



# Neighbourhood Plan submission version



2017–2031

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# Foreword

I am very pleased to write this foreword by way of an introduction to the Swinford Neighbourhood Plan. This Plan will help govern the future development for Swinford from 2017 until 2031.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015, the first public meeting was held in Swinford to gauge public support for the delivery of a Neighbourhood Plan. That meeting, followed by a Parish Council resolution to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, effectively started a process that has taken up a considerable amount of time and effort from the Advisory Committee that was established by the Parish Council alongside the local community.

During the past two years, we have set up theme groups consisting of members of the public to consider subjects that are important to the village; produced, distributed and analysed a community questionnaire; held two open events (one at the start of the process to gather information about what makes Swinford special and what needs to improve, and one towards the end of the process when draft policies were open to scrutiny by the community prior to being finalised); held two rounds of Regulation 14 Consultation; and held a housing update presentation in June 2017 to discuss the process to date, the revised housing allocation and the proposed sites following the first round of Regulation 14 Consultation. Comments have been collated from all our consultation processes, and the Plan revised as necessary considering the views expressed by local and national stakeholders and local people.

This is the submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Swinford. This means that the Parish Council is satisfied that it has a robust draft Neighbourhood Plan and asks Harborough District Council to check the processes that have been followed and consult with relevant bodies that it has been developed in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.

I would like to thank all members of the various groups that have helped us to get to where we are now. We are also grateful to Officers at Harborough District Council, District Councillors and the wider community for their involvement in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

In a relatively short period of time we have produced a document that we believe reflects the hopes and aspirations of the community, and we hope that you agree!

**Tina Briars - Chair  
Swinford Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee**

**September 2017**

# 1. Background and Context

## Neighbourhood Plans

The Localism Act (2011) introduced a new planning initiative which gives Parish Councils the opportunity to engage with their local communities and prepare what is known as a 'Neighbourhood Plan' which will help to shape future development in their areas. Once 'made', these plans will become part of the strategic development plan produced by district councils and therefore, carry full legal weight in the determination of planning applications.

Neighbourhood Plans carry some statutory weight from the point at which they are submitted to the local planning authority, but do not take full effect until they pass a community referendum with over 50% of the votes cast in favour. Plans must also pass an independent examination to test conformity with local, national and EU strategic planning policies before they can be put to a community referendum and legally come into force. These are known as 'Basic Conditions'.

The Basic Conditions require Neighbourhood Plans to:

- Have regard for national planning policy (primarily through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG));
- Be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area (i.e. such as in a core strategy);
- Be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

An independent and suitably qualified person will check that a Neighbourhood Plan appropriately meets these conditions before it can be voted on in a local community referendum. This is to make sure that referendum only take place when proposals are workable and fully compliant.

A Basic Conditions Statement for Swinford Neighbourhood Plan can be found in Appendix 1.

## A Neighbourhood Plan for Swinford

With an increasing number of planning applications being submitted for development in the Parish, allied to the potential for change within the village and surrounding landscape, the Parish Council took the decision that it would be timely to consider a Neighbourhood Plan for Swinford.

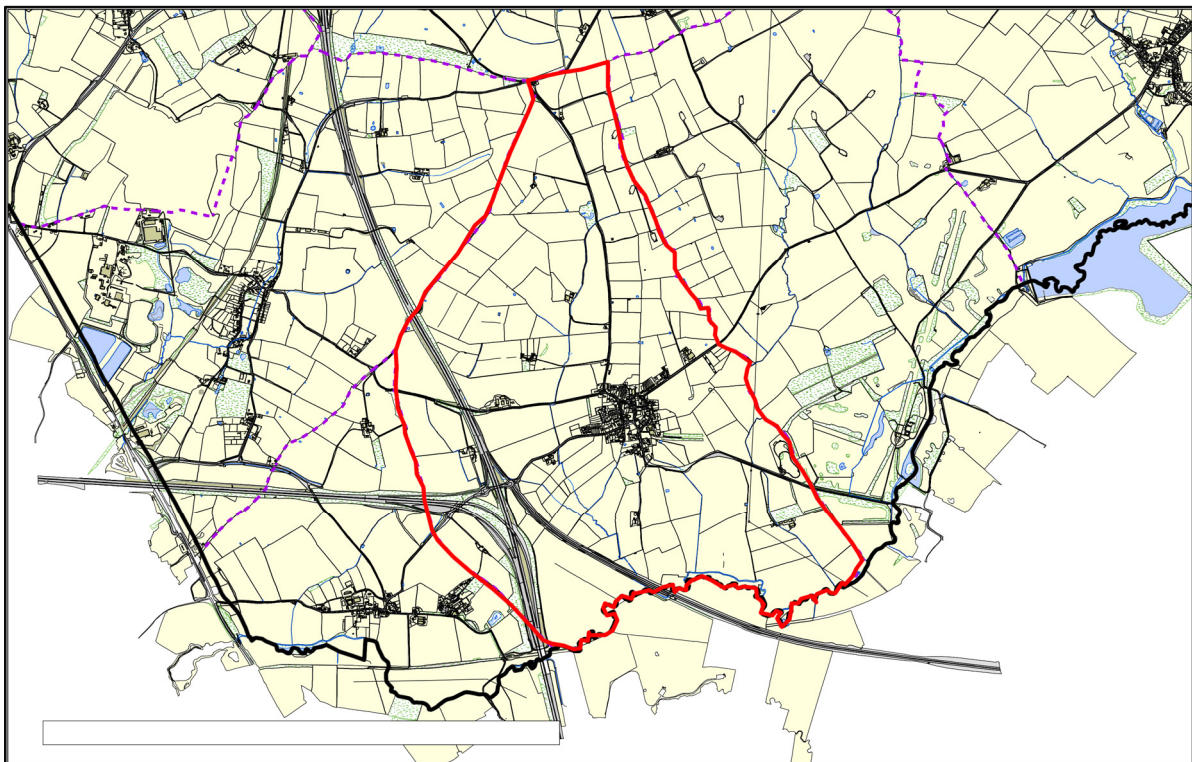


The Plan gives local people an opportunity to help formulate policies on the type, scale and design of any new development within the Parish and help determine what would be acceptable and appropriate in the local environment.

It sets out how they would like to see the village develop over the next fifteen years or so, and ensures that local people have a stronger influence over the way change and development takes place in the area and helps to protect and possibly enhance the features they most value.

In March 2015, Swinford Parish Council approached Harborough District Council (HDC) with an application for designation as a Neighbourhood Plan area. The Portfolio Holder for Planning Services approved the application on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2015. The area to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan is delineated by the parish boundary shown on the map below.

**Figure 1 – Designated Area**  
Swinford Neighbourhood Plan Designated Area



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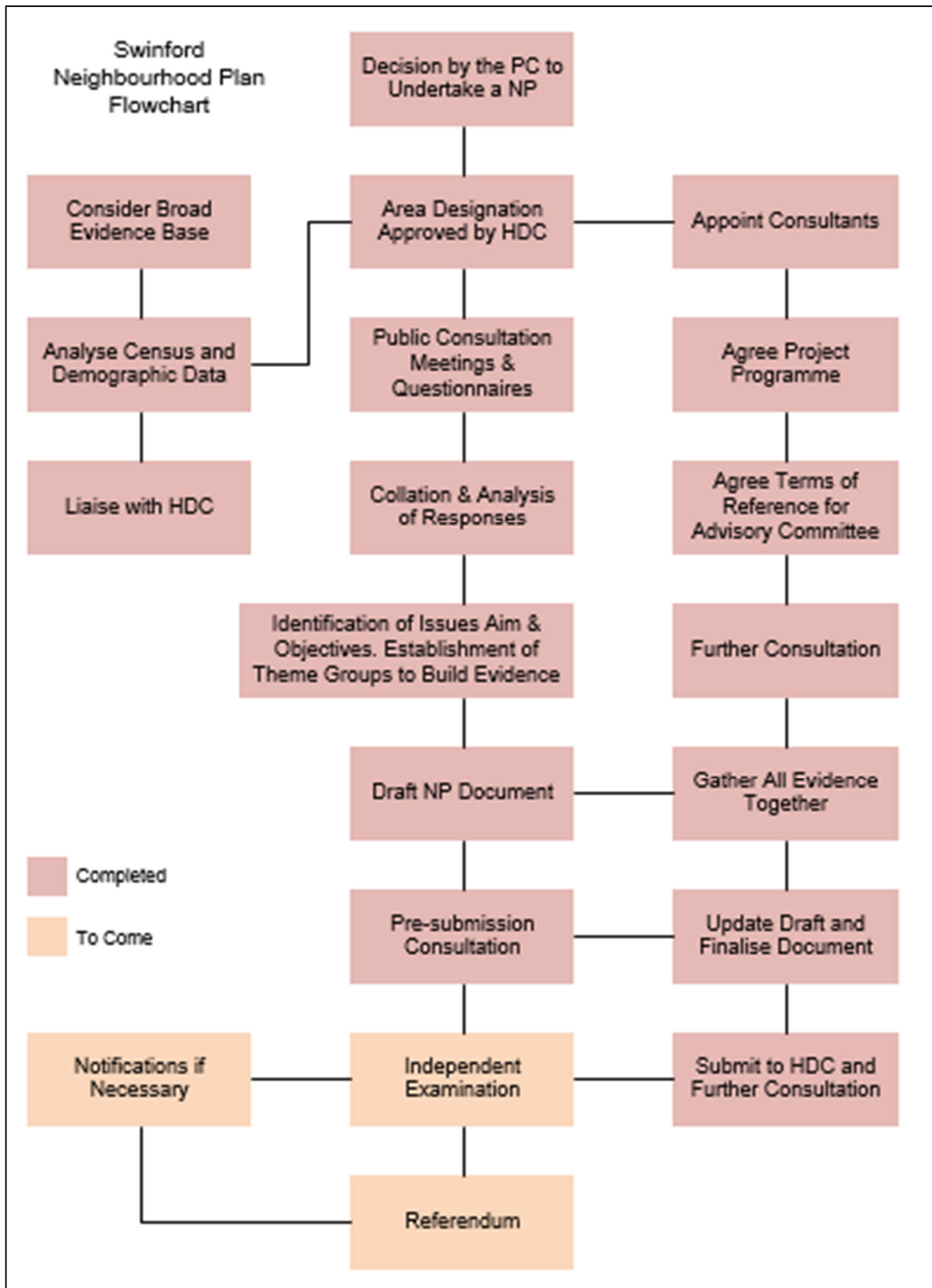
## **The Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee**

The work of driving the Neighbourhood Plan forward was carried out by a small Advisory Committee comprising Parish Councillors Tina Briars (Chair) and Jane Robson (Secretary) along with local residents including Lawrence Osborne, Graham Mold, Martin Wright, David Steele, Anthony Hannant, Brian Clapham, Dave Havergill, John Wiggins and Clare Waters.

The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan must conform to guidelines laid down by central government and involves extensive consultation not only with the local community, but also the district council and local businesses and landowners. There is a prescribed procedure with appropriate checks and formal consultation processes.

The development of the Neighbourhood Plan for Swinford is as set out in the following flow chart:

**Figure 2 – Plan Flowchart**  
Swinford Neighbourhood Plan Flowchart



## 2. Planning Context

### National Planning Policy Context

The procedure for the 'making' of a Neighbourhood Plan is prescribed within the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The Regulations have informed the preparation of policies for the Swinford Neighbourhood Plan, in particular ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Is in general conformity with the strategic policies of Harborough District Council and has regard for the policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as well as meeting a range of EU obligations.

The NPPF, published in March 2012, sets out the Government's approach to sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Essentially, it is about positive growth with economic, social and environmental gains being sought simultaneously through the planning system. The NPPF is supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), an accessible web based resource which is actively managed and updated as necessary.

Neighbourhood planning forms part of the NPPF in allowing local communities to shape sustainable development within their area and to enable local communities to address their detailed needs and priorities.

The NPPF defined broad and specific guidelines for planning policy in England. The opening paragraph in the introduction to the NPPF explains the overarching principle as follows:

*'The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities'.*

The Ministerial foreword in the NPPF includes the following statement from the Rt. Hon. Greg Clark MP, the then Minister for Planning:

*In part, people have been put off from getting involved because planning policy itself has become so elaborate and forbidding – the preserve of specialists, rather than people in communities'.*

*‘This National Planning Policy Framework changes that. By replacing over a thousand pages of national policy with around fifty, written simply and clearly, we are allowing people and communities back into planning’.*

Within the document, the NPPF sets out 12 ‘core planning principles’ the first of which specifies that local decision making should *“be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area.”*

A Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and must also plan positively to support these policies.

## **Local Planning Policy Context**

The Neighbourhood Plan takes into account the existing Harborough Core Strategy and the emerging Local Plan, which is expected to be ‘adopted’ in October 2018.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

## **Sustainable Development**

A definition of sustainable development is provided within the NPPF. It describes three dimensions to sustainable development and that these dimensions give rise to the need for planning to perform a number of roles:

**An economic role** (see policies CF1,2 T1 and E1-E5) - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure.

Whilst the community is primarily residential, there is a desire to safeguard its employment outlets, including the employment site and farming community. We therefore wish to retain the current level of employment, and develop it further where possible, in our area by:

- Supporting the provision of high speed broadband to enable working at home;
- Developing an active relationship with local farmers and landowners to help make best use of land whilst preserving the village community and its environment.

**A social role** (see policies H1-H7) – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by promoting the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible

local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

Through the Neighbourhood Plan we are seeking to ensure that the community is able to grow and adapt successfully to an increased population.

**An environmental role** (see policies ENV1-ENV10) – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including supporting the move to a low carbon economy.

In order to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, we are seeking to ensure that:

- The special open spaces within our village are protected from development, to protect the village identity and retain the rural nature of its surroundings;
- Development preserves and contributes to the attractive local countryside including replacement of any hedging and trees which need to be maintained;
- Development recognises the need to protect and, where possible, improve biodiversity and important habitats and includes adding hedging and trees to boundaries of new developments.

This document sets out local considerations for delivering sustainable development across Swinford. Development proposals should meet the requirements of all relevant policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and be in line with Harborough District and national policies.



## Neighbourhood Plans

The NPPF sets out the broad parameters within which a Neighbourhood Plan should be prepared. It notes that there are a number of key elements that should be at the heart of the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Neighbourhood Plans give communities direct power to develop a shared vision of the neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need.
- Neighbourhood Plans can shape and direct sustainable development within their area.
- The ambition of the Neighbourhood Plan should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider area.
- Neighbourhood Plans should be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and plan positively to support them. They should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan and should not undermine its strategic policies.

## 3. Swinford Village

### A Brief History

The rural parish of Swinford is situated in South Leicestershire. The earliest evidence of human activity in the parish is of prehistoric date with Stone Age flints including a Neolithic arrowhead. Other flint and pottery finds together with earthworks carry the story through the Bronze Age to the present via the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Mediaeval periods.

While there may have been a Roman settlement within the parish rather than itinerant activity, the village itself is thought to be of Anglo-Saxon origin from its name, the derivation of which is still disputed. It may be a corruption of 'swine-ford', the ford across the Avon used by pigs, it may refer to the village's position at the head (haefod) of a stream (suin), or there may be another explanation altogether.

The first historical record of the village was made in the Domesday survey in 1086. It appears that the village was of some importance at this time as seven separate manorial estates are mentioned, more than for any other place in the county, including Leicester. A priest was also in residence, one of only five in the county. It seems likely that the enlarging or rebuilding of the original Saxon church was instigated by the Revell family in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The church and some 160 acres of land were granted to the Knights Hospitallers of Jerusalem in 1190 who held them until the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

One documented event from past centuries was the 'sudden and dreadful fire (which) broke out on Thursday, April 10, 1740, between the hours of 8 and 9 in the forenoon, which in less than three hours' time (the wind being very violent) consumed 15 dwelling houses, together with all the barns, stables, and out-houses belonging to them, together with all their household goods, implements of husbandry, and large quantities of grain, hay, malt, and fuel; and also many horses and other cattle, being the whole substance of the poor sufferers, to the amount of £2500 or thereabouts: for which they were allowed to make a collection by letters of request'.

