that the main village has no school or shop and little in the way of public transport services or local employment means there is no economic or environmental justification for concentrating new housing development in this settlement alone, even were the space to be available.

GUIDELINE H 2: NEW HOUSING IN SETTLEMENTS

The Parish will support appropriate new housing within the existing housing clusters of Little Wenlock, New Works, Huntington and Coalmoor.

The infill space that currently exists for a small number of dwellings within New Works and to a lesser extent Huntington and Coalmoor, however, provides a further reason to encourage appropriate housing development in these parts of the parish. As does their proximity to the facilities of the main Telford area.

Particular care must be taken to avoid housing sprawl from existing settlements, or extensions to them encroaching on the open countryside.

GUIDELINE H 3: HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The Parish will resist new residential development in the open countryside outside the existing boundaries of its settlements.

4.5 NEW HOUSING SCALE

The parish also believes that appropriate development scale is vital to maintaining its community life and spirit, wishing to ensure new housing is integrated into its settlements in ways which encourage rather than discourage community involvement.

It is equally keen to maintain a reasonable balance of houses across the range of sizes and affordability to ensure it preserves communities with a good mix of family types and circumstances.

GUIDELINE H 4: NEW HOUSING SCALE

The Parish will resist new residential developments involving anything other than one or two dwellings on suitable infill plots, while seeking to maintain a diversity of size and affordability within its housing stock.

4.6 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As part of its effort to maintain a balanced community, the parish wishes to ensure that people employed locally or from local families can afford to continue living in the locality.

A parish-wide assessment conducted in the mid-1990's identified a need for two or three affordable houses for rent providing these dwellings could remain available to local people in housing need.

GUIDELINE H 5: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Parish will encourage a small scale scheme of affordable housing for local people if a continued need is identified and provided adequate occupancy controls are in place to reserve it for their use in perpetuity.

4.7 HOUSING DESIGN

Although the existing housing stock is of a wide variety of different designs, the parish is keen to see all new houses and extensions to existing dwellings reinforcing its local character and visual distinctiveness.

At the same time, it is particularly conscious of the need to respect the established features of its settlements and avoid developments which are either incongruous in themselves or inappropriate in relation to their effect on neighbouring properties or existing residents.

Appropriate design to minimise heat loss and wasteful energy use is also considered important.

GUIDELINE H 6: HOUSING DESIGN

The Parish will look favourably on proposals for new housing or extensions to existing houses that:

- (a) Blend-in well with its settlements in design, layout and scale, preserving or enhancing their character;***
- (b) Have no unacceptably negative effects on neighbouring properties or the amenity of their residents; and,***
- (c) Are designed to minimise heat loss and wasteful energy use.***

4.8 BUILDING CONVERSIONS

The parish is aware of the damage that excessive conversion of non-residential buildings to residential use can cause. It is equally conscious, however, of the need to ensure that large numbers of redundant farm buildings do not fall into decay and dereliction.

Barn conversions within the open countryside must be avoided in just the same way as new housing development, unless the buildings concerned are of sufficient merit and where they would otherwise be lost.

More favourable consideration should, it is felt, be given to residential conversions where the buildings are within one of the parish's existing settlements or form part of a specific scheme to diversify an existing farm business and maintain or create local employment.

GUIDELINE H 7: BUILDING CONVERSION

The Parish will be sympathetic to the conversion of redundant buildings to domestic use providing:

- (a) They are of a substantial stone or brick construction capable of conversion without major reconstruction; and***
- (b) They are located within the boundary of an existing designated settlement; or,***
- (c) They form part of a specific scheme of farm diversification with adequate safeguards over future ownership and use.***

4.9 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

There is limited potential for commercial development within the parish's existing settlements and this must be carefully controlled to preserve the immediate environment and tranquillity of the almost entirely residential communities.

While interested in maintaining existing local employment and in developing new job opportunities, the parish is particularly keen to avoid 'unneighbourly' developments resulting in additional noise, smell or other disturbance in or close to its settlements.

Commercial developments outside the parish's existing settlements have less potential for additional disturbance to residents, providing they are of an appropriate type, scale and design.

In many cases, indeed, they are to be encouraged as a means of maintaining rural employment and preventing farm buildings falling into disuse and decay.

Commercial uses considered particularly appropriate include:

- Tourist accommodation;
- Countryside leisure and recreation;
- Rural craftwork;
- IT and design work; and,
- Business consultancy

In all cases the parish considers such developments should be located within existing farmsteads and, preferably, within existing buildings converted for the purpose. Any developments in the open countryside are clearly undesirable in exactly the same way as residential developments.

GUIDELINE H 8: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Parish will support limited commercial developments if:

- (a) They are small in scale and of a type appropriate to the rural area;***
- (b) They are located in existing farmsteads or buildings and, with the exception of small-scale tourist accommodation, are outside existing settlements; and,***
- (c) They are unlikely to cause disturbance or nuisance to residents, or inappropriate additional traffic levels on local roads.***

4.10 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Industrial developments of any type or scale are considered inappropriate to the maintenance of the tranquil rural environment that forms such an important part of the parish's vision.

