

**Pen Selwood Parish Council
Planning Policy**

2015

Introduction

This is an update of the October 2011 Pen Selwood Planning Policy and Cherished Landscape Evaluation document, amended in the light of information gathered from the South Somerset District Council Core Strategy and Pen Selwood's Community Plan of 2012.

Under the SSDC Core Strategy Pen Selwood is classed as a Rural Settlement. This means that development will only be considered when it meets the sustainable needs of the village. Most development within the SSDC is planned to be in Yeovil, the Market Towns and the Rural Centres.

The Pen Selwood Community Plan covered many aspects of life in the village including development and its findings have been incorporated into this new version of our Planning Policy Document, although it is safe to say that most of the findings of the Community Plan closely matched the original document's ethos.

Context

The Parish of Pen Selwood occupies the southern end of a prominent wooded ridge which formed the core of the ancient forest of Selwood and the boundary between Somerset and Wiltshire. It is a small parish with a number of farms and equestrian facilities but the majority of the buildings are domestic dwellings. There are 136 houses in Pen with a population of approx 286. Demographically 38% of residents are 65 years of age or over. It has a stable population with very few 'weekenders' and over half the population have lived here for more than ten years.

The village has an ancient church, a village hall, a community field with children's playground and a nature reserve. It has no shop, school or post office. There is no bus service, though some residents do use the CAT bus regularly. There is a public house at the very end of the parish at Leigh Common.

The village is very active socially. Each year it runs a village fete, a horse and dog show, a 'Tough 10k' run and holds a village christmas party. It runs its own website, has events throughout the year to support the church, the village hall and the community field and children's playground. The Parish Council has provided allotments and supported the village in buying a defibrillator which is housed in the old telephone box. There are monthly playreading and bookclub meetings. It has an active group of bell ringers and a footpath group. The village hall houses two art groups, weekly yoga classes, a fortnightly village café and a monthly pub night. There is also an excellent quarterly parish newspaper which is always full of news and events.

All this gives a sense of belonging and community that the people who live here really cherish and wish to preserve.

Much of the Parish lies within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs.

As such it is recognised to be of equivalent importance in terms of landscape quality as a National Park. Its designation as an AONB was confirmed in October 1983.

The First Priority of the Parish Council with the help of the residents is to:

“Preserve the tranquil, rural character of Pen Selwood as part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”

To achieve this we must:

- Maintain the rural ambience.
- Preserve our leafy lanes and hedgerows.
- Protect the tranquillity and visual amenity of the village.
- Ensure that only appropriate and suitable development occurs in the village.

It was clear from the Community Plan that residents love the rural nature of the village. The distinctive features that people value are:

- The rural ambience, with tree lined approaches and natural verges. There are no street lights in the village which adds to the rural nature and allows more stars to be seen. It is so rare to have such little light pollution anywhere these days.
- Outstanding landscape and views, sitting as it does almost wholly within an AONB.
- A very large network of footpaths and bridleways within the parish which are cared for by an active footpath group.
- Historical features such as ancient field boundaries, medieval millstone pits, an ancient packhorse route and two motte and bailey castles.
- Woodland, leafy lanes and hedgerows. The species rich hedgerows and fields complement broad areas of woodland and incised coombes.
- Quiet lanes for walking, riding, cycling and jogging.
- The ancient nature of the linear settlement with dwellings that are well spaced and with a diversity of building styles.

The present-day inhabitants of Pen Selwood are aware of their historical inheritance. Many residents have sympathetically restored their houses and preserved historic features. The main concern is the possibility of 'creeping suburbanisation' and development which could be 'out of scale' with the village. Development should be tied to proven local Parish need that is identified and accepted by both the Parish Council and South Somerset District Council and according to the SSDC Core Strategy for rural settlements.

The Community Plan, via a questionnaire to which 79% of residents responded, asked people, amongst other things, for their views on housing and development within the village. The results made it clear that the majority of residents were

against any multiple housing development, although many people would not mind if new individual houses were built especially if they were for people with existing links to the village.

It was also clear that most people would not like to see light industrial premises, small business or leisure developments or large scale alternative energy developments.

Any proposals for future development will be judged against relevant planning policies and in particular be related to maintaining a sustainable residential and agricultural environment. The Parish Council will respond to all planning applications within the given time frame as stipulated by the District Council. Where planning applications are received outside the normal cycle of meetings, non-contentious applications will be dealt with through consultation with the Councillors together with site visits where considered necessary. An additional council meeting will be called whenever there is a situation of wider public concern.

The Parish Council Guidelines.

Historical and Community Guidelines

We are a very ancient village and must once have been of great strategic importance judging by the number of defensive works within or close by the parish boundaries, although for most of our history we have been a quiet agricultural community.

- We will continue to recognise and care for our historical heritage including our 12th century church, memorial cross, the village pump, our ancient field boundaries, medieval whetstone quarry pits, Leigh Common, ancient pack horse route and motte and bailey castle sites.
- It is therefore important that any development respects the historical character and pattern of the settlement.
- We will seek to ensure that any development, either new or an alteration to an existing property will blend in and be sympathetic to the surrounding area.
- The Parish Council will not support any large scale development.

Landscape guidelines.

It is clear that the residents of Pen Selwood value the landscape in which they live. To maintain this landscape it is important that where there is development of any kind it should adhere to the following landscape guidelines.