A major change in the landscape of the parish must have occurred after 1780 when the first of a series of Acts of Parliament was passed to begin the process of enclosing the open and common fields, pastures and commons. Vestiges of ridge and furrow ploughing are still evident within many of the fields of the parish from the times of open field systems.

Other changes would have occurred from time to time, such as the widespread loss of tree cover due to Dutch elm disease in the 1960s and 70s. Alterations to the built

environment have been seen, from the demolition of dwellings to the building of new ones in green or brown field sites and the change of use and conversion of existing buildings. An 11-turbine wind farm was constructed north of the village at Swinford Corner and commenced operation in autumn 2012.

There are records of education being conducted within the parish from at least 1723, when 16 children were enjoying lessons paid for by some 'neighbouring gentlemen'. The old Catholic school provided an education primarily for the children of Stanford Estate workers until its closure. The present school building was begun in 1874 and has gone through several phases of alteration and extension up to the present. Numbers on the roll have fluctuated to a current high, with occasional boosts such as that provided by evacuees during the war.

The population of Swinford appears to have always been at relatively healthy levels – from the first mention in the Domesday survey, 27 households in 1564, 68 dwellings in 1670, 82 inhabited houses in which were 92 families in 1801 (358 adults), increasing to 450 adults in the 1830s and 40s but then decreasing to just over 300 in 1901 and rising again to 586 in 2011.

## **Profile**

At the time of the 2011 Census, Swinford had a population of 586 which represented a significant increase of 18% since 2001, far higher than the District increase of 11.5%.

Levels of deprivation are well below the district, regional and national averages. 60.8% of households are classified as not deprived compared to 54.1% across Harborough and 42% in the East Midlands and England. The levels of health are good with the proportion of residents who consider that their health is very good being above average (56.3% in Swinford compared to 50.9% across Harborough, 45.3% regionally and 47.2% in England).

The levels of unemployment are low and levels of self-employment at 17.7% more than double regional levels. Levels of economic activity, at 81%, are greater than District (74%); Region (69%) and England (70%) levels. There are limited employment opportunities in the village.

A higher proportion of residents (53.5%) travel to work by car than they do across the district, region or nationally and car ownership is high. The proportion of households with no car is 4.4%, in stark contrast to district (11.8%); region (22.1%) and national (25.8%) The proportion of working age residents (12%) who state they work from home is double the local average and almost four-times regional and national averages.

The Parish is a popular area to live and demand for housing is strong. The main tenure is owner occupied (81%), and other forms of tenure, especially socially rented, are

relatively low (4%). There are more detached houses (63%) than across Harborough (48%), the East Midlands (33%) or England (22%). There are also fewer small houses (1, 2 and 3 bedroomed) than across the District and more large houses (4 and 5+ bedroomed).

Number of bedrooms				
Bedrooms	Swinford		Harborough District	
1	7	3%	2,033	6%
2	33	14%	7,853	22%
3	78	34%	13,018	37%
4	75	33%	8,975	26%
5+	34	15%	2,968	9%

There is also an ageing population in Swinford, although the increase in people aged 65+ since 2001 is only five – 79 people compared to 74 in 2001. A much higher level of under occupancy is present compared to the District as a whole – 63% of households have two or more spare bedrooms compared to just 49% across the District as a whole.

The fit between demand and the available type and tenure of housing is an issue as well as the affordability of existing and new housing.

The Parish has a limited social and community infrastructure which includes a pub, village hall, primary school, children’s play area and church. However, there are several active community groups within the village.

There are limited employment opportunities in Swinford. Public transport is infrequent and the junction improvements to the A14 within a mile of Swinford have reduced traffic movements through the parish but have reduced the connection to the national traffic network for residents.

The area is strategically well located in relation to the national road network, has several walking routes and a national cycle route. Public transport is limited and there is a very high dependency on the car for travel purposes.

The built environment is good. This includes 17 Listed Buildings. The majority of the village is in a Conservation Area.

## 4. Process

### Community Engagement

At the start of the process, members of the community were invited by Swinford Parish Council to an open event in the Village Hall on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015. The purpose was to share information about neighbourhood planning and to establish levels of support in the community. The parishioners who attended overwhelmingly supported the development of a plan. The event, which attracted over 70 residents, set in motion a process to establish an Advisory Committee and to begin to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan.

### Questionnaires

Copies of the initial questionnaire were distributed to every household in the parish. In total, 168 copies of the questionnaire were completed and returned (from 233 households), representing a return from 72% of households.

### First Open Event

A consultation event on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016 set out the context and stages of the project and asked questions about people's thoughts about Swinford. An analysis of the event is included in the evidence base.



The views expressed by the residents were used to shape the strategy in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan for Swinford. Over 60 people attended and offered their views.

## **Theme Groups**

Following the Open Event in April 2016, residents signed up to become part of 'theme groups' to explore the detail of the Neighbourhood Plan; to build the evidence base and to lay the foundation for the draft Neighbourhood Plan. An environmental theme group was established, along with a theme group on housing and the built environment and another group looking at community facilities; transport and employment.

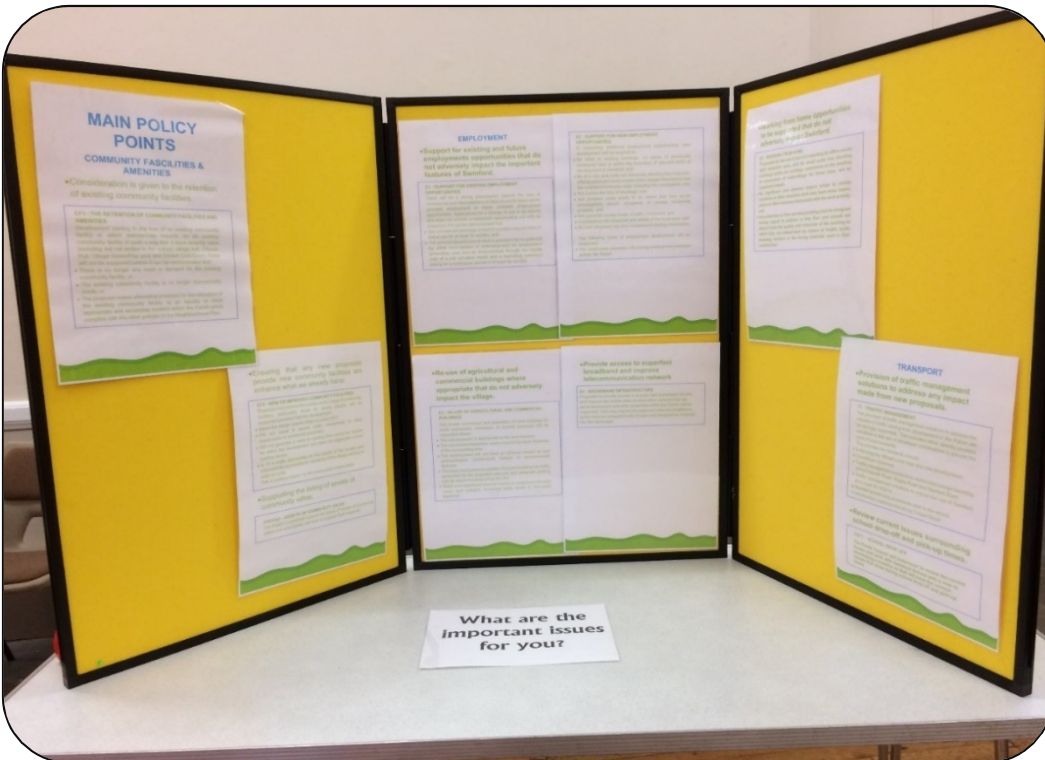
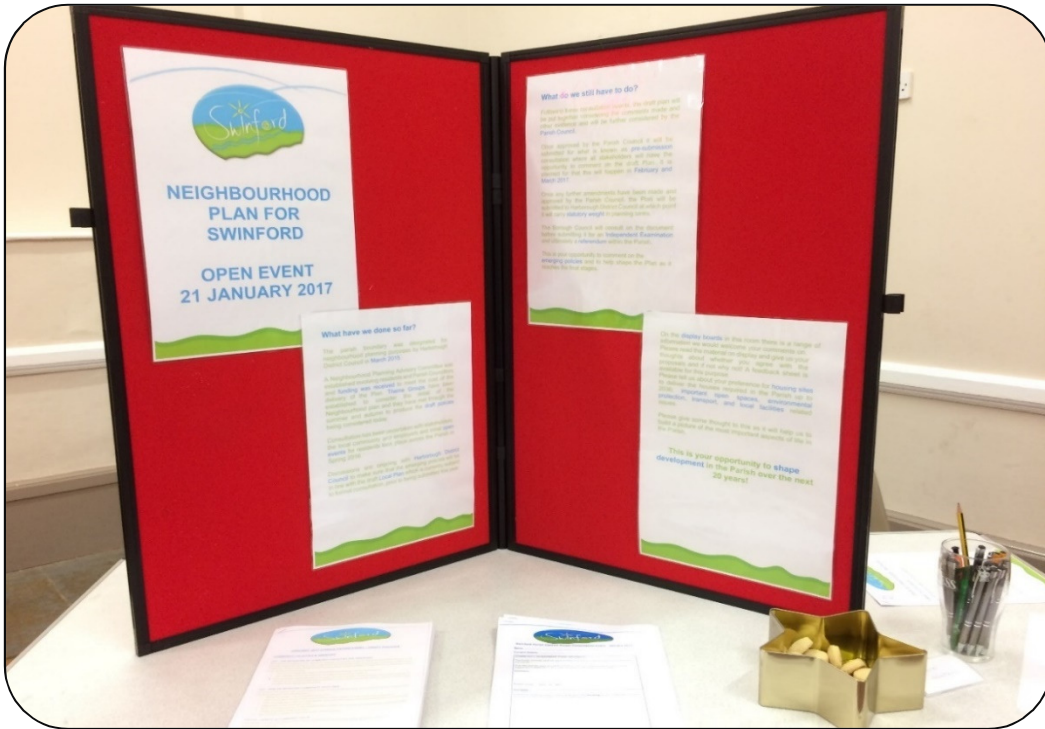
This work continued until the end of 2016. The Advisory Committee met regularly through this period to co-ordinate the outputs from the theme groups and to resolve any areas of overlap.

## **Second Open Event**

A further Open Event took place in January 2017 at which the emerging policies were put to the community. The responses are in the supporting information on the Parish Council website.

As well as advertising the event in advance in a Parish Council newsletter, every household received a leaflet in the week running up to the date encouraging parishioners to attend and offer their views. The event was held over a weekend on a Friday evening (4.00pm to 8.00pm) and a Saturday morning (10.00am to 12.00pm) in the village hall.





At the event draft policies on housing, the environment, community facilities and amenities, transport, and employment were displayed. Over the two sessions a total of 71 people attended and approximately 25 submitted written comments.

The comments were all reviewed at NPAC meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and decisions made about how to reflect parishioner's views in the final draft plan.



### **Regulation 14 Statutory Consultation (Round One)**

The pre-submission consultation for statutory stakeholders began on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and finished on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. All responses were collated onto a spreadsheet which is available on the PC website. The spreadsheet shows how each of the responses was considered by the NPAC and the resulting actions. During the consultation period, it was discovered that the measurements of the preferred housing development site had been incorrectly recorded in the SHLAA. This meant that after further meetings and consultations with landowners the housing policy was completely re-written.

### **Third Open Event**

As a result of the re-write of the housing policy the Parish Council decided to hold a further consultation event on 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Details of the event were circulated via a newsletter. Presentation slides from the event are on the PC website. The meeting was attended by 49 parishioners. Parishioners were invited to ask questions and make comments during the presentation. They were also informed that updated drafts would be available on the PC website so that further questions and comments could

be submitted to the Clerk after the meeting. It was also explained that because of the significant changes to the policy the PC would conduct a further pre-submission consultation with dates to be announced.

## **Regulation 14 Statutory Consultation (Round 2)**

The second pre-submission consultation was held from Friday 14<sup>th</sup> July to Friday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2017. All responses were collated onto a spreadsheet which is available on the PC website. The spreadsheet shows how each of the responses was considered by the NPAC and the resulting actions.

The Consultation Statement for Swinford Neighbourhood Plan can be found in Appendix 2.

## 5. Vision

### A Vision for Swinford

The Advisory Committee have developed a vision for Swinford that reflects the views of the community.

The statement below was tested and amended through consultation with the broader community at the open event in January 2017.

### Vision Statement

Swinford is a tranquil, rural community in South Leicestershire, in many ways a typical English village. Our vision for its future is one that seeks to preserve the essential characteristics and valued features of the village as well as conserving and enhancing its surrounding environment. We plan to maintain its uniqueness and to ensure that the needs of its local community are addressed.

Where the village needs to respond to the demand for new homes and community infrastructure this will be achieved sensitively and in a way which fits with and complements the existing buildings, facilities and services.

Any building development will need to acknowledge and work with the concerns of Swinford residents about the ability of present infrastructure to adapt to growing demand.

### Objectives

To help achieve the vision, the following objectives which are all linked to the NPPF definitions of sustainable development (outlined on page 8) have been established.

The Neighbourhood Plan will:

- Perform a social role by identifying potential housing sites that will meet the needs of community whilst responding to national and district housing policy. The plan will support sustainable development of high quality design that has regard to existing dwellings. Developments will be supported where they provide adequate off-street parking, have adopted services and roads and provide a mixture of housing types to meet local needs. This objective will be addressed through the development of a housing policy together with associated community actions.
- Perform an environmental role by setting out measures to conserve and protect local green spaces, local sites for sport and recreation, and identify areas and features that have historical and cultural significance for parishioners.

Protection will be given to sites of environmental significance, important woodland, trees and hedges and all aspects of local biodiversity. The plan will also seek to protect important views identified by parishioners. This objective will be addressed through the development of a policy for the local environment together with associated community actions.

- Perform an economic role by identifying existing community facilities, drawing attention to any gaps in provision and identifying how the provision might be improved. It will recognise the importance of retaining important community facilities and amenities such as the play area, school, village hall and pub whilst encouraging new or improved facilities. The plan will encourage traffic management solutions to address local concerns about the impact of increased traffic and on-street parking. This policy will be addressed through the development of a policy which addresses community facilities and amenities together with associated community actions.

## 6. Policies

### Strategy

At the heart of the Neighbourhood Plan for Swinford is the principle of ensuring sustainable development, which is defined in the NPPF as 'providing for the needs of the current generation while not making make life worse for future generations'.

Through the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan, consideration has been given to the type and extent of new development required to meet the needs of the local community, where it should best be located in the Parish, and how it should be designed. The Plan includes in its scope everything from small-scale development, such as a minor extension to a house, to small-scale housing developments and employment proposals.

The Plan is not intended to replace the policies contained in the Harborough Core Strategy, Harborough Local Plan (when adopted) and the NPPF. It sits alongside these to add additional, more detailed policies, that are specific to Swinford and which help achieve the Community's vision. Where suitable policies already exist in the Harborough Core Strategy or NPPF they are not duplicated in this Plan.

### Limits to development

The purpose of Limits to Development is to ensure that sufficient sites for new homes and economic activity are available in appropriate locations that will avoid impinging into the local countryside wherever possible.

Limits to Development have been drawn by Harborough District Council in the Adopted Core Strategy for Villages such as Swinford who are seen as suitable settlements for development. The Core Strategy makes it clear that such a measure is important to clarify where new development activity is best located. The Core Strategy defines the extent of a built-up part of a settlement and distinguishes between areas where, in planning terms, development is acceptable in principle, such as in the built-up area of the village, and where it would not be acceptable, generally in the least sustainable locations such as in the open countryside. Such growth would risk ribbon development and the merging of hamlets to the detriment of the community and visual amenity of the Neighbourhood Plan area's surroundings.

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to designate Limits to Development for the village of Swinford. This will update and supersede the existing Limits to Development currently used by Harborough District Council, as it takes into account recent housing



allocations that have taken place since the Limits to Development were introduced, and incorporates the housing allocations proposed within the Neighbourhood plan.

Within the defined Limits to Development an appropriate amount of suitably designed and located development will be acceptable in principle, although some sites within this area are protected from development and all development will be required to take into account the policies within this Plan.

Focusing development within the agreed Limits to Development will help to support existing services within the village centre and help to protect the countryside and the remainder of the Neighbourhood Plan area from inappropriate development.