This applies as much to temporary land uses like mining or land-filling as it does to permanent developments involving heavy plant and machinery; particularly so in view of the extent to which substantial parts of the parish have suffered the cumulative impact of open-cast coal mining, land-filling and poor quality land restoration over many decades.

GUIDELINE H 9: INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Parish will resist inappropriate permanent or temporary industrial developments.

4.11 LISTED BUILDINGS

The parish is keen to protect and preserve its listed buildings for their historic and architectural value as an important part of the community's heritage.

In this context, there is a clear need to control the extent to which they are subject to alterations, extensions and other changes, as well as to prevent their demolition as part of new developments.

At the same time, however, care must be taken to avoid overly restrictive controls which may result in such buildings being left to decay into dereliction.

The setting of listed buildings also needs to be protected from any development in the immediate vicinity which would adversely affect their context.

GUIDELINE H 10: LISTED BUILDINGS

The Parish will make every effort to prevent the loss, dereliction or inappropriate alteration of listed buildings, while discouraging developments which would detract from their setting.

4.12 ENERGY SUPPLY

Although historical problems with power failures in the main settlement of Little Wenlock have largely been overcome in recent years, New Works and outlying parts of the parish have continued to experience repeated power cuts. As well as affecting domestic electricity supplies, these cuts have left a number of homes without water for several days in some cases.

The parish believes most of the power supply problems can be eliminated by greater attention to vegetation control along local overhead power lines. Better back-up generator facilities at key water pumping stations would further safeguard water supplies.

GUIDELINE H 11: ENERGY SUPPLY

The Parish will maintain continued pressure on local utility companies to ensure adequate schedules of overhead power line maintenance and back-up generators at water pumping stations.

4.13 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

As part of its commitment to more sustainable development, the parish is strongly in favour of all measures that increase the energy efficiency of buildings and reduce the consumption of energy.

In particular, it considers it vital to minimise heat loss from buildings through the highest possible standards of insulation. At the same time, it is keen to see the greatest possible use made of low energy technologies.

GUIDELINE H 12: ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Parish will encourage residents to reduce heat loss from buildings as well as making maximum use of low energy technologies.

4.14 RENEWABLE ENERGY

The parish is also interested in reducing the use of fossil fuels by maximising energy from renewable sources.

In addition to specifying electricity from 'green' sources, a particular role is seen for the use of active solar technology in both existing and new buildings.

Care will, however, need to be taken with the design and siting of solar energy collectors so they do not adversely affect the visual character of buildings. This will be an especially important consideration with Listed Buildings.

GUIDELINE H 13: RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Parish will raise the awareness of renewable energy in general and solar technology in particular among residents, encouraging greater use of 'green' electricity together with the installation and use of renewable energy systems.

4.15 STREET LIGHTING

Adequate street lighting continues to be an important requirement within the two main settlements. The parish believes, however, that safety and security needs must be effectively balanced with lighting which is in keeping with the rural character of the area.

Refurbished, telegraph pole-mounted lighting units are the preferred option with more natural 'white' bulbs rather than orange 'sox' lights.

To minimise unnecessary light pollution part-night operation is considered to be most appropriate, with photo-electric cells switching the lights on at dusk and off at dawn while timing devices switch them off at around 1.00 am then back on again at around 5.30 am.

This and the widespread use of low energy bulbs, of course, also makes a significant contribution to energy (and cost) saving.

Outside the main settlements it is not considered either appropriate or necessary to have street lighting of any description, while significant light pollution from other sources should be discouraged.

GUIDELINE H 14: STREET LIGHTING

The Parish will ensure street lighting within its main settlements that is adequate, in-keeping with the character of the parish and operated to minimise unnecessary energy use and light pollution.

4.16 PAVEMENTS & STREET PARKING

While road safety is an important issue for pedestrians in the two main settlements, the community has no desire to see more pavements in either of its villages, regarding these as out-of-character with the rural environment.

Nor does it wish to see any 'urban style' yellow lines or other controls over on-street parking, regarding an element of this as desirable to limit traffic speeds by creating clear road constrictions (as well as essential for many residents).

GUIDELINE H 15: PAVEMENTS & STREET PARKING

The Parish will discourage the installation of new pavements or on-street parking controls in its main settlements, unless dictated by particular road safety issues.

4.17 TRAFFIC CALMING

The imposition of a 30 mph speed restriction in Little Wenlock in 2002 to match the long-standing restriction in New Works is seen as a positive move to reduce dangerously high traffic speeds in some parts of the village.

The parish, however, believes there is a need to take more active measures to control the speed of traffic in specific parts of its settlements.

In this context, there is concern over the installation of speed bumps or sleeping policeman, both for their appearance and the extent to which they can create noise and, in many cases, additional danger from unobservant motorists.

Instead, the balance of community opinion is in favour of appropriately-designed verge-side fencing to create a feeling of narrowing on entry to the village. Other measures offering the potential to reduce traffic speeds, that are in-keeping with the area and do not significantly add to either noise or danger should also be explored.

GUIDELINE H 16: TRAFFIC CALMING

The Parish will prioritise the installation of traffic calming measures of an appropriate design on the approaches to its settlements where speeding traffic is a problem.