- Development that would be visually intrusive will be resisted unless adequate screening or landscaping measures can be achieved. Removal of native trees and hedgerows will be resisted and any new planting should be of native species.
- Agricultural buildings and stables should avoid isolated and prominent locations. They should be positioned if possible next to existing agricultural buildings.
- The 11.5 miles of footpaths in the parish are recognised as a valuable asset. The Parish Council will resist the rerouting or closure of footpaths for development.
- Large scale Solar Panel or Wind Farm development will be strongly resisted as will the placing of such that are clearly visible from the AONB.
- The common land at Leigh Common should be protected.
- The SSSI at Moldrum's Ground nature reserve will be protected and the Parish Council will support the development and designation of other wildlife conservation areas within the parish.
- The ancient pack horse route which is an unsurfaced extension of Long Lane must be preserved.
- The Combe and surrounding area recognised as 'Cherished Landscape' should be protected. See Cherished Landscape Evaluation document October 2011.

Highway Guidelines

With the exception of the Leigh Common area the village is accessed by narrow winding country lanes. All access is single track with infrequent passing places. Vehicular progress is slow and the many tight bends make visibility difficult. There are some notably difficult slopes to navigate which become very dangerous in winter. In particular Great Hill and Coombe Street. The lanes are too narrow for heavy vehicles, lorries and large buses. When large lorries do come into the village they cause damage to the verges, banks and overhanging vegetation. On several occasions long vehicles have become stuck across the bends in Long Lane and elsewhere. Particular problems are caused when any combination of large lorry, tractor, cyclist, walker, horse rider, delivery van and resident in their car meet on a blind bend. The narrow highways must be seen as an impediment to further development.

- The Parish Council will continue to issue reminders to residents requesting that deliveries are made using the smallest vehicle possible.
- The Parish Council will work relentlessly to encourage Highway to keep the lanes in good repair and deal with our annual pothole problem.

- It is also important to work with Highways to agree hedge and verge cutting times. This includes cutting verges late in the season to allow the wild flowers to set seed.
- All planning applications will be assessed in terms of their likely impact on the limited road network and general environment in terms of noise, air and light pollution.

Settlement Guidelines

- The spacious and open character of Pen Selwood should be retained as should the extensive views from many parts of the village.
- Any new development will be expected to respect the linear layout of the village which radiates from the church.
- New development with frontages on to the main village streets will be expected to retain their existing hedging and/or natural stone walling.
- Open green verges adjoining the lanes through the village will be retained.
- Road signs will be restricted and only essential signage will be permitted.
- Additional road names will not be permitted.
- Street lighting will not be permitted.
- Hard kerb edging between verges and road surfaces will be discouraged. The use of geometrical waiting bays will be discouraged.
- We will encourage the removal of unsightly street furniture such as disused telegraph poles where these detract from the character of the village.
- New development will be expected to provide parking and access so that visual impact is minimised and the narrow lanes are kept free of parked vehicles.
- There should be no major developments of economic activity and no new housing except that which meets the needs of the village and takes account of views expressed in the community plan as detailed above.
- Major development would be considered to damage the character of the village and the AONB.
- Approval for mobile homes will be given only on a needs basis and for a limited period of time. The term mobile home is understood to be temporary accommodation used while an individual property is renovated, remodelled or extended. A grouping of several mobile homes would not be permitted.
- Change of use of residential buildings to offices will be permitted but only where the scale and nature of the business is not detrimental to the neighbouring properties.

Building Guidelines

- The overall design of any new dwelling should be on traditional lines (vernacular architecture of the village) using natural building materials such as greensand stone.
- Natural clay tiles or slates for roofs should be used in preference to concrete tiles and conform to traditional roof pitches and overhangs.
- Chimney stacks in brick or stone are a notable feature and should be retained and incorporated into new developments where possible.
- House extensions should be in keeping with the property that is being developed and wherever possible should use the same materials.
- New farm buildings should respect the traditional character of nearby buildings. Traditional materials of appropriate colour should be used where possible and/or screened by sensitive planting.
- Applications for residential buildings on the grounds of agricultural need must have an agricultural tie.
- Porches and windows of a scale and design similar to those used traditionally will be encouraged.
- Standard modern house types should be avoided.
- Individual, unique builds will be decided on their merits but must be sympathetic and protect the rural character.

Environmental Guidelines

- The Parish Council will look favourably on new technology and environmentally friendly developments.
- The Parish Council is alert to the noise and visual impact of wind power generators and would resist any such development within the Parish.
- The Parish Council will resist the erection of tall galvanised phone masts.
- The Parish Council will encourage anti-pollution practices wherever possible in terms of light, air, noise, water and waste.
- Taking into account their visual impact within the village and with the exception of large commercial wind turbines, we will support the installation of renewable energy sources such as house solar panels and heat pumps which minimise carbon emissions or the use of fossil fuels.

Consultation

- The Parish Council will lobby for a reduction in noise from the A303 through the use of low noise surfaces.
- At this time Superfast Broadband is being rolled out to a target of 90% of rural areas. The Parish Council will work with parishioners to try and ensure that our village is included in this important amenity.

The Parish Council will monitor the application of this Policy document and review its contents on a needs basis.

Pen Selwood Parish Council on behalf of its residents would like to reiterate that we wish to preserve the rural nature of our village. We should like to feel that South Somerset District Council and planning officers will support us in this aim

Changes to the 2014 document:
New Parish Councillors following May 2015 election
and
South Somerset's Core Strategy has now been adopted

Pen Selwood Parish Council

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