## **Methodology**

The updated Limits to Development have been determined using the following criteria:

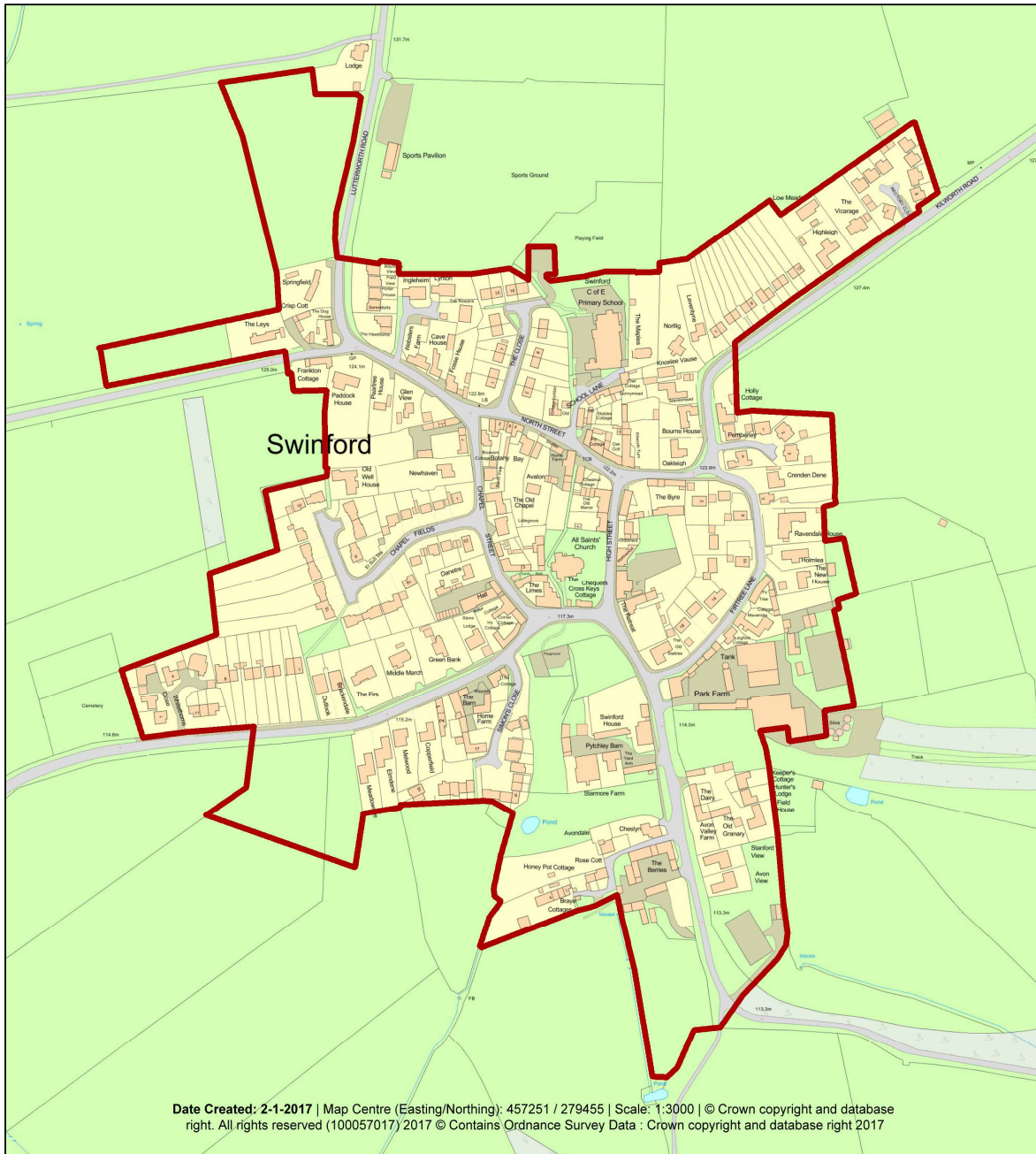
- Recent approvals and existing commitments by virtue of an extant planning permission for residential development on the fringes of the settlement have been incorporated;
- Clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows and roads have been followed;
- Scope has been provided to relax the boundary to allow for future expansion to meet the need for housing and business growth over the Plan period.

## **Updated Limits to Development Boundary**

It is important to clarify where new development activity is best located and defines the extent of a built-up part of a settlement and distinguishes between areas where, in planning terms, development is acceptable in principle, such as in the built-up area of the village, and where it would not be acceptable, generally in the least sustainable locations such as in the open countryside. Such growth could be to the detriment visual amenity of the Plan area's surroundings. The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to designate Limits to Development for the village of Swinford. This will update and supersede the existing Limits to Development currently used by Harborough District Council.

Focusing development within the agreed Limits to Development will help to support existing services within the village centre; will help to protect the countryside; and will protect the remainder of the Plan area from inappropriate development. The revised LTD boundary is shown on the map below:

**Map 1**  
Swinford Limits to Development



## POLICY S1: LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals within the Plan area will be supported on sites within the Limits to Development as identified above where it complies with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan and subject to design and amenity considerations.

# Housing Policy

## Introduction

The Neighbourhood Plan relates to the Parish of Swinford, which principally comprises the core village of Swinford itself.

## The Built Environment

The Parish of Swinford has a long and interesting history, resulting in a wide array of attractive landscapes and a distinctive local character. This is reflected in the fact that the village is a Conservation Area.

**Map 2**  
Swinford Conservation Area



Swinford is a compact village whose form consists of a core of older buildings and the church within an irregular quadrilateral of roads. Roads lined with development lead into each corner of the quadrilateral and there is one loop lane linking two of these roads (from Stanford and Kilworth). This core quadrilateral and the four roads makes up the Conservation Area. Later development further out from the core and the modern housing of Chapel Fields is excluded. With the core of the village being the quadrilateral there is no central focal point, rather the village has open nodal areas where the four roads reach the core.

The Conservation Area is a mixture of former farmhouses and farmyards, cottages and more substantial houses. The building material is principally red brick with clay tiles, though there is some slate. Webster's and the former Cave Arms are thatched. There are vestiges of the timber framing tradition, notably in Webster's dated 1718, the former Cave Arms Public House, early parts of The Retreat, Home Farm in Rugby Road and elsewhere in farm buildings as at the Berries. There are several boundary walls of mud with corrugated iron coping. The churchyard retaining wall to the road, and parts of the church of All Saints are in river pebbles. The church itself is within the central quadrilateral, partially hidden by buildings. It is reached by three alley footways alongside and between buildings from north, west and south. The view towards the church along these footpaths, especially that from North Street, is important. The churchyard, raised above the road and bounded by red brick and pebble retaining walls, forms a significant open area to the west of High Street.

The grouping around the junction of North Street, High Street, and the road to Kilworth is important, it includes Grade II listed Home Farm House, the two 17th century steeply gabled buildings of the Old Manor and Kilworth Road Farmhouse, a K6 red cast iron telephone kiosk and several cottages.

The southern side of the core quadrilateral between the roads to Stanford and Rugby is significant. The south side of the road has a wide grass verge with a Walnut tree; a long stretch of mud wall is behind. This space was formed by setting back the long mud boundary wall which curves between the Stanford and Rugby Road. Behind this mud wall and along the Rugby and Stanford Road the settlement is more open with orchards, paddocks with farmsteads. The open undeveloped space between the two roads is significant and makes a major contribution to the setting of the more densely developed village core to the north.

To the north on one corner is The Limes, an imposing 3-storey red brick 18th century house; on the other corner is the open space of the churchyard whose surface is level with the top of its retaining wall of river cobbles. The Church itself, of sandstone or river cobbles, is in an elevated position behind; its octagonal Swithland slate clock face dated 1819 is prominent.

The approach along the Stanford Road is notable, not just for the lime trees but for the estate cottages of 1881 and the three red brick farmsteads of The Berries, Swinford House and Park Farm. The yard buildings to the rear of The Berries are complete and the yard is cobbled. On the Rugby Road at the edge of the village is Home Farm with 17th century red brick steeply roofed barn, and partly timber framed farmhouse on the Rugby Road.

The biggest challenge facing the future of Swinford is to balance the desire to protect the character of the village with the need to grow and evolve in a sensitive and proportionate manner in order to sustain the community and its facilities (and not overwhelm them).

The policies in this section seek to reflect the design principles which the community believes will help to achieve this aim. They reflect the outcome of consultations with all residents and of a Theme Group which specifically focused on relevant issues – all of which showed broad unanimity of views.

In this section, therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan sets out planning policies which seek to identify and protect the distinctive elements which together provide the special qualities of the landscape setting and built heritage of the Swinford Parish.

New development proposals should be designed sensitively to sit within the distinctive settlement patterns of the village of Swinford. Existing settlement patterns have grown incrementally over time. The buildings date from many different periods, providing a richness and variety of styles and materials. This traditional rural character should be enhanced by new development and schemes should be designed to ensure that new buildings sit comfortably alongside the existing settlement pattern, and are respectful of their surroundings.

The community consider it to be important that new residential development is of the highest standard to ensure that it is in keeping with the majority of residential properties in the village. It is not considered necessary to have a uniform series of properties that all look the same, rather to ensure that new developments respect the features of buildings which make the village of Swinford a desirable place in which to live.

New development proposals should be designed sensitively to ensure that the high quality built environment of the parish is maintained and enhanced, particularly where schemes are located within or in close proximity to the Conservation Area. New designs should respond in a positive way to the local character through careful and appropriate use of high quality materials and detail. Proposals should also demonstrate consideration of height, scale and massing, to ensure that new development delivers a positive contribution to the street scene and adds value to the distinctive character of the area.

## **POLICY H1: BUILDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

All new development proposals of one or more houses, replacement dwellings and extensions are encouraged to have regard to the following building design principles to a degree that is proportionate to the development:

- New development should enhance and reinforce the local distinctiveness and character of the area in which it is situated, particularly within the Conservation Area, and proposals should clearly show how the general character, scale, mass, density, and layout of the site, of the building or extension fits in with the aspect of the surrounding area. Care should be taken to ensure that the development does not disrupt the visual amenities of the street scene and impact negatively on any significant wider landscape views;
- New buildings should follow a consistent design approach in the use of materials, fenestration, and the roofline to the building. Materials should be chosen to complement the design of the development and add to the quality or character of the surrounding environment and of the Conservation Area;
- Adequate off-road parking/garaging of suitable size to accommodate family cars should be provided as a minimum of two car parking spaces for dwellings of three bedrooms or less and three spaces for dwellings of four bedrooms or more, in line with Highways Authority requirements. The garaging should be of a size to accommodate family cars and bicycles, not be prominently sited, and not be built in a block;
- All new housing should reflect the character and historic context of existing developments within the Parish. However, contemporary, and innovative materials and design will be supported where positive improvement can be robustly demonstrated;
- Redevelopment, alteration or extension of historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings within the Parish should be sensitive to their distinctive character, materials, and form;



- Proposals should minimise the impact of cabling, satellite dishes, aerials, burglar alarms, noise, odour and light. Light pollution should be minimised wherever possible and security lighting should be appropriate, unobtrusive and energy efficient;
- Development proposals should seek to protect and, where possible, enhance the biodiversity value of a site and provide mitigation measures where necessary;
  - Development should create safe and accessible environments by incorporating ‘Secured by Design’ Principles. Where possible, enclosure of plots should be of native hedging, wooden fencing, or stone/brick wall of rural design. Any enclosures that are necessarily removed through the development process should be reinstated in keeping with the original;
  - Development should incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques to meet high standards for energy and water efficiency, including the use of renewable and low carbon energy technology, as appropriate;
  - Development should incorporate sustainable drainage systems with maintenance regimes to minimise vulnerability to flooding and climate change; ensuring appropriate provision for the storage of waste and recyclable materials;
  - Development should be of a similar density to properties in the immediate surrounding area as far as possible;
  - Development proposals aimed at achieving the Home Quality Mark or the Building for Life Accreditation are encouraged.

### **Housing Needs Reports**

As part of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan a Housing Needs Report (dated June 2016 and prepared by YourLocale) (Appendix 3) was undertaken which draws on available data from the 2011 Census, Land Registry and the Office for National Statistics, small area model-based income estimates and local consultation exercises.

Set out below are some of the more relevant comments in the YourLocale report relating to population and housing profile and the implications on housing needs.

### **Village Profile – Population**

- There are 586 residents within the Swinford parish. Since 2001 the population has grown by 18%;
- The percentage of residents between 20-29 is much lower than regional and national averages, indicating that younger people move out of the village for jobs or university;
- There is a higher proportion in the 40-49 and 60-69 age ranges compared to regional and national averages;
- There is a higher level of under 16s in the parish compared with regional/national averages (23% of the population);
- There is evidence of an ageing population, with the number of residents between 60-74 more than doubling between 2001 and 2011.

### **Village Profile - Housing**

- The housing stock comprises 233, primarily located within the village. It is in this area that the housing policies of the Neighbourhood Plan will largely be concentrated. 6 of these properties are vacant;
- The occupied housing stock within the village comprises:  
40 one or two-bedroom houses,  
78 three-bedroom houses,  
75 four-bedroom houses, and  
34 five or more bedroom houses;
- These include 147 detached (at 63% significantly higher than regional and national averages), 58 semi-detached and 25 terraced houses;
- Home ownership levels are relatively high compared with regional and national averages, with 81% (187) of homes in owner occupation. In addition, 9 houses are classed as affordable housing and 29 are privately rented;
- All but 10 of the households have at least one vehicle at their disposal (possibly reflecting the complete lack of public transport provision to the village);
- The parish has a larger proportion of properties with high value council tax bands with over 32% of dwellings at Band F or above, significantly above regional and national averages;
- New housing development is evidenced by 43 new build house sales between 1995 and 2015;
- There is a lack of apartments/flats and bungalows in the parish.

In addition, a Housing Needs Report (also dated June 2016 and prepared by Midlands Rural Housing (MRH) on behalf of Harborough District Council) (Appendix 4) was undertaken as part of a rolling 5-year programme of Housing Needs Surveys.

Set out below are some of the more relevant comments and conclusions from the MRH report:

- In terms of types of housing required in the village the most popular choices were homes for young people, homes for the elderly and small family homes (1-2 bedrooms);
- There is an identified need for 4 open market homes and 3 affordable homes for rent for local people in the next 5 years.

### **Implications of the Housing Needs Reports**

The Swinford Parish is an attractive environment for young, mobile, relatively affluent families and older people. However, the lack of infrastructure (no public transport, and the only key services being a pub and a school) make it a less appealing to the majority demographic such as the less affluent/less mobile. It is not certain that the expected growth in the number of residents over the period of this plan will make additional key services viable, and with an ageing population nationally the recent trend in the village towards older residents is set to continue. In addition, there is an identified need for homes to be available for local people, including a small number of affordable homes. Therefore, the future housing provision should take this into account.

### **Housing Provision**

Consultation has shown that residents are not opposed to limited development, but are concerned that house building:

- is proportionate;
- meets the identified needs of the village;
- does not have an adverse impact on the character of the Parish;
- does not change the housing mix which the majority of residents believe is about right;
- does not take the form of a single large development or 'housing estate' which would be totally out of character with the village of Swinford;
- is considered alongside appropriate improvements in infrastructure which might be required with the new housing targets (for example public transport, road maintenance, a shop, school facilities and parking).

It is also recognised that the provision of new housing helps to support existing community facilities such as the pub, village hall, playground and school which are all seen as critical facilities that need to be protected for the benefit of the community.