5. COUNTRYSIDE & ENVIRONMENT

5.1 KEY PRINCIPLES

The mixed farming and woodland character of the parish should be preserved.

The countryside should be maintained and enhanced, with the emphasis on wildlife and habitat conservation and a tranquil and safe rural environment.

5.2 LOCAL CONTEXT

Little Wenlock is recognised within the Wrekin Local Plan as a particularly sensitive countryside area, containing, as it does, the only part of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Borough, three of its eight SSSIs, its only Local Nature Reserve and the largest single area of its designated Wildlife Sites and Ancient Woodland.

This sensitivity is made all the more important by the close proximity of these valuable landscape and countryside resources to the expanding urban area of Telford. And by the fact that, unlike much of the open area in and around the town, little if any of the parish is considered to be derelict land.

A substantial part of the parish is, furthermore, recognised as a special case in both the Shropshire Structure Plan and the Shropshire Minerals Local Plan for the cumulative impact of coal and fireclay working in the area. As such, with Broseley/Shirlett, it is accorded special status in minerals planning policy (M21D).

5.3 DESIGNATED AREAS

The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its associated Ancient Monument, SSSI, Nature Reserves, Wildlife Sites and Ancient Woodland are, without doubt, one of the Borough's greatest environmental and ecological assets. Not least for the fact that, in the Wrekin, they represent a significant part of its identity.

The parish considers it essential that these assets are protected from development and preserved from degradation, both through excessive or inappropriate use and as a result of neglect.

Equally important to protect and preserve - and perhaps even more vulnerable for their size and more isolated nature - are the SSSI at Lydebrook Dingle, the Wildlife Sites at Marmers Covert and Lydebrook Dingle, and the Ancient Monument at New Works Wood.

Given the delicate ecological balance which exists between these designated areas and their surrounding habitats, the parish strongly believes that the protection accorded them must extend to the areas of open land in their immediate proximity.

In many cases, this land provides a vital wildlife bridge between the designated areas as well as an important landscape setting and context for them.

GUIDELINE C 1: DESIGNATED AREAS

The Parish will use every means in its power to protect and preserve the following designated areas and their surrounding countryside from any developments which would adversely affect them either direct or indirectly:

- (a) The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;***
- (b) Sites of Special Scientific Interest;***
- (c) Ancient Monuments;***
- (d) Nature Reserves;***
- (e) Wildlife Sites; and,***
- (f) Ancient Woodland.***

The main areas are identified in Maps 2-6.

5.4 FARMING & WOODLAND

Agriculture, and to a lesser extent forestry, has been the main force responsible for shaping the post-industrial landscape of the area.

Farming remains the main land use and its primarily mixed grazing livestock nature is vital to the preservation of a landscape characterised by relatively small fields, substantial hedgerows and numerous coppices and areas of woodland.

The rearing of game-birds for shooting has become increasingly important to the maintenance of this countryside pattern as financial pressures on traditional dairy, beef and sheep enterprises have grown.

The few remaining farming businesses in the parish have yet to seriously diversify from their mixed livestock roots. However, increasing levels of diversification seem inevitable in the face of the continued decline in profitability of these enterprises.

Equally inevitable under these circumstances is a progressive growth in the size and intensity of livestock production as the farms seek progressively greater economies of scale.

This presents the parish with a serious dilemma. To preserve the character of the countryside it clearly needs to see the continued dominance of profitable grazing livestock systems. The alternatives are an agriculture increasingly dependent on arable crop production or a progressive decline in the quality of the existing pastureland and its maintenance, both of which would be to the detriment of the present rural character.

At the same time, increasing intensification of existing enterprises could be equally damaging, leading to the use of ever-larger machinery and more cost-efficient operations, resulting in increased field amalgamation, noise and traffic hazard. The greater pollution hazard presented by larger livestock units (particularly those under acute financial pressure) also needs to be taken into account. As does the pressure to accept farm diversifications that may have their own negative impacts in order to ensure the continuation of the core grazing livestock systems.

A similar dilemma exists as far as the wooded areas of the parish are concerned. These clearly need to be managed while being protected from the sort of developments - including large scale timber removal and recreational activities - that would adversely affect their character and ecological value.

GUIDELINE C 2: FARMING & WOODLAND

The Parish will encourage efforts to maintain the viability of the existing mixed farming and woodland systems, providing they do not involve intensification or diversification of a type or scale likely to cause significant changes to the character of the countryside, the tranquillity of the environment or the amenity of parishioners.

5.5 WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Rather than merely preserving it, the parish is keen to enhance the richness and diversity of the countryside's flora and fauna.

In particular, it wishes to see the most sympathetic management of existing wildlife resources and habitats; the improved maintenance and planting of verges; and additional hedgerow trees.

At the same time, it is conscious of the need to carefully manage the bodies of open water, ponds and streams (especially the Lyde Brook and its tributaries) in the area for greatest wildlife and landscape value. In this context, it believes, the clearance of overgrown ponds is important.

The parish sees Countryside Stewardship schemes undertaken by farmers and landowners as an important means of securing such environmental benefits.

Also valuable in this respect, it believes, are conservation agreements, commitments and undertakings obtained as part of planning applications, together with financial and other support for specific projects from grant-giving bodies and organisations.