These aims are consistent with statements made in the draft Local Plan for Harborough (which was published in June 2017):

- *'new housing will reflect local needs in terms of type, size and tenure';*
- *'new housing developments will be of high quality, well designed, and respectful of their setting to ensure that the character of the District's towns and villages is maintained and protected';*

- *'protecting the character and environment of local areas, in Selected Rural Villages';*
- *'providing a range of market and affordable housing types in sustainable locations to meet local needs. Recognise the specific accommodation requirements of the young and the elderly populations...'*

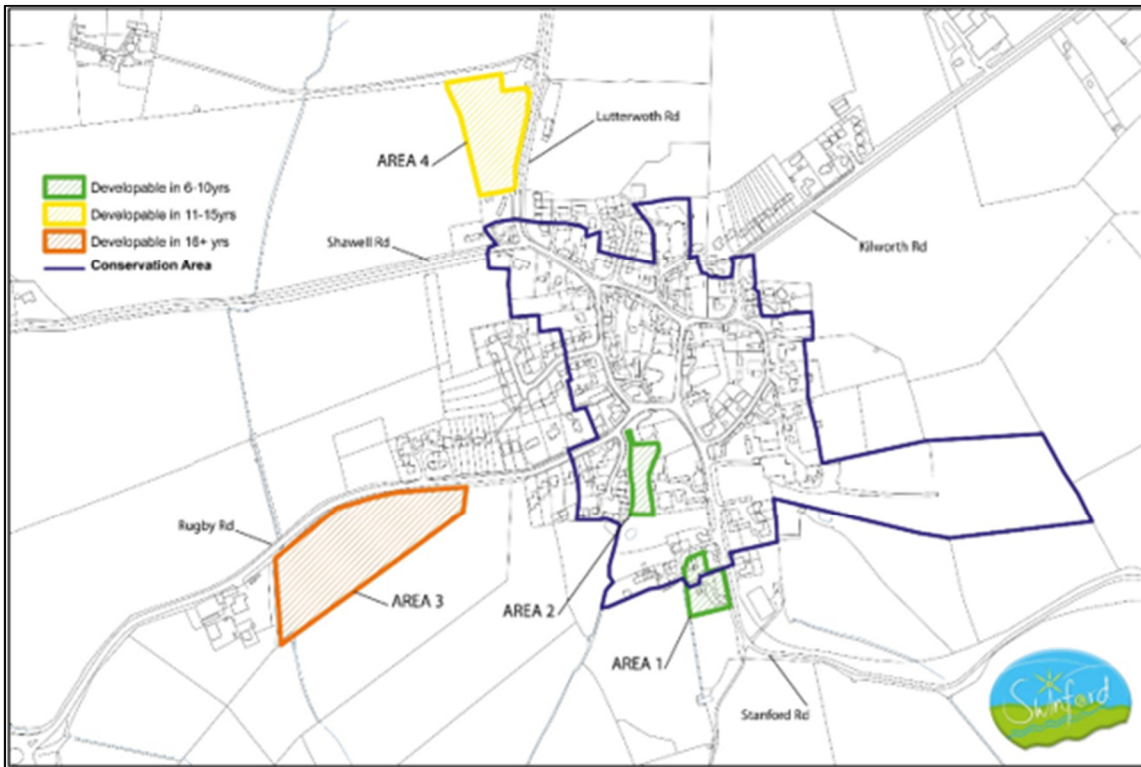
The draft Local Plan Proposed Submission (June 2017) established a hierarchy of settlements to determine the most appropriate locations for residential development. On the basis of this hierarchy, Swinford is classified as a 'Selected Rural Village' (SRV). SRVs benefit from two or more of six key services - a food shop, GP surgery, library, post office, primary school and public house. As Harborough District Council have a statutory duty to provide adequate housing throughout the District, they have calculated a minimum target figure for each Parish based upon a housing distribution strategy agreed by the Executive Committee. This approach has set Swinford a housing target of a minimum of 35 residential units to be constructed to 2031. Any planning approvals since April 2017 will count towards this target.

## **POLICY H2: HOUSING PROVISION**

**The housing provision for Swinford Parish will be a minimum target of 35 new dwellings over the period to 2031, excluding existing commitments and completions and windfalls, which will be fully met by the allocation of housing sites in Policy H3.**

### **Housing Allocations**

During 2015, Harborough District Council, along with all other districts in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area, undertook a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Following a call for landowners to identify sites with potential for house building, four sites were identified.

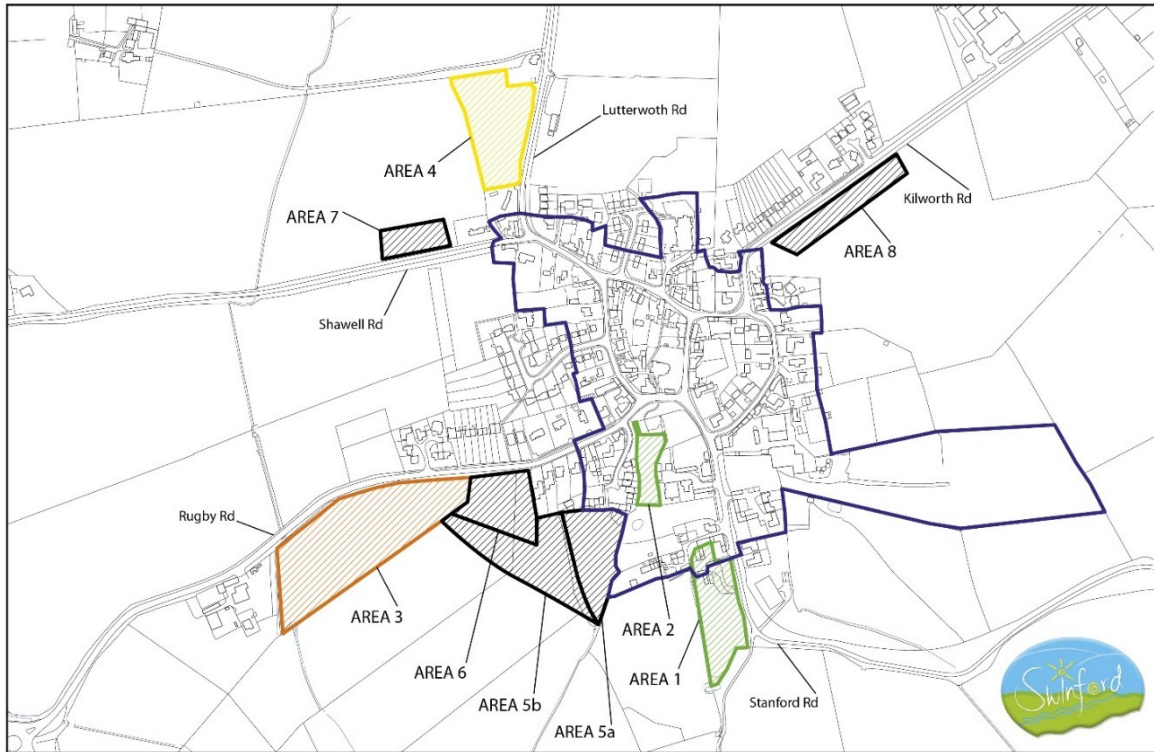


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In developing the Neighbourhood Plan and looking out for suitable land to allocate for development, all land owners holding sites in and around the village were identified, through the SHLAA information and the Land Registry. All were notified of the Neighbourhood Plan process and invited to enter into dialogue with the team developing the Neighbourhood Plan, including commenting on the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire circulated in January 2016 and attending the open day held in April 2016.

During the process five further sites were identified that was not already identified in the SHLAA report – making nine in total. The nine sites are shown below:

**Map 4**  
SHLAA Sites (Revised)



One of the four sites identified in the SHLAA report (The Berries – A/SW/HSG/01) has received planning consent, and is included in existing commitments.

To make a more informed and independent assessment of the sites identified in the SHLAA report and the five new sites identified, a sustainability analysis (Appendix 5) was undertaken by YourLocale consultancy. This was based on sustainable development criteria for the selection and allocation of sites for new dwellings (Appendix 6) using best practice methodology, supplemented with evidence from Harborough District Council, approved Neighbourhood Plans, community consultation and other relevant plans and documents including the National Planning Policy Framework. This review provided both a score for each site and a ranking which was used to determine which sites were most appropriate. The methodology has been used successfully in other adopted Neighbourhood Plans.

The nine sites scored as follows:

Area (Site)	Location	Approximate number of dwellings	Score	Rank
1	Lilbourne Lane	9	-4	N/A
2	Village Paddock	4 or 5	-5	8
3	Rugby Road	36-40	0	4=
4	Lutterworth Road	21-23	1	3
5a	South of Simons Close	10 or 11	-3	6=
5b	Rugby Road	30-34	-3	6=
6	Rugby Road	18-20	4	1
7	Shawell Road	4 or 5	3	2
8	Kilworth Road	20-22	0	4=

The Parish of Swinford is committed to sustainable development, and therefore the results of this sustainability analysis were deemed as crucial in determining the allocation of sites for development. What was also crucial were views of parishioners, and in this regard a number of factors were taken into account:

- A general preference not to have large developments which would be out of keeping with the Parish;
- Preferences for and against particular sites as ascertained in the Questionnaire and Open Days;
- Views and outlooks which are particularly valued by parishioners (see Map 12);
- A preference to maintain existing levels of housing density if possible;
- Other comments made in the questionnaire process, open days, and in response to draft versions of this Neighbourhood Plan.

Having considered these factors, it was considered that no changes to the ranking from the sustainability analysis need be made. However, the indicative housing numbers deliver a density which parishioners believe is out of keeping with the local environment, and therefore a preferred estimate of dwellings per allocated site is shown below which maintains a density which is in keeping with the local environment.

The following sites are considered deliverable, achievable and suitable for development and are presented here in order to meet the housing requirement for the Parish:



Area (Site)	Location	Approximate number of dwellings
6	Rugby Road	15
4	Lutterworth Road	17
7	Shawell Road	3

### POLICY H3: HOUSING / LAND ALLOCATIONS

Land is allocated for housing development at the locations shown below. Development will be supported subject to the following criteria:

#### Site 6 - Rugby Road

- The development should provide for around 15 dwellings on greenfield land to maintain a similar density to adjacent existing dwellings;
- 6 units should be affordable and made available to local people in line with policy H6;
- Service roads should be adopted;
- There should be safe pedestrian access into the village.

#### Site 4 - Lutterworth Road (A/SW/HSG/04)

- The development should provide for around 17 dwellings on greenfield land to maintain a similar density to adjacent existing dwellings;
- 7 units should be affordable and made available to local people in line with Policy H6;
- Service roads should be adopted;
- There should be safe pedestrian access into the village.

#### Site 7 - Shawell Road

- The development should provide for around 3 dwellings on greenfield land to maintain a similar density to adjacent existing dwellings;
- Service roads should be adopted;
- There should be safe pedestrian access into the village.

## **Windfall Development**

There is a history of small scale infill development in Swinford. Our proposed policy for windfall sites is shown below. The Plan will allow for these sites, which should be of no greater size than one-three new homes.

### **POLICY H4: WINDFALL SITES**

**Small scale development proposals for infill and redevelopment sites (one to three dwellings) will be supported where:**

- It is within the revised Limits to Development of the Village of Swinford;
- It respects the shape and form of Swinford in order to maintain its distinctive character and enhance it where possible;
- It is of an appropriate scale which reflects the size, character, and level of service provision within Swinford;
- It retains existing important natural boundaries such as trees, hedges and streams;
- Properties with 3 or fewer bedrooms provide for off street parking and/or garages for at least two vehicles. Properties with 4 or more bedrooms provide parking and/or garages for at least three vehicles. The garaging should be of a size to accommodate family cars and bicycles, not be prominently sited, and not be built in a block;
- It provides for a safe vehicular and pedestrian access to the site; and
- Does not reduce garden space to an extent where it adversely impacts on the character of the immediate area, or the amenity of neighbours and the occupiers of the dwelling.

## **Housing Mix**

Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes is essential to support sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities. In Swinford, this will underpin a well-balanced population that is vital to the on-going viability of local services and prosperity of the Parish, particularly in light of the community's increasingly ageing population.

Evidence from the YourLocale Housing Needs Report (Appendix 3) indicates:

- a predominance of detached housing (63%) which is much higher than regional/national averages;
- a predominance of larger houses (82% are 3 bed or more) which is much higher than regional/national averages;
- a predominance of owned houses (81% are owned) which is much higher than regional/national averages;
- a low number of affordable homes (9 or 4% of the housing stock);
- a high level of under occupancy, with 63% of all households having 2 or more spare rooms and a further 29% having one or more. The Census data suggests that older person households are more likely to under-occupy their dwellings.

The MRH Housing Needs Report (Appendix 4) indicates a preference for homes for young people, homes for the elderly and small family homes (1-2 bedrooms) and an identified need for 4 open market homes and 3 affordable homes for rent for local people in the next 5 years.

Together with the statistics suggesting an increasingly ageing population, this suggests a need for smaller homes partly to accommodate younger families and young people, and partly to enable older residents who may wish to downsize to smaller properties to be able to do so, releasing larger under occupied properties suitable for growing families. Housing developments must therefore provide a mix of one and two bedroomed units or bungalows to meet this need and preference within the local community.

#### **POLICY H5: HOUSING MIX**

**New housing development proposals should provide a mixture of housing types specifically to meet identified local needs in Swinford. Sites should deliver more than 50% of the units as 3 bed or fewer (which can include bungalows for older people which should be built to the recognised mobility/wheelchair standard).**

#### **Affordable housing**

Council housing was provided in Swinford in the period following both World Wars where houses were built on Kilworth Road in the 1920s. In addition, affordable housing and starter homes were provided as part of the Simon's Close and Whitethorns Close Developments since 2000.

The 'Right to Buy' policy of the 1980s and transfer of Harborough District Council's stock to the Seven Locks Housing Association has resulted in a limited number of houses available at the lower end of the market or for rent in the village. There are now only 9 properties available for rent from a local authority or housing association. This would suggest a need for smaller more affordable houses for those entering the housing market.

The draft Harborough Local Plan suggests a minimum target of 40% of new houses should be affordable.

#### **POLICY H6: AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE**

**40% of all new housing development on sites for more than ten dwellings, or on sites of more than 1,000 square metres, should comprise affordable housing. The affordable homes should be provided as an integral part of the development and be of a similar style to the other housing on the site. The affordable housing should be distributed throughout the development.**

**Where possible, affordable housing within the Plan area shall be made available to eligible households with a connection to the Swinford Parish.**

#### **Developer Contributions**

New development can bring significant benefits to the local community, including new homes and jobs. It can also have negative impacts, for example, where additional demand is placed on facilities and services which are already at or near capacity. Planning obligations (also known as Section 106 agreements) may be used to secure infrastructure or funding from a developer. For example, a planning obligation might be used to secure a financial contribution towards improving existing recreational facilities or affordable housing. However, planning obligations can only be sought where they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

A new system is also being introduced alongside the use of planning obligations. This is known as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and it will require developers to make a payment to the District Council based on the size and type of development

that is proposed. The proceeds of the levy will then be used to provide the infrastructure necessary to support growth across the District. A proportion of these CIL receipts will automatically be devolved to the relevant Parish Council for allocation to neighbourhood priorities. This proportion is set at 25% in areas where there is a Neighbourhood Plan in force. At this time the Harborough District Council is still considering whether to replace Section 106 agreements with CIL.

Through the preparation of the Plan, the Parish Council in conjunction with the community and other stakeholders has identified a small number of priority projects they wish to secure funding (either in whole or in part) through the use of planning obligations.

#### **POLICY H7: DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS**

**The Parish Council will seek, wherever possible, to use financial contributions obtained through the Community Infrastructure Levy or negotiated planning obligations; for the following:**

- **measures aimed at improving parking, congestion, and traffic calming in the village;**
- **develop more sport and recreation activities.**

## Environment Policy

### Introduction

The primary objective of this Plan is to preserve the characteristic and valued features of Swinford – its ‘environment’, as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework – while meeting the housing needs of the District and securing the long-term social and economic viability of the parish. As set out below, the locations of the most significant features of the natural, historical and cultural environment provide a framework within which new infrastructure can be developed strategically.

The modern natural, historical and cultural environment of Swinford is the direct result of two millennia of history – in detail, this is a unique story, not like that of any other place – overlaid onto a topography based on geology and the complex interaction between the natural environment and human activity.

Random archaeological finds show that the area was occupied in prehistoric times, and it is known that there were Romano-British farmsteads and villas here, close to Watling Street, during the occupation. However, the place-name Swinford (swine-ford in Old English) shows that the settlement itself was probably established in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. The present church stands on a mound, typical of those built on the site of an early Christian place of worship. By 1086 Swinford was one of the largest villages in the area, and it remained so for much of the medieval period; earthworks and finds outside the modern built-up area attest to this. Swinford was (and still is) a classic nucleated settlement, with dwellings and farms clustered round the church. The cottages were set back from the wide streets, with open closes and crofts among them. The community’s land was arranged as three (or more) collectively farmed open fields, traces of which survive as the ridge and furrow earthworks resulting from centuries of ploughing.

The open village fields were enclosed in 1783, when arable farming was replaced with smaller, hedged, grazing fields. Preservation of the ridge and furrow under permanent grassland happened at this time, although much of these earthworks have since been destroyed with a return to arable farming across more than half of the parish.

The present layout of the village undoubtedly preserves much of that of the medieval settlement pattern, despite 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and particularly 20<sup>th</sup> century infilling and expansion (small housing estates). A primary objective of this Plan is the preservation of as much as possible of this historic, domestic-scale, rural layout by sensitive, strategic planning of all new development.

Swinford is part of the Laughton Hills Landscape Character Area (HDC District Landscape Character Assessment 2007), judged to be one of the most sensitive in the District. Its wider landscape setting has been affected by recent development of a

large windfarm and improvement of M1/M6/A14 junction 19, and residents are united in wishing to protect the village and its landscape from further loss of its rural character.

Swinford's long history of settlement and farming has resulted in a relatively impoverished natural environment in the parish. This raises the importance and value (both for biodiversity and the community) of the semi-natural features and sites that do exist. Undeveloped areas across the parish, but especially within and close to the village, include areas of habitat of high local importance for wildlife. Consequently, particular effort has been put into identifying and evaluating these sites, along with those of local historical and cultural importance, by undertaking an Environmental Inventory (Appendix 7) of the whole Plan Area to provide a robust evidence base for the environmental policies in the Plan.

## **The Natural Environment**

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks:

- to protect and where possible enhance the open spaces surrounding the village;
- to protect the setting of designated heritage assets;
- to preserve the character of Swinford by retaining important views and areas of separation;
- to support and improve access to countryside and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages to enjoy.

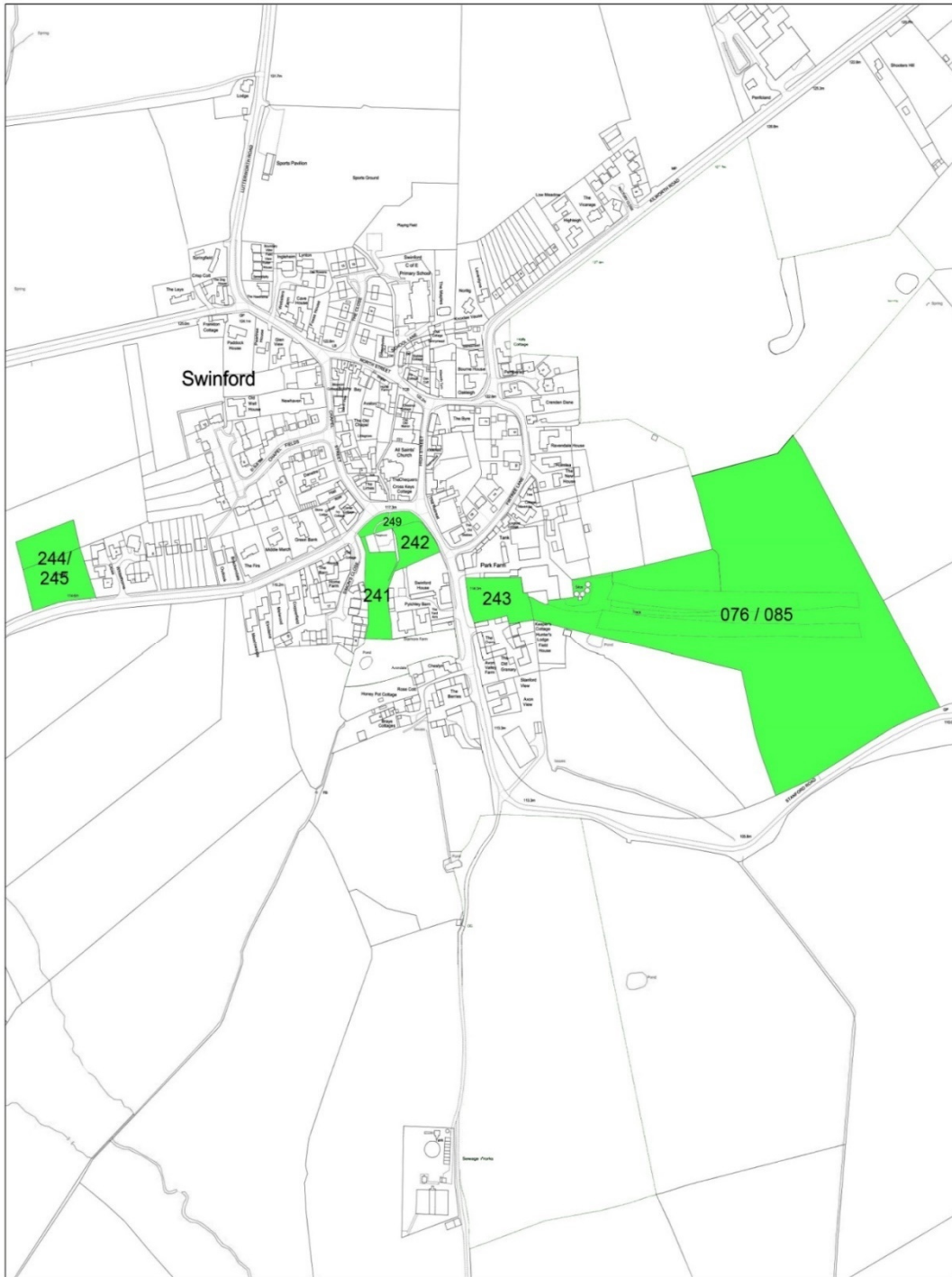
### **a) Local Green Spaces (LGS)**

National Planning Policy enables a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, to identify for protection, green areas of particular local importance, where they meet specified criteria. The designation should only be used where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The Environmental Inventory (Appendix 7) of all undeveloped land in the Parish was carried out between May and September 2016. Information was compiled from existing sources (national and/or local designations, records and mapping), fieldwork, and local knowledge and records, combined with the results of the consultation (open events and questionnaires) which residents conducted for this Plan.



**Map 5**  
Local Green Spaces (LGS)



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Of the estimated 255 parcels of undeveloped land in Swinford, approximately 150 were identified as having notable environmental (natural, historical, and/or cultural) features. These features have been recorded to provide the evidence base for the *environment* component of *sustainable development* in the Plan Area.

All 255 inventory sites were scored against the nine criteria for Local Green Space eligibility in the *National Planning Policy Framework 2012*. Seven sites score 65% or more of the maximum possible, and are proposed for designation as Local Green Spaces (list below, map above). Their statutory protection will ensure that these most important places in Swinford's unique natural and human landscape are protected.

Two sites are proposed by HDC as Local Green Spaces in the new emerging Local Plan, these are the Glebe and the Village Green. These are included in the list below.

*Note: Local Green Space designation provides statutory protection of local, bounded parcels of land against development, subject to certain conditions. Designation does not confer rights of public access beyond any already in force, nor does it affect a landowner's other property rights.*

#### **POLICY ENV1: LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, an identified Local Green Space (listed below and displayed in Map 5) will not be supported, other than in very special circumstances.

- Stanford Estate Avenue and Homefield (076 and 085) (Listed by Historic England and Natural England as a site of significance, see Environmental Inventory (Appendix 7))
- Parish Cemetery and Extension (244 and 245) (Already OSSR site)
- Stanford Road Paddock (243)
- Mourant Orchard (242)
- Village Green (249) (Proposed as potential LGS by HDC in emerging Local Plan)

Further information on the Local Green Spaces in Policy ENV1 can be found in the Local Green Spaces Detail (Appendix 8).

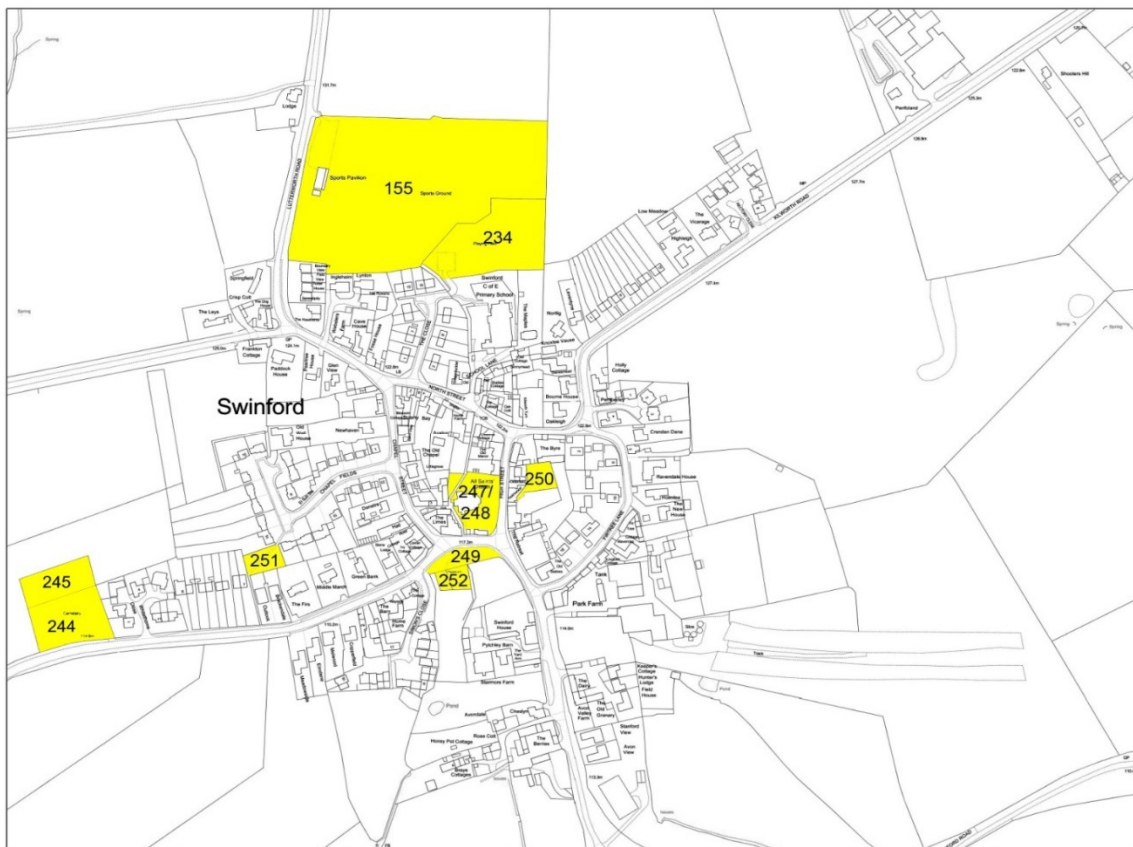
#### **b) Open Space**

In addition to the Local Green Spaces listed above, the Environmental Inventory (Appendix 7) identified a further seven open spaces within or close to the built-up area,

that are of importance both for maintaining the village's characteristic pattern of open spaces and buildings and as essential social and cultural assets. They are a vital part of the special character of Swinford, are highly valued by the community and merit protection and enhancement. All seven spaces are existing HDC Open Space, Sport and Recreation (OSSR) sites.

This Neighbourhood Plan confirms continued support for the existing HDC OSSR sites.

**Map 6**  
Open Space, Sport and Recreation (OSSR) Sites



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## COMMUNITY ACTION 1: OTHER IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE

The Parish Council and the community will actively work with Harborough District Council and other partners to secure or continue protection of the locations and features of the following sites (Map 6) as Open Space, Sport, and Recreation (OSSR) sites in the typological classes noted.

All Saints Churchyard (247/248) (*Burial Ground*) (*Existing OSSR; potential LGS in HDC consultation – this site is already statutorily protected by its historic use and other designations*)

Children's Play Area (252) (*Existing OSSR, Asset of Community Value*)

The Chequers Public House Garden (250) (*Existing OSSR, Asset of Community Value*).

Sports Field, Lutterworth Road (155) (*Existing OSSR*)

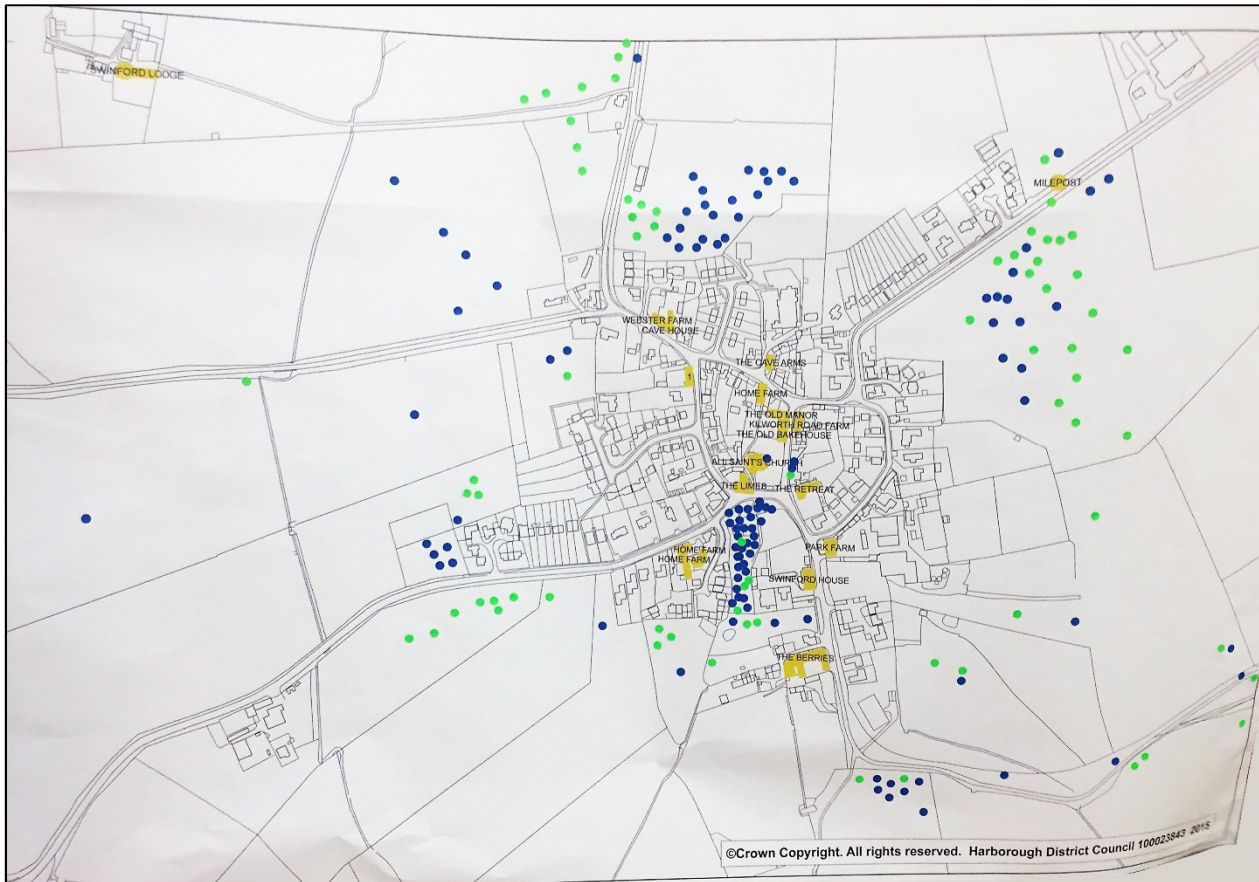
Swinford Church of England Primary School Playing Field (234) (*Existing OSSR*)

Chapel Fields Green (251) (*Existing OSSR*).

The Cemetery and the Cemetery Extension (244 and 245) (*Existing OSSR, Burial Ground proposed by NP as LGS*).

## Map 7

Sites Identified by Villagers as Valued and with Local Significance (April 2016)



The 'dots map' (see above) was compiled by parishioners as a pictorial representation at the consultation event in April 2016 to show sites that are valued, have local significance and have views and aspects of the village that parishioners wish to see retained. The blue dots indicate sites that are valued, the turquoise dots indicate views and aspects that parishioners say are important to them.