GUIDELINE C 3: WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

The Parish will encourage and support all genuine wildlife and habitat conservation and improvement efforts undertaken by parishioners, landowners and organisations; actively seek external funding and support for specific conservation projects; and work with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and other bodies to achieve the most sustainable environmental improvements possible.

5.6 RIGHTS OF WAY

In providing access to the countryside for residents and visitors, the parish's extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPs) is considered to be a particularly important asset. While there is no major desire to add new rights of way, the parish wishes to ensure the greatest possible appropriate use of the existing network through unambiguous designations, effective maintenance and adequate signage.

As far as designations are concerned, the reclassification of RUPPs to footpath, bridleway or byway status is an important current priority; especially so given recent interest from external organisations in 'opening up' green lanes for recreational vehicle use.

Also important, with the growing popularity of horse riding and the increasing volumes of traffic using the parish's lanes, is the effective classification of bridleways to ensure the needs of both walkers and riders are adequately catered for.

The extensive review currently being undertaken through the North Telford Parish Paths Partnership is designed to identify and classify all rights of way, ensuring they are provided with the appropriate legal status to minimise misuse and disputes.

GUIDELINE C 4: RIGHTS OF WAY

The Parish will maintain an up-to-date Definitive Statement of existing rights of way, and work to ensure they are classified appropriately and both signposted and maintained effectively.

5.7 THE WREKIN

As one of the Borough's greatest countryside assets, the Wrekin and Ercall attract growing numbers of visitors each year. This is placing increasing pressure on local facilities - most obviously car parking, refuse disposal and public toilets.

Roadside parking has reached the stage that it causes serious road safety concerns. Inadequate waste bins are compounding the local litter problem. And the closure of the public toilets has created difficulties for many visitors.

The parish believes Telford & Wrekin Council needs to prioritise the maintenance of this important Borough amenity if it is not to become overwhelmed by these pressures.

GUIDELINE C 5: THE WREKIN

The Parish will encourage Telford & Wrekin Council to develop and implement a plan for the positive management of visitors to the Wrekin and Ercall to the benefit of the entire Borough.

5.8 ROADS

The narrowness of many of the parish's lanes and the growing volume of road traffic using them presents an increasing road safety problem. All the more so given the extent to which local rights of way are interconnected by these lanes.

Balancing the needs of walkers, horse-riders, cyclists and drivers is no easy matter. Yet it is becoming particularly critical in several locations - including the area around the Wrekin - where the lanes are especially narrow and their recreational use notably high.

Vehicle size and weight restrictions and road signs can help, but these do not address the main problem of cars travelling too fast and with too little appreciation of the dangers involved. Nor can traffic calming measures which are only permissible within statutory speed limits.

Under these circumstances, the parish is interested in designating certain of its roads as Quiet Lanes to allow them to be managed to prioritise the needs of walkers, cyclists and horse riders within a statutory designation,

Quiet Lanes are considered especially appropriate in the areas around the Wrekin because of their recreational popularity and existing network of rights of way - including both the parish's long distance paths.

Quiet Lane designation is also seen as an effective way of maintaining the tranquillity of such areas and maximising their value for recreational enjoyment.

GUIDELINE C 6: ROADS

The Parish will seek to have a number of its roads designated as Quiet Lanes and managed to improve the safety and enjoyment of walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

5.9 MINERAL EXTRACTION

The parish has suffered the deprivations of open cast coal mining in repeated sites across a substantial area over several decades. Although temporary in nature, the mining process has resulted in considerable noise, dust, disruption and loss of amenity to large numbers of residents over an extended period.

Restorations have, in many cases, left much to be desired, resulting in a far less attractive and ecologically valuable countryside than the landscapes replaced.

The Development Plan recognises the cumulative impact of open cast mining on the area, granting it special status in local mineral planning terms.

Now the major areas of local derelict land have been reclaimed and the axis of mining has moved away from the area, the parish believes the adverse impacts of coal extraction far outweigh any economic or community benefits to be derived from it.

The ready availability of imported coal and the declining popularity of the fuel as an energy source means there is currently no national need for open cast coal that cannot be met from alternative, less damaging sources.

Whereas previously regarded as derelict by virtue of past coal mining, the extent of natural regeneration on the land above the bulk of the parish's remaining coal reserves means these areas are now regarded as valuable landscape resources in their own right. Part of the locality has even recently been designated an Ancient Monument in recognition of its historical value.

The scale of recent housing developments on the edge of Telford in close proximity to these areas further makes open-casting, with its associated fears of health problems as well as dust and noise nuisance, even more unacceptable in the parish.

GUIDELINE C 7: MINERAL EXTRACTION

The Parish will oppose the re-opening of opencast mining unless an over-riding national need can be demonstrated, sufficient community gains secured and adverse impacts on local residents effectively mitigated.

5.10 WASTE DISPOSAL

Voids created by open-cast mining have meant the parish has been the location of a series of landfilling operations over many years. The final site has a projected further lifetime of 4-5 years.

Serious problems have been experienced with this land use. Even with modern licence conditions, poor operation and supervision of sites has resulted in a catalogue of vermin, litter, smell, poor road condition and other complaints. As well as repeated failures to comply with licence conditions, the present operator has recently been the subject of a major court case for falsifying records and illegal disposals.