### c) Other Sites of Environmental Significance

Fifteen of the remaining natural and historical environment sites identified in the Environmental Inventory (Appendix 7) are all significant at district or parish level. The natural environment sites are mainly those where *priority habitats* occur or where *priority species* have been recorded as breeding or as regular visitors. Policy ENV4, below, deals with the community's wish to promote protection of these priority habitats, sites with priority species and species of conservation concern, in general. Policy ENV2 deals with the identified site-specific occurrences.

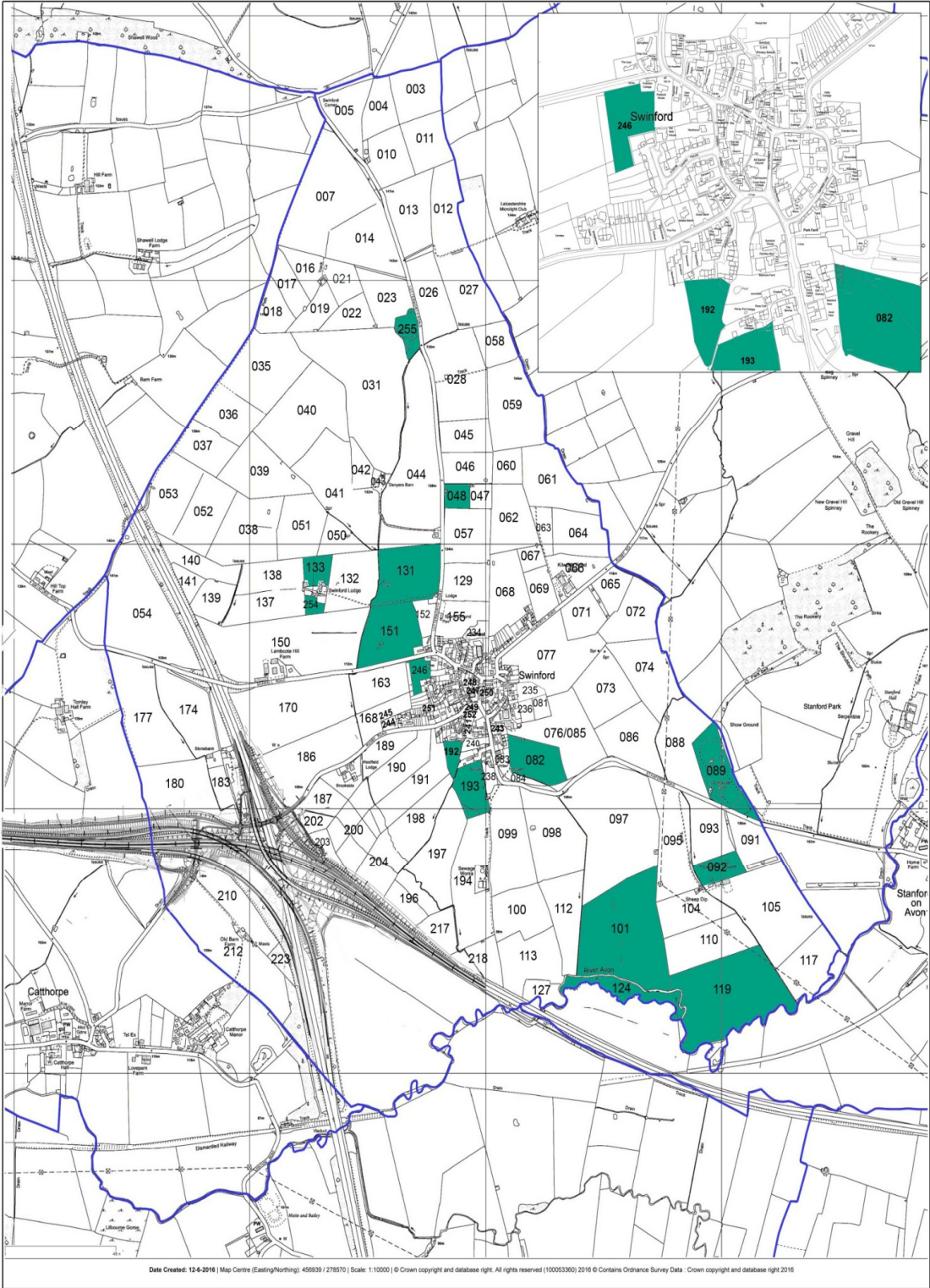
The historical environment sites comprise sites of nationally recorded (Historic England and Leicestershire & Rutland Historic Environment Records) or local history significance. Important buildings are dealt with in Policy ENV6.

**POLICY ENV2: PROTECTION OF OTHER SITES OF ENVIRONMENTAL (NATURAL AND HISTORICAL) SIGNIFICANCE**

**Fifteen sites in the Plan Area (see Map 8) have been identified as being of local significance for wildlife and/or history. They are important in their own right and are locally valued. Development proposals that affect them will be expected to protect or enhance the identified features.**



# Map 8 Other Sites of Environmental Significance





#### **d) Trees, Woodland and Hedges**

The landscape history of Swinford means there is a notable lack of trees in the open country. The parish has standard trees in its hedgerows, but only three small woodlands/spinneys; there is no extensive or mature woodland at all. The main 'wooded' area is the village itself, thanks largely to 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century ornamental plantings; several trees in the Parish cemetery are protected under Tree Preservation Orders while more general protection is afforded to trees within the Conservation Area.

All hedges appear to be on field boundaries established by or after the Enclosure Award of 1783; most are hawthorn/blackthorn with ash standards, and are thus not regarded as of high biodiversity value. However, they are considered by the community to be of high landscape value.

This policy ensures that the landscape and ecological value of the remaining woodland and trees in the parish is recognised in the planning process, including provisions for conservation, new planting and replacement in new development.

The recent re-modelling of Junction 19 M1 resulted initially in the loss of significant planted areas and hedging. The road building project is now almost complete and currently 180 mature trees, 30 hectares of native saplings (equalling approximately 35 football pitches) and 4.5 kilometers of hedgerow are being planted.

The lack of identified woodland in the wider parish is addressed in Community Action 2.

#### **COMMUNITY ACTION 2: INCREASE IN TREE PLANTING**

**The Parish Council together with an appointed Tree Warden will actively support groups to seek grants to enable the planting of more trees in the parish to enhance the environment and help to improve air quality.**

### **POLICY ENV3: IMPORTANT WOODLAND, TREES AND HEDGES**

Development proposals that will affect trees, woodland and hedges of environmental (biodiversity, historical, arboricultural) significance, or of landscape or amenity value, will not be supported. Proposals for new build housing should be designed to retain such trees and hedges where possible. Where destruction cannot be avoided developers will be required to plant replacement trees (on a three-for-one basis) or hedges either on the site or elsewhere in the parish.

### **COMMUNITY ACTION 3: IMPORTANT TREES**

The Parish Council with an appointed Tree Warden will continue to identify trees and woodland of value for recommendation to the Planning Authority for Tree Preservation Orders. The Tree Warden will also consider the issue of air pollution mitigation owing to the proximity of the major motorway junction (Junction 19 M1) and its impact upon air quality in the parish.

#### **e) Biodiversity**

Swinford has relatively few substantial sites of importance for wildlife, meaning that biodiversity overall is relatively low. The need for every community to make its own contribution to reversing the current threats to and loss of priority habitats and species is recognised in the parish.

Biodiversity enhancement (species and habitats) is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework, which is itself compliant with the European Habitats Directive 1992 (*Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*) and the UK *Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations, 2010, amended 2012*.

The Policy and Community Actions below provide for three proactive measures:

- having up to date information about parish wildlife;

- requiring developers to take biodiversity into account in their proposals;
- mobilising the community to create new; and manage existing habitats to enhance biodiversity.

#### **POLICY ENV4: BIODIVERSITY**

**Development proposals will be expected to safeguard significant local habitats and species, and, where possible, to create new habitats for wildlife.**

#### **COMMUNITY ACTION 4: BIODIVERSITY**

**The Parish Council in conjunction with other bodies will keep updated the list of known sites of biodiversity interest that forms part of the Environmental Inventory (Appendix 7) prepared for this Plan.**

**The Parish Council will actively seek to work with community groups, landowners, funders and other organisations to enhance the biodiversity of the parish by creating and / or managing habitat sites (e.g. wildflower meadows, woodland, wetland) on suitable parcels of land.**

#### **f) Ridge and Furrow**

Although much of the grassland in the north and west of the parish has been converted to arable or re-sown as improved grass (for silage or intensive grazing), a characteristic feature of Swinford is the survival of a significant number of ridge and furrow fields. A survey in 2016 confirmed the extant distribution of ridge and furrow by comparison with Google Earth photography dating from 2011.

Like almost all other rural settlements in the Midlands, Swinford village was surrounded by open fields, and farmed on a 3-field rotation, from before the Norman Conquest until the time of the Enclosures, mostly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. On the heavy clay of south Leicestershire, the contemporary simple plough with a non-reversible coulter pulled by teams of oxen produced permanent, large-scale ridges and furrows. After the 1783 Enclosure of Swinford, when the old fields were subdivided and largely converted to grazing land, the ridges and furrows were ‘fossilised’, preserving the medieval pattern of ploughlands beneath the new hedges and fields. However, a second agricultural revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the conversion of many of the

grazing fields back to arable by deep ploughing, resulting in the final destruction of a significant proportion of the ridge and furrow earthworks.

The national trend has been loss of between 85% and 100% per parish, mostly since 1940. Swinford has also seen a marked decline in ridge and furrow fields, but it is one of only a few parishes in Leicestershire where the decline has not been almost terminal. Of the c.148 agricultural fields in the parish, around 45 (30%) still retain traces of ridge and furrow.

In English legislation (except for the few that are also Scheduled Monuments) ridge and furrow fields are not statutorily protected, despite a recognition that “*as the open field system was once commonplace in NW Europe, these [surviving] sites take on an international importance*” (English Heritage, 2012).

While individual fields in Swinford are not claimed to be of international importance, the well-preserved groups are an important part of the distinctive character of the parish and provide a link to its historic past. They are valued by the local community and any further, avoidable, loss would be irreversibly detrimental. This policy not only seeks to protect the best of remaining ridge and furrow fields from development, but highlights their importance to the community, especially bearing in mind that many of the threats to ridge and furrow fields often involve types of development, changes of land use and farming practices that do not require planning approval.

#### References:

Hall, D 2001. *Turning the Plough. Midland open fields: landscape character and proposals for management*. English Heritage and Northamptonshire County Council.

Cathchpole T and Priest R 2012. *Turning the Plough update assessment* English Heritage and Gloucestershire County Council.

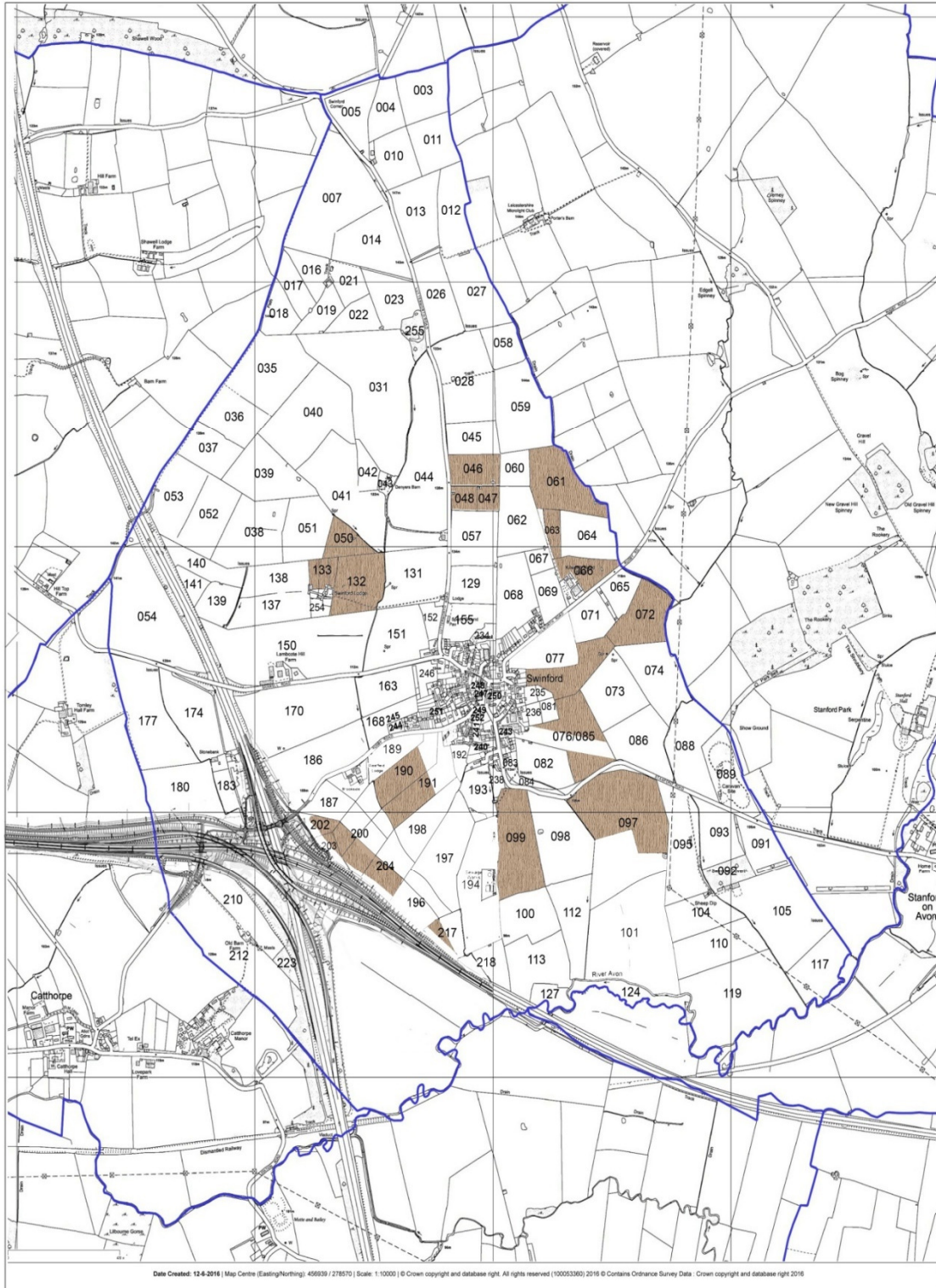
Knox R 1992. *A desk study of M1 junction 19 in Leicestershire* [for loss since 1940s].

### **POLICY ENV5: RIDGE AND FURROW FIELDS**

**The areas of ridge and furrow earthworks mapped below in Map 9 are non-designated heritage assets, and any harm arising from a development proposal, or a change of land use requiring planning approval, will need to be balanced against their significance as heritage assets.**

# Map 9

## Best Examples of Ridge and Furrow Fields



## **Built Environment**

The present layout of the village preserves the outlines of the medieval settlement pattern as a pattern of 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding, replacement, infilling and expansion largely built on the medieval streets. A primary objective of this Plan is the preservation of as much as possible of the village's characteristic layout, in part by sensitive, strategic planning of all new development but also through protection of the most important and valued buildings and their settings.

### **Statutorily Listed Buildings**

Seventeen structures in the village are Statutorily Listed Buildings. They are statutorily protected, but their settings should be considered when determining the locations and designs of permitted new development.

The seventeen listed buildings are detailed below and on Map 12.

- Webster's Farm, North Street **(1)**
- The Cave Arms, North Street **(2)**
- Home Farm, North Street **(3)**
- The Old Manor, North Street **(4)**
- The Old Bakehouse High Street **(5)**
- All Saints Church **(6)**
- The Limes, Rugby Road **(7)**
- The Retreat, High Street **(8)**
- Home Farm Barn, Rugby Road **(9)**
- Home Farm, Rugby Road **(10)**
- Park Farm, Stanford Road **(11)**
- Swinford House, Stanford Road **(12)**
- The Berries, Stanford Road **(13)**
- Cornerways, Chapel Street **(14)**
- Swinford Lodge, Lutterworth Road **(15)**
- Kilworth Road Farmhouse (now The Old Farm) **(16)**
- The Milepost, Kilworth Road **(17)**



**Map 10**  
Listed Buildings



**Locally Listed Buildings**

The Neighbourhood Plan has given local people an opportunity to give their views on local heritage. We have identified groups of buildings in the village which are typical and representative of the style and character worthy of repetition in future development.