Restorations have generally been poor, leaving an inevitable legacy of prominent venting pipework, flare stacks and minimal vegetation value. And one site on the edge of New Works has resulted in long-term gas migration problems for local residents.

While accepting the need for land-filling, the parish believes it has borne more than its fair share of waste operations to date and is firmly opposed to future developments that might create suitable land-fill sites.

GUIDELINE C 8: WASTE DISPOSAL

The Parish will do everything possible to ensure the current land-fill site causes minimal problems to the local community; work to secure the effective restoration and aftercare of all completed sites; and resist any developments that might create sites suitable for future land-filling.

6. COMMUNITY & SERVICES

6.1 KEY PRINCIPLES

Community spirit and responsibility should be fostered with facilities and activities attracting and involving as many residents as possible.

Initiatives which improve the quality of local life and sustainability of the environment should be actively promoted.

6.2 LOCAL CONTEXT

The Telford & Wrekin Community Strategy stresses the value of strong communities and the need for agencies, public bodies, organisations and voluntary groups to work together to improve local communities and their services. Local concerns identified of particular relevance to the parish include fear of crime, affordable housing, public transport provision, environmental protection and waste recycling.

The Community Safety Strategy further sets out to build confident communities and create safer, healthier neighbourhoods across the Borough.

Improved access in the rural area is an important objective of the Local Transport Plan, together with improving road safety and reducing reliance on the car.

6.3 POST OFFICE & SHOP

Although there is some support for the re-establishment of a Post Office and shop in Little Wenlock village, there is serious doubt over the viability of such a business.

The fact that Post Offices and shops are available locally in both Horsehay and Lawley, not to mention the Town Centre, must be important considerations in this respect. As should also be the availability of a weekly mobile shop (currently only used by a small number of older residents) and home-shopping services offered by at least one local supermarket.

Should a strong enough case be made for a Post Office and/or shop in the parish, the new village hall or the Huntsman Inn would be logical locations, allowing them to be combined with existing community facilities for greatest value and cost-effectiveness.

Wider publicity for the existing mobile shop, supermarket home shopping and any other services that could be provided 'at the door' would help meet the need for local facilities and reduce the requirement for car journeys.

GUIDELINE S1: POST OFFICE & SHOP

The Parish will support any business case made for the re-establishment of a Post Office and shop in Little Wenlock while assisting local home shopping or delivery services to make their availability better known throughout its communities.

6.4 VILLAGE HALL

Little Wenlock Village Hall is the parish's single most important community resource. The new hall, completed in the summer of 2002, is an excellent, modern facility designed for particular versatility of use which the community wishes to utilise to the maximum.

The main hall is capable of accommodating 300 people. It is complemented by a committee room for up to 50 people, fully equipped catering kitchen and bar area. Existing facilities include a demountable stage and tables & chairs for 100.

Current activities extend to whist, yoga, indoor bowls, keep fit, and art classes, while the Parish Council, WI, Gardening and Lunch Clubs all use the hall for their regular meetings. A Youth Club is planned for 2003.

A wide range of other occasional community gatherings are also held in the hall. These include Christmas fayres, harvest suppers, summer fetes, skittles nights, concerts, race nights, dances and discos. In addition, the building is hired out for weddings and other functions, and commercial use.

GUIDELINE S2: VILLAGE HALL

The Parish will actively support and assist the Village Hall Committee and other community organisations develop and improve the facilities offered by the new hall and extend its activity range.

6.5 PLAYING FIELD

While the existing playing field facilities at Little Wenlock are by no means bad for a community of its size, the children's play equipment is both limited and antiquated. Furthermore, annual playground inspections regularly identify safety issues that need to be addressed; often at considerable cost.

Apart from football posts and an activity wall and basketball hoop for ball games, facilities for older children are also sadly lacking.

Under these circumstances, a strong desire for improved and safer play equipment for young children has been identified in community consultations, together with a clear need to extend the play facilities for older children.

The parish sees improved play equipment for pre-school and primary school children as giving mothers far more opportunity to keep their families occupied locally, instead of having to drive to the Town Park or Wellington. As well as reducing car journeys, this would also increase young family flexibility quite markedly.

At the same time, it believes improved play facilities for older children would do much to reduce the extent to which they currently use local roads within the village for ball games, skating, cycling and other group play, giving obvious safety benefits.

The renovated barn which forms part of the playing field is recognised as an important community asset which could be developed for a variety of uses - including indoor games and activities for young people. This will, however, require major expenditure and an ongoing programme of supervised access to make it viable.

GUIDELINE S3: PLAYING FIELD

The Parish will prioritise schemes to improve the play equipment and facilities provided for local children at Little Wenlock, encouraging community efforts to secure outdoor and indoor improvements and the necessary funding to achieve them at the earliest opportunity.

6.6 COMMUNITY EVENTS

The parish is well-known for its sense of community and the number and range of events and activities organised by its various organisations to bring residents of all ages together and encourage the participation of visitors.

These include village fun days; barn dances; seasonal fetes, fairs and festivals; plant sales; garden open days; and latterly, the Little Wenlock 'Wheeze' cross-country run.

The community is keen to involve as many local people as possible in such events, increasing their 'reach' to involve people from across the entire parish, and attracting visitors and funds from outside it.

It also wishes to encourage the widest participation in the range of regular activities organised by the Gardening Club, Indoor Bowls Club, Lunch Club, Tennis Club and other local interest and community groups.

GUIDELINE S4: COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Parish will do everything possible to support community groups and organisations in running events and activities which bring together people from across the parish and attract visitors.

6.7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In company with many rural areas, the parish has suffered from a progressive decline in public transport provision over the years. To such an extent that it is now served by just three buses a week; all of them from Little Wenlock village.

As a result parishioners are effectively deprived of public transport. Those actually living within Little Wenlock village find it difficult to plan their lives around such a skeleton service, while many of those living outside the main village have to travel at least as far to reach the buses as to their destinations. At the same time, the buses tend not to go to the places people need to visit.

A number of older residents do not have cars and, because their breadwinner works outside the parish, families with a single car also find themselves without transport during the working week. There is a clearly identified transport need too amongst teenagers wishing to take advantage of entertainment facilities within the Telford area.

Extra bus services are considered inappropriate to these needs for their inflexibility, even if they could be justified socially or economically. Although a reasonable amount of informal car-sharing takes place, extending this into more formal schemes is also felt to leave a lot to be desired since the variety of destinations and needs means people generally do not want to travel to the same place at the same time.

In place of a better bus service, the parish believes its unmet transport needs would be better served by a specialist Taxi Voucher Scheme offering those who need public transport vouchers for use in payment or part-payment for taxi journeys as and when required.

The fact that pooling their vouchers would make them go very much further is considered a positive encouragement to share journeys, giving an environmental as well as social benefit to such a scheme.

GUIDELINE S5: PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Parish will work to establish a Taxi Voucher Scheme to complement the existing bus services for parishioners with unmet transport needs, seeking the necessary funding and organisational support as a matter of priority.

6.8 CRIME PREVENTION

Criminal activity in much of the parish is limited to isolated incidents of theft from cars, houses, garages and sheds, and disposal of cars stolen elsewhere.

The scale of car abandonment (and associated drug-taking) has been markedly reduced in recent years as a result of the closure of what had long been the clear blackspot for this activity - Hatch Lane - and its eventual reclassification to bridleway status.

There remain, however, a number of 'green lanes', no through roads and other isolated areas vulnerable to and occasionally used for both these activities.

Theft, criminal damage and trespass are more common on the farms to the east of the parish (nearest to Lawley and Telford) and poaching of gamebirds and deer is a concern around the woodlands in particular.

Minor incidents of vandalism have taken place around the converted barn on the playing field, which tends to attract youngsters from both within and outside the parish, but again these have tended to be isolated.

Although even the most vulnerable elderly residents do not feel a serious fear of crime, the parish is keen to make crime prevention a priority both to reinforce parishioners sense of safety and to deter criminals.

A Neighbourhood Watch programme has been running within the parish for a number of years - albeit on rather an informal and intermittent basis. Coupled with regular liaison with the West Mercia Constabulary and involvement in the Telford Crime Prevention Panel (with its range of focused initiatives, including Security for the Elderly), an active programme of Neighbourhood Watch throughout the parish is considered to be best local crime prevention strategy.

GUIDELINE S6: CRIME PREVENTION

The Parish will do everything possible to minimise crime and fear of crime by encouraging an active Neighbourhood Watch programme and participating in specific local crime prevention initiatives.

6.9 EDUCATION

With no schools in the parish, most children and young people travel to Wellington or Telford for state primary, secondary or tertiary education.

Local needs surrounding education are, consequently, primarily related to access. More specifically these involve the ability to secure places at local primary and secondary schools and transport provision to these and other educational facilities in and around Telford.

GUIDELINE S7 EDUCATION

The Parish will provide guidance to any residents with educational access problems or concerns, assisting them in whatever ways it can to achieve the right provision from the relevant authorities.

6.10 SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The general lack of facilities and employment in the parish and the unavailability of public transport makes it difficult for young people to socialise and obtain part-time or holiday jobs.

While this should be helped by the improvement of playing field facilities and the provision of taxi vouchers, the parish is keen to do more to assist its young people, both in terms of local activities and mobility.

GUIDELINE S8: SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Parish will support the development of organised activities for young people based around the Village Hall and help parishioners gain access to the youth employment transport schemes run by the Borough.

6.11 HEALTHCARE

Routine healthcare poses similar access-related issues for residents of the parish. Furthermore, the rural location means emergency medical services tend not to be available as promptly as they are in the urban and suburban parts of the Borough.

Under these circumstances, the parish recognises the need to ensure ambulance crews can rapidly locate patients requiring emergency treatment and are able to establish the critical medical information they need to ensure the best treatment accurately and efficiently.

At the same time, it believes there would be particular value in having a number of local people able to provide immediate life-saving treatment in response to emergencies prior to the arrival of paramedical staff.

GUIDELINE S9: HEALTHCARE

The Parish will implement a series of initiatives - including involvement in the First Responders Scheme - to support the provision of emergency care to residents. It will also provide advice to anyone experiencing healthcare access problems.