In responses to the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire, parishioners were keen to preserve the existing village house building styles and scale which is translated into the grouping shown on Map 11.

The owners/residents of the following houses within the groups and other individual houses have consented to have them included in the list of Non-Designated Heritage Assets below:

**Group 1**

Lutterworth Road – Webster’s Farm\*, Cave House and adjoining property

**Group 2**

Chapel Street – The Old Chapel



**Group 3**

North Street Cottages (south side / east end)

**Group 4**

School Lane (south and east side)

**Group 5**

North Street - opp. Home Farm\*, Chestnut Cottage and The Old Manor\*, Kilworth Turn, Oak Cottage and Ivy Cottage

**Group 6**

Junction of High Street, Rugby Road and Stanford Road – Cross Keys Cottage, The Chequers Public House and The Retreat\*

**Group 7**

Rugby Road – Cottages (2) at right angles to road beside Home Farm Barn\*

**Group 8**

Stanford Road – Barn and stables in Park Farm\*

**Group 9**

Stanford Road – Swinford House\* and its original farm buildings

**Group 10**

Stanford Road – Farm and buildings on the east side of Stanford Road

**Group 11**

Lilbourne Lane – Braye Cottages, Honeypot Cottage and Rose Cottage

**Group 12**

Junction of Shawell Lane and Lutterworth Road – Frankton Cottage, The Dog House  
and Crisp Cottage

**Group 13**

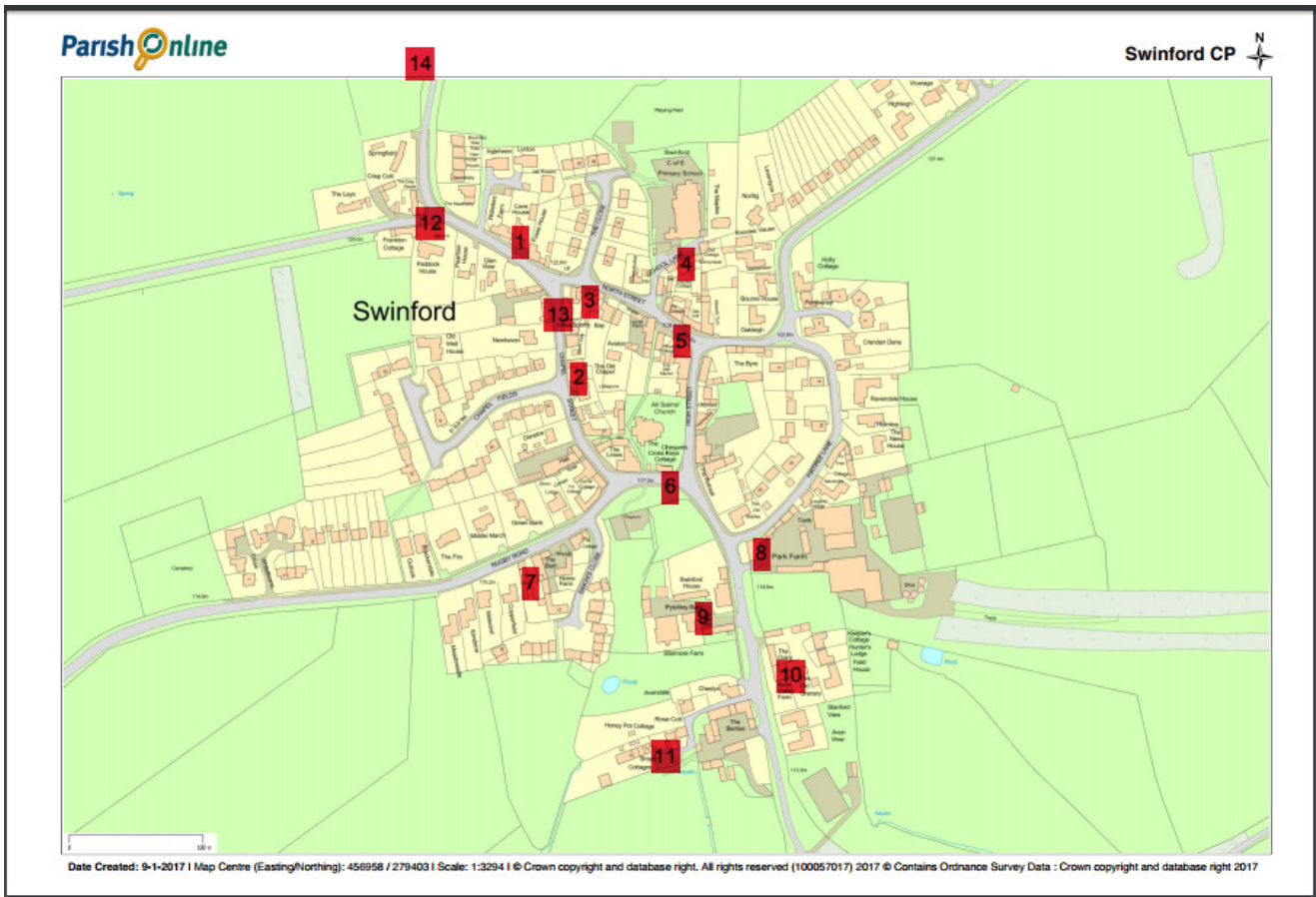
Junction of Chapel Street and Lutterworth Road

**Group 14**

Lutterworth Road – Lodge Cottage

\* *Statutorily Listed Buildings*

**Map 11**  
Non-Designated Heritage Assets



Development proposals will be expected to safeguard the settings of Statutorily and Locally Listed Buildings in the Plan Area, in line with national policy.

### **POLICY ENV6: LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS**

The buildings listed above are non-designated heritage assets. They are locally important for their contribution to the layout and characteristic mix of architectural styles in the village.

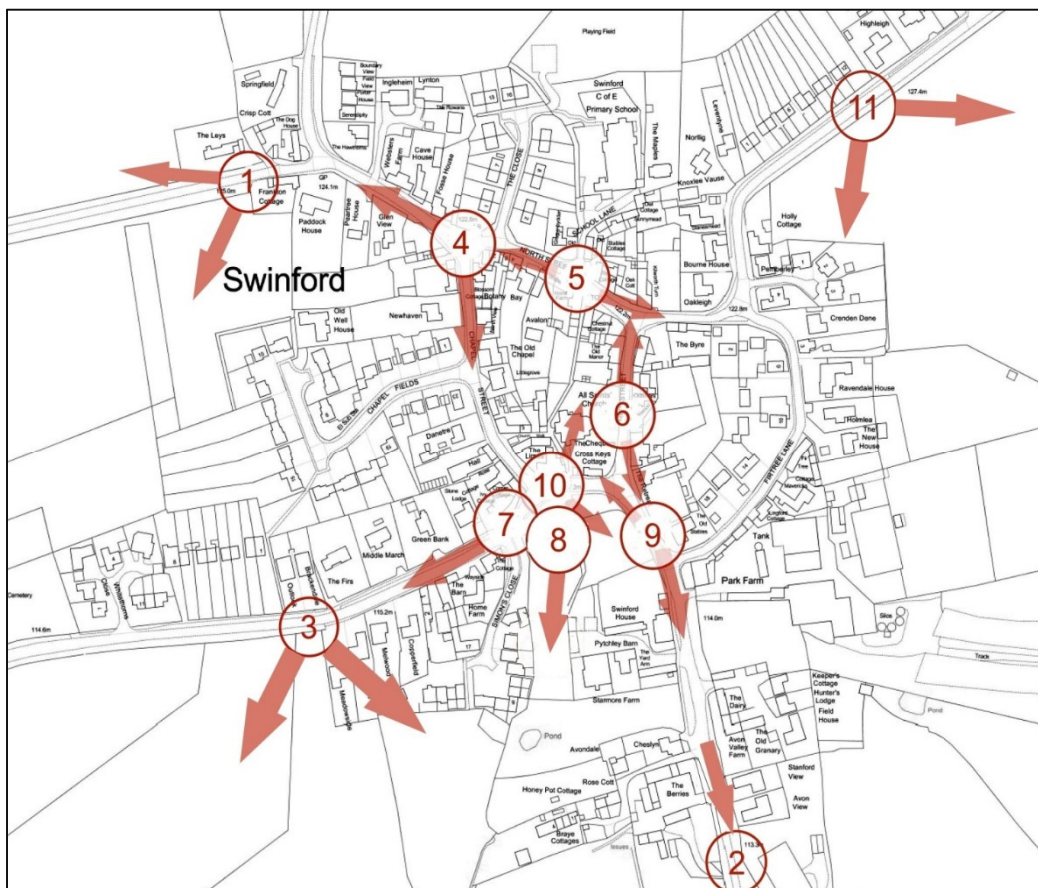
Development proposals that affect an identified non-designated building or structure of local historical or architectural interest or its setting will be expected to conserve or enhance the character, integrity and setting of that building or structure.

## g) Views

Important views have been identified and mapped using an analysis of the community consultations and fieldwork undertaken for the Plan.

As views frame and delineate open spaces in the countryside, they are regarded by the community as essential for protecting the valued rural context of the village and for maintaining its geographical and landscape relationship with the rest of the parish (its historic territory). This is a particularly sensitive issue for Swinford residents following the 2012 installation of Swinford Corner windfarm 1500m to the north and the 2016 expansion of Junction 19 (M1/M6/A14) within 600m of the village to the west, both of which are now obtrusive insertions into the views in those directions.

**Map 12**  
Important Views – Village Views



Map 12 shows village street views and also incorporates views over the countryside. Details of the numbers displayed on Map 12 are listed in Policy ENV7 below.

## **POLICY ENV7: PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT VIEWS**

The numbered views below should be protected and developments should seek to preserve them:

1. From Shawell Road south and west down Avon valley into Warwickshire;
2. Stanford Road corner bridleway gate southeast towards Avon Valley;
3. From Rugby Road bridleway entrance east and south towards Northamptonshire;
4. From corner of Chapel Street and North Street, west along North Street and south down Chapel Street;
5. West and east along North Street;
6. South and north along High Street;
7. Southwest along Rugby Road from the corner of Rugby Road/Chapel Street;
8. From the play area, south over the Glebe land;
9. From Rugby Road/High Street junction south down Stanford Road and west along Rugby Road;
10. From Rugby Road/Chapel Street junction northeast over churchyard and southeast over 'village green';
11. From Kilworth Road over ridge and furrow field to Stanford Park woodland, Hemplow Hills, and Northamptonshire Hills.

### **Rights of Way**

The parish is relatively well served by public footpaths and bridleways. Policy ENV8 and Community Action 5 express a local aspiration for creating better, safer circular routes for recreation and to support the known benefits to physical and mental wellbeing of walking and other forms of exercise.

Route 50 of the National Cycle Network passes through the parish, such amenities are assets to parishioners for sport and recreation.

## **POLICY ENV8: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS**

**Development proposals that result in the loss of, or have a significant adverse effect on, the existing network of footpaths will not be supported.**

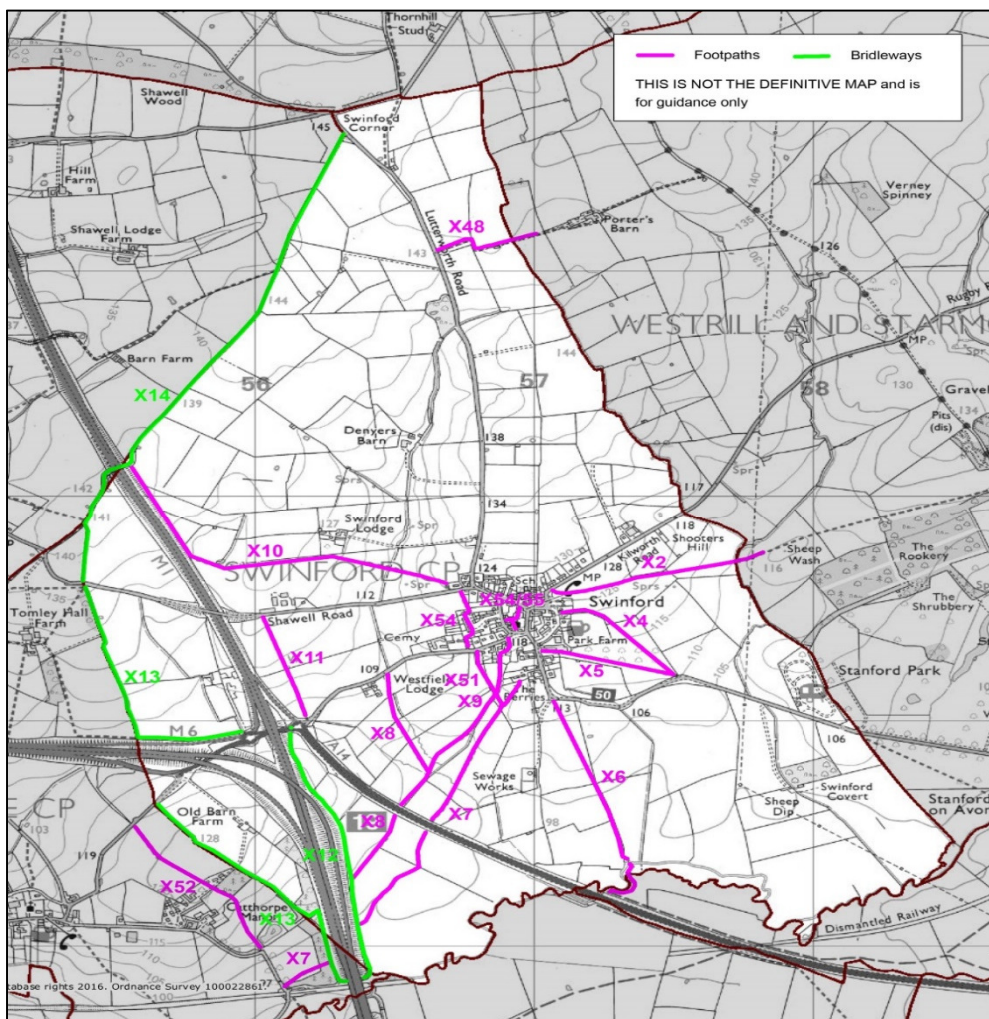
## **COMMUNITY ACTION 5: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS**

**The Parish Council will monitor the condition of the existing network of footpaths and bridleways, and work with the responsible Local Authority departments and with the community and landowners to ensure that the network is maintained in a safe, useable condition.**

**The Parish Council will actively seek to work with landowners, Leicestershire County Council and other bodies to create and maintain enhancements to the present network of walking routes in the parish.**



**Map 13**  
Footpaths and Bridleways



**NOTE:** this is not an up to date map, works at the junction have altered some routes, however, this is the most up to date map currently available

## h) Sustainable Development

In line with Harborough District Council's Local Plan the community of Swinford intends to play its part in the sustainable development of the District. The intention is not to prevent all development, but to remind potential developers that the community, through the Parish Council and the Planning system, will scrutinise all development proposals for their sustainability. Policy ENV 9, below, deals with the related issues of sustainable drainage.

Neither does the community intend to resist all proposals for energy generation equipment and facilities; instead, it lists the criteria by which the community and its elected representatives will judge all planning proposals, including those for wind and solar energy generation. Future technologies for renewable, sustainable energy generation will be evaluated objectively by the community, using the same criteria.

Finally, acceptance of the need to add new houses and other appropriate development to secure the future sustainability of the community is tempered by a wish to ensure that such new development is designed and built to enhance the built landscape of the village, and to make its contribution to maintaining or increasing the biodiversity of the parish.

### **POLICY ENV9: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Development proposals, within the Limits to Development, that are compliant with the aims of a low carbon economy, and contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change, including sustainable design, energy generation, drainage and construction techniques and practices, will be expected and viewed positively.**

#### **i) Sustainable Drainage and Flood Risk**

Swinford village is not at risk of flooding from rivers, although in the wider parish the Environment Agency map of 'Flood Risk for Planning' (Appendix 9) shows two areas in the Avon floodplain that are in Flood Risk Zone 3, the highest risk classification.