6.12 SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY

With a relatively large population of older people and its isolation from many local services, the parish is keen to provide elderly residents - particularly those without immediate family assistance - with whatever additional home support they may require.

Housework, shopping, laundry and ironing, gardening, fridge and freezer cleaning, pet care, errand-running, odd jobs and form-filling are areas in which extra support may be particularly valued by more vulnerable members of the community. As are advice and guidance on healthcare, residential and nursing care, group activities and social service entitlements.

GUIDELINE S10: SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY

The Parish will encourage all efforts to support elderly residents in their homes, working with local organisations, charities and service providers to identify particular needs and promote practical schemes to meet them.

6.13 HOME-WORKING

Given its potential to secure local employment, strengthen the community and reduce the need for travel to work, the parish is keen to do everything possible to encourage home-working whether as part of full, part-time or self-employment.

In particular, it wishes to see the extension of broad-band telecommunications access to all parishioners and the development of self-help activities which bring home-workers together and provide support for home-based businesses.

GUIDELINE S11: HOME-WORKING

The Parish will actively encourage local services and activities - including broadband telephony - which support residents in home-working.

6.14 WASTE RECYCLING & DISPOSAL

As part of its commitment to environmental sustainability and minimising the need for landfill, the parish is keen to encourage as much waste reduction, re-use, recycling and home composting as possible.

A paperbank and bottle bank, together with aluminium and steel can and aluminium foil recycling facilities are already provided in Little Wenlock village. As yet, however, no facilities are available in New Works. Local initiatives have also been undertaken to encourage Christmas tree recycling and the home-composting of organic waste.

Improved and extended recycling facilities have been identified as a priority by the community, together with a regular village skip service for non-recyclable waste to reduce journeys to the nearest public amenity site - approximately twice the distance of the past since the closure of Stoney Hill.

These improvements can best be achieved by working closely with the Borough's expanding recycling effort, as well as maintaining and developing a range of independent initiatives.

While the company still has a presence in the parish, the assistance of local landfill operator, Onyx may usefully be sought to provide a community skip service.

GUIDELINE S12: WASTE RECYCLING & DISPOSAL

The Parish will actively encourage waste reduction, re-use, recycling and home composting; support initiatives to extend and increase public recycling facilities and their use; and attempt to secure a community skip service for non-recyclable waste.

6.15 EMERGENCY PLANNING

Recent incidents of prolonged power and water supply failure resulting from severe weather, as well as concerns over fire and other local authority cover and services, have underlined the need for the parish to plan effectively to support its residents in the event of emergencies.

It is considered particularly important to have designated points of official community contact with the relevant service providers to co-ordinate information flow in both directions - reporting problems and issues to the authorities on the one hand and feeding back progress and actions to the community on the other.

An up-to-date contact register of individuals with particular medical, safety, law and order, counselling and craft skills who may be called upon in response to specific emergencies is also felt to be vital.

GUIDELINE S13: EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Parish will develop and maintain an emergency plan, designating key responsibilities and identifying important skills within the community to ensure the best possible co-ordination of self-help.

6.16 LOCAL INFORMATION

There are a wide range of services available locally - from a mobile shop and library to home-shopping via the Internet, community nursing, meals on wheels, pastoral care, public amenity sites and recycling facilities.

At the same time, a wide range of activities are run by a variety of community groups and organisations on both a regular and occasional basis.

The parish recognises the value of ensuring residents are as well informed as possible of local services and activities, helping them take the greatest advantage of the services available and encouraging the greatest participation in the activities organised. This is considered to be an especially important community -building measure.

In addition to noticeboards in both main villages, a Parish Information sheet listing a large number of the most valuable services and activities, together with contact numbers, is up-dated and distributed regularly. An occasional Community News sheet is also produced and distributed to communicate developments, Parish Council news and details of other local activities and events.

A number of possibilities have been identified for enhancing community information provision, including;

1. Improving the design, content and durability of the information sheet;
2. Developing the Community News sheet into a more regular and comprehensive source of activity information;
3. Producing a regularly up-dated register of reliable local craftsmen and suppliers; and,
4. Developing and maintaining a parish web-site as an additional communication medium.

GUIDELINE S14: LOCAL INFORMATION

The Parish will encourage and support initiatives from individuals and community groups to better inform residents of local services and activities, seeking external funding where available.

7. ACTION PLAN

7.1 IMPLEMENTATION

The Little Wenlock Parish Plan will be implemented by the community under the guidance of Little Wenlock Parish Council according to the following overall action plan.

Each year the Parish Council will report on the progress achieved over the past twelve months and produce a specific plan of action for the coming year. This will ensure the momentum of action is maintained and the entire community is as fully informed and involved as possible.

GUIDELINE	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITIES
HOUSING & BUILDING		
H 1 NEW HOUSING NUMBERS	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 2 NEW HOUSING IN SETTLEMENTS	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 3 NEW HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 4 NEW HOUSING SCALE	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 5 AFFORDABLE HOUSING	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Undertake a Housing Needs Assessment Develop a programme if appropriate	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Housing) Local Housing Association
H 6 HOUSING DESIGN	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 7 BUILDING CONVERSION	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 8 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 9 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 10 LISTED BUILDINGS	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 11 ENERGY SUPPLY	Secure appropriate vegetation control and maintenance of overhead power lines Secure adequate back-up generators at key pumping stations	Parish Council Electricity company Water company
H 12 ENERGY EFFICIENCY	Conduct parish energy audit Provide all homes with energy-saving advice Establish community energy-saving group	Parish Council Marches Energy Agency Community group
H 13 RENEWABLE ENERGY	Conduct parish energy audit Provide all homes with green electricity information Establish community energy-saving club Seek pilot homes for active solar technology	Parish Council Marches Energy Agency Community group
H 14 STREET LIGHTING	Survey all homes on street lighting effectiveness Identify additional needs and implement maintenance and improvement programme	Parish Council Electricity company

H 15 PAVEMENTS & STREET PARKING	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering future developments	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
H 16 TRAFFIC CALMING	Investigate specific needs and options Consult with community Cost appropriate measures Instal measures subject to funding	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Highways) West Mercia Constabulary
COUNTRYSIDE & ENVIRONMENT		
C 1 DESIGNATED AREAS	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
C 2 FARMING & WOODLAND	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
C 3 WILDLIFE CONSERVATION	Conduct Phase 1 Habitat Survey Establish community conservation group Identify and implement specific projects Seek external funding and support	Parish Council Community group Shropshire Wildlife Trust
C 4 RIGHTS OF WAY	Produce Definitive Rights of Way Statement Ensure appropriate maintenance	Parish Council North Telford Parish Paths Partnership
C 5 THE WREKIN	Seek Borough action to improve road safety, litter collection and disposal, and re-open public toilets.	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Recreation, Highways & Environmental Services) West Mercia Constabulary
C 6 ROADS	Establish Quiet Lane designation process Consult with community Seek Quiet Lane designation for appropriate roads	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Highways) Campaign to Protect Rural England
C 7 MINERAL EXTRACTION	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning)
C 8 WASTE DISPOSAL	Seek adoption as Supplementary Planning Guidance Use in considering planning applications Maintain pressure on land-fill operator and waste licensing authorities through liaison group.	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Planning & Environmental Health) Environment Agency Onyx
C 9 LITTER & FLY TIPPING	Organise community litter-picking Ensure Borough removes dumped rubbish Develop specific action plans with Borough for problem areas	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Environmental Services)
C 10 VERGES & PLANTING	Establish annual maintenance plans with Borough. Ensure effective implementation	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Environmental Services)
C 11 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE	Establish six monthly review and action plan with Borough. Ensure effective implementation	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Highways)
C 12 SNOW CLEARANCE & GRITTING	Seek extension of gritting routes with Borough. Ensure effective implementation	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Highways)

COMMUNITY & SERVICES		
S 1 POST OFFICE & SHOP	Support any planning or change of use application Provide all homes with local mobile shop and home delivery information	Parish Council
S 2 VILLAGE HALL	Support Village Hall facility improvement Extend activity programme	Parish Council Village Hall Committee
S 3 PLAYING FIELD	Prepare children's play equipment development proposal Seek external funding and support	Parish Council Village Hall Committee
S 4 COMMUNITY EVENTS	Maintain existing events and activity programme Encourage extra events and activities Seek external funding support	Parish Council Village Hall Committee Parochial Church Council Community groups & clubs
S 5 PUBLIC TRANSPORT	Develop Taxi Voucher scheme Seek Parish Transport Grant support Operate and extend scheme if successful	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Transport)
S 6 CRIME PREVENTION	Reinvigorate Neighbourhood Watch Develop specific crime prevention initiatives	Parish Council West Mercia Constabulary Telford Crime Prevention Panel
S 7 EDUCATION	Establish focus for local education information Provide guidance on request	Parish Council Telford & Wrekin Council (Education)
S 8 SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	Establish youth club Provide residents with information on local transport schemes Seek funding for activity programme	Parish Council Community group Telford & Wrekin Council (Transport)
S 9 HEALTHCARE	Establish Community First Responders group Provide all homes with Datalink emergency information scheme packs Ensure adequate street signing	Parish Council Shropshire Ambulance Service Telford & Wrekin Council (Highways)
S 10 SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY	Establish local needs Organise home support and visits Work with specific charity and voluntary service programmes	Parish Council Parochial Church Council Age Concern WRVS
S 11 HOME-WORKING	Seek provision of broadband telephony services from local exchanges Establish home-workers community group	Parish Council Community group
S 12 WASTE RECYCLING & DISPOSAL	Secure recycling facilities in New Works Establish community recycling group Organise home composting initiative Provide all homes with waste advice Seek extension of Borough kerbside recycling scheme Secure occasional village skip service	Parish Council Community group Telford & Wrekin Council (Environmental Services) Onyx
S 13 EMERGENCY PLANNING	Establish a local emergency plan Maintain up-to-date contact list of key skills within the community	Parish Council
S 14 LOCAL INFORMATION	Provide all homes with up-rated Information Sheet on regular basis Develop Community News into more regular newsletter Develop village web-site	Parish Council Community groups