The important issue for residents is that of flooding from surface water, which appears to have increased in the parish over recent years; possible causes are increased rainfall overall, more intensive rainfall events, intensification of agriculture, and new development being permitted without recognition of its effects on local hydrology. Small-scale, local flooding by surface water may not be newsworthy but it is distressing for the people affected and, countrywide, is the commonest, most widespread type. Within the built-up area of the village, flooding from surface water (run-off and 'flash flooding') is an actual or potential risk at all sites where there are 'ordinary watercourses' (defined as 'rivers, streams, ditches, drains, cuts, culverts, dikes, sluices, sewers (other than public sewers within the meaning of the Water Industry Act 1991) and passages, through which water flows'), and also, significantly, along the



main streets within the village, across Rugby Road (and fields southwards) just west of the cemetery, and across Stanford Road.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) does not prohibit development in areas of high flood risk (e.g. Environment Agency Flood Risk Zone 3); NPPF paragraphs 100 – 103 are advisory on Local Planning Authorities. Flooding from surface water was excluded from the Government *National Flood Resilience Review* (September 2016). This Policy therefore represents a local determination to strengthen the conditions in respect of flooding and hydrology to be applied to all substantial (one or more houses / 100m<sup>2</sup> area of site) development in the parish.

The sites allocated for housing development (see policy H3) are within Flood Zone 1, defined by the Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework as having a low probability of flooding. However, any development holds the possibility of worsening flood risk in the surrounding areas as more water could run over hard surfaces.

#### **POLICY ENV10: RIVERS AND FLOODING**

**Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that a sequential approach in respect of flood risk has been considered when determining the proposal's location:**

- **The location takes geology, flood risk and natural drainage into account, including undertaking a hydrogeological study whose findings must be complied with in respect of design, groundworks and construction;**
- **The design includes as appropriate, sustainable drainage systems (SuDs), surface water management measures and permeable surfaces;**
- **There will be no resulting increase in the risk of flooding downstream or to third parties.**

# **Community Facilities and Amenities Policy**

## **Introduction**

The presence of community facilities and amenities make a significant contribution to the wellbeing and community spirit of Swinford. They have a positive impact of the sustainability of the parish, enhancing the village and providing focal points for social interaction.

For the size of Swinford there is a wide range of facilities. These include a pub; primary school, village hall, church, playgroup, play area with village green and equipment and a cricket club / sports field.

However, in recent years Swinford has suffered the loss of some amenities such as a local shop and public transport. These have not been replaced, although there is the use of the community bus which is operated and run by a local charity. This has increased the need for car ownership but has opened up a wider range of shopping alternatives than what was available locally.

The village is popular for commuting to work because of the close access to M1, M6 and A14 but with the recent closure of the Catthorpe Interchange the Parish awaits to understand the impact this will have on village life.

## **Protecting Existing Community Facilities**

### **Pub**

The Chequers is the only pub in Swinford. The close access to the motorways made it a great place to people to break up their journeys but with the closure of these links the impact is yet to be known. Combined with the efforts of its current tenants and changes made to the menu it is a pub that is becoming more inviting to locals and resident visitors.

The importance of the pub to community life is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that it scored the highest amongst villagers as being important but also The Chequers scored the highest amongst amenities that are used.

### **School**

Swinford Church of England Primary School provides a distinctive Christian education for children within the National Curriculum, links with the local community help shape teaching and learning at Swinford. The school welcomes children to the school whatever their background or religion. The school was established in 1874 and the school building re-developed in 2007. There is a strong community spirit in the village

and the school plays a significant part in this. Approximately 60% of its pupils come from within the parish.

The school has state-of-the-art teaching resources in light, spacious and stimulating classroom settings. There is a large hall equipped with sound and lighting systems and a sprung floor. Also, there is a well-equipped computer room, a library and areas for small group work. Outside there is a large playing field, a hard playground, a dedicated outdoor learning area and a large outdoor classroom. There is also a woodland area for children to explore and learn in and a garden where children grow plants and vegetables.

The official capacity is 105 and currently has 106 pupils on the roll. As with other schools of similar context and size, there is some unevenness in distribution across year groups so could accommodate a few more pupils in some classes.

### **Village Hall**

The village hall is a well-used local resource which offers a main hall, a meeting area, large store cupboard, kitchen/catering facilities and toilet facilities for all abilities. It is also home to the local playgroup who have a secure permanent set-up featuring a large room and toilets. The village hall is well used, not only does it provide a venue for the local playgroup but it hosts annual productions by the local amateur dramatics society and is a popular meeting place for other organisations in Swinford such as the WI and Swinford 2000 (local charity).

The importance of the village hall to community life is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that it scored the second highest amongst villagers as a facility that they use.

### **Church**

All Saints church is considered an important historic building or focal point. Regular attendance is low but the church is kept going by voluntary donations and events organised by a circle of parishioners. The church fills up at Easter, for carol services on Christmas Eve, for weddings, baptisms and funerals. The churchyard is in a central location to the village and has easy access from the front and back.

### **Playgroup / Swinford Seasons**

Swinford Playgroup, whilst independent of the school, have an excellent relationship. Swinford Playgroup has been established for over 25 years and is operated from within the Village Hall. It provides a wide range of opportunities and activities to support children through early years development offering a safe, secure, welcoming and friendly environment. Swinford Seasons is a before and after school care provision that operates for children who attend Swinford School.

### **Village Green / Play Area**

Right at the heart of Swinford there is a very popular play area set back from the village green. The land is rented from the diocese and leased to the Parish Council. The site is managed and maintained by a local charity called Swinford 2000 who formed in 1999 to build the play area as a millennium project for the community. The village green is a beautiful setting managed by volunteers in the village and is home to trees, bushes and shrubs and caters for at least two community events a year bringing all generations together in a rural setting.

### **Cricket Club / Sports Field**

Rowland United Cricket Club in Swinford runs all levels of teams with the emphasis on participation and fun. The club currently runs two midweek senior sides with a Sunday friendly and junior sides from ages U11 through to U17.

The sports field is home to the local football team Swinford Chequers who have risen in the leagues currently sitting in Division 3 of the Leicester Alliance League.

To promote a sense of community and emotional wellbeing that is so much part of Swinford's heritage and to maintain the appeal and viability of the Parish as a place to live it is essential that Swinford retain their facilities and amenities, enhancing where possible.

The importance of the existing facilities and amenities were highlighted during the questionnaire and open event exercises that have taken place in Swinford through the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan.

The results of a Parish-wide questionnaire at the outset of the Neighbourhood Plan process identified the value placed on retaining existing Parish facilities by local residents. This was reinforced by the open event held in April 2016. Policy CF1 explains how the Plan will contribute towards the objective of maintaining and enhancing the existing level and range of facilities.

## **POLICY CF1: THE RETENTION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND AMENITIES**

Development leading to the loss of an existing community facility or which detrimentally impacts on an existing community facility in such a way that it loses amenity value (including but not limited to the school, village hall, church, pub, village green / play area and cricket club / sports field) will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that:

- there is no longer any need or demand for the existing community facility; or
- the existing community facility is no longer economically viable; or
- the proposal makes alternative provision for the relocation of the existing community facility to an equally or more appropriate and accessible location within the Parish which complies with the other policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Assets of Community Value**

The designation of a community facility as an Asset of Community Value provides the opportunity to give it added protection from inappropriate development.

The Localism Act 2011 defines an 'Asset of Community Value' as "a building or other land (whose) main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social well-being or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future". The Localism Act states that "social interests" include cultural, recreational and sporting interests

Where an asset is 'Listed' the Parish Council or other community organisations will be given the opportunity to bid to purchase the asset on behalf of the local community, if it comes up for sale on the open market. Its 'Listing' can also be taken into consideration when determining a planning application for a development proposal, which would affect the reason why it was listed.

Assets of special importance to the well-being of the parish and to which local people have a strong affinity and wish to protect may come forward over the lifetime of the Plan.

## COMMUNITY ACTION CF1: ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

The Parish Council will support the listing of Assets of Community Value and once listed, will work to support their longevity.

### **Promoting Additional Community Facilities and Amenities**

Community consultations have confirmed the value of enhancing the range of community facilities and amenities in the parish, recognising their benefits to the local community.

The loss of the local shop and public transport in Swinford has never been forgotten and gives added importance to the need to encourage additional community services and amenities into the settlement. The combination of losing the local shop and then public transport has been significant for individuals, in particular those who have no access to transport to travel outside of the village. 85% of 168 respondents to the questionnaire identified that they would like to see a local shop in Swinford and 85% would also like to see public transport. The open event confirmed the thirst for a local shop, 13 of the 15 responses considered, stated the need for a village shop to start up again in Swinford.

However, this needs to be evaluated in the context of concerns expressed amongst the community about the impact of parking and the impact of increased traffic flows on road safety.

## **POLICY CF2: NEW OR IMPROVED COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

**Proposals that improve the quality and / or range of community facilities, particularly those for young people, will be supported provided that the development:**

- **meets the design criteria stated in policy H1;**
- **will not result in severe traffic movements or other impairments to residential properties;**
- **will not generate a need for parking that cannot be catered for within the development and does not aggravate current parking issues;**
- **is of a scale appropriate to the needs of the locality and conveniently accessible for residents of the village wishing to walk or cycle;**
- **has a positive impact on the community infrastructure.**

## **COMMUNITY ACTION CF1: COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

**Conduct a review of community facilities, groups, and their importance within the community.**



## **Transport Policy**

### **Traffic Management**

Swinford is a rural Parish and there are no major roads within it. Swinford is located next to the M1, M6 and A14 and was used as a 'cut through' for traffic prior to the closure of access to these roads for the M1 Junction 19 Improvement Scheme.

Volumes of traffic can be high at certain times and speeding in defence of the 30mph limit has previously been a problem. This, combined with the lack of off road parking in some areas create further problems particularly at peak times and when HGV's decide to travel through the village.

There are two choke points in Swinford on North Street and Chapel Street due to inadequate parking around the school and no provision for off road parking. This problem is exacerbated at school drop-off and pick up times and can also present difficulties for very large agricultural vehicles that use North Street.

Parking is also highlighted through questionnaire analysis and consultation as a particular problem along North Street and Chapel street and concerns were also raised regarding parking on pavements.

There is no provision for public transport in the village but there is access to a community bus which is run by a local charity called Swinford 2000. This facility is charged at cost and is not intended to make a profit. Whilst the bus does not put on regular trips to neighbouring towns following an unsuccessful trial it is regularly used by the school and a number of sports and social groups within the village.

The car provides the principal mode of transport for residents of the Plan area with no provision for public transport. The 2011 Census identifies only 4.4% of households with no car or van, compared to 12% across Harborough, 22% in the East Midlands and 26% across England. With the lack of public transport reducing journeys made by car would prove challenging but there are a number of actions that can be taken by individuals and by the public and private sectors that could help with this issue.

Residents are concerned by the potential for new developments to exacerbate existing parking and transport problems. The Plan therefore focuses on those areas where it can have an influence on the need to travel by car, on highway safety and on parking provision. In particular, it includes measures to prevent the loss of off-street parking and ensure that, where necessary, traffic management measures are provided in connection with new development.

Policies identified elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan support the aim of improving the transport situation in the Parish. These include protecting the existing pedestrian links to the surrounding area (Policy ENV8); supporting the promotion of high speed electronic communications, enabling businesses and individuals to communicate more effectively without travel and providing the opportunity for residents to work at home and more locally (Policy E4); and providing an appropriate level of off-street parking in any new developments (Policy H1).

### **POLICY T1: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

The provision of traffic management solutions to address the impacts of traffic arising from development in the Parish will be strongly supported. This includes either directly provided solutions or the use of developer contributions to provide the cost of improvements. The priorities for residents include:

- extending the 30mph zone near any new development;
- countdown chevrons;
- traffic management solutions to restrict / discourage speeding along Kilworth Road, Rugby Road and Stanford Road;
- traffic management solutions to reduce the use of Swinford as a route for HGV's;
- reviewing / widening pavements near to the school;
- introducing a passing bay along Chapel Street;
- cycle provision.

### **COMMUNITY ACTION 8: SCHOOL DROP OFF**

The Parish Council will endeavour to review the current issues and work with Swinford School with a view to developing a solution to that will ease the current issues that arise during school drop-off and pick-up times.

### COMMUNITY ACTION 9: ONE WAY SYSTEM AND BUS SERVICE

The Parish Council will explore all options with the District and County Council of implementing a one-way traffic system around the centre of the village. It will also explore whether or not the old bus service can be restored.

## **Employment Policy**

### **Support for Existing Employment**

Supporting a healthy and diverse local economy is an important theme of the Neighbourhood Plan. This support recognises the constraints imposed by the fact that Swinford is a rural parish and thus relatively remote from the major employment centres and by the fact that its residents place a high value on its rural character in all its aspects. That being said, it is very accessible to a significant number of towns and cities therefore a very good place to commute from. However, increased opportunities for home working and the highly mobile local economy – in terms both of demand and of labour – offer opportunities for niche businesses to flourish and for individuals to base themselves from the Parish while working elsewhere. Both these trends benefit the overall sustainability and diversity of the Parish.

There is an increasing number of residents who are home workers (11.8% of people living in the Parish who are aged 16-74 and in employment compared to 5.7% in Harborough District) choosing or needing to work from home. The majority of other workers commute to their place of employment. 53.5% of residents drive their car to work, above the rates for the Region (42.2%) and England (36.9%). The lack of local bus service and other bus services are insufficiently frequent at peak commuting times to facilitate working even a 9-5 day in Market Harborough or Leicester, the local employment centres, let alone to support shift working or flexi-time working with its inherent requirements for flexibility. Swinford village has an ageing population meaning less and less residents need to work. Although the ageing population might move away to places that provide facilities more relevant to their needs which may see younger people taking residence in their place.

Employment facilities are few and far between in Swinford. It is proposed that such facilities are protected against being lost to other uses. To do so, it is necessary to restrict the demolition or conversion of existing commercial premises (B-class uses) for non-commercial purposes. Only if it is clearly demonstrated that there is little prospect of the existing building or land being used for employment-generating purposes can this be permitted.

In order, therefore to demonstrate that commercial land or property can be redeveloped for non-commercial uses, the land or buildings must not have been in active use for at least twelve months and it must be clear that there is little or no prospect of the premises or land being reoccupied by an employment-generating user in the future. This must be demonstrated by a sustained marketing campaign lasting at least six months, undertaken through an appropriate commercial agent. This must show that all reasonable steps have been taken to market the property and that there has been no interest from a credible party.

## **Policy E1: SUPPORT FOR EXISTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

There will be a strong presumption against the loss of commercial and retail premises or land (A and B-class) which provides employment or future potential employment opportunities. Applications for a change of use to an activity that does not provide employment opportunities will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that:

- the commercial premises or land in question has not been in active use for at least 12 months; and
- the commercial premises or land in question has no potential for either reoccupation or redevelopment for employment generating uses and as demonstrated through the results both of a full valuation report and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least six months.

### **Support for New Employment Opportunities**

Community consultations have identified broad support for a healthy local economy providing amenities such as a general store and local employment opportunities. The Open Event from April 2016 recognised the value of supporting local businesses following the questionnaire identifying that 29% of respondents operated a business from the village.

Consequently, opportunities for business start-ups should be accommodated wherever possible and existing businesses should be encouraged to remain within the community and to grow. The Parish also needs to attract appropriate new enterprises in the right locations to boost and diversify the local economy and to provide more local employment opportunities at the same time considering the types and ensuring that they are in keeping with the village.

However, employment proposals should only be seen as acceptable if they avoid harmful impacts on other matters agreed to be locally important such as increased traffic flows, parking, residential amenity, the preservation of historic / heritage assets and the local environment.

The draft Local Plan supports the rural economy by allowing for the expansion of existing enterprises or the creation of small-scale new businesses to contribute to a vibrant and diverse local economy and improve the overall amenity value of living in the Parish.

## **Policy E2: SUPPORT FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE VILLAGE OF SWINFORD**

**New employment-generating opportunities will be supported where it:**

- a) falls within the boundary of planned limits of development for Swinford unless it relates to small scale leisure or tourism activities, or other forms of commercial/employment related development appropriate to a countryside location or there are proven exceptional circumstances; and**
- b) reuses land or buildings wherever possible; and**
- c) is of a size and scale not adversely affecting the character, infrastructure and environment of the village itself and the Plan area, including the countryside; and**
- d) does not involve the loss of dwellings; and**
- e) Does not increase noise levels to an extent that they would unacceptably disturb occupants of nearby residential property; and**
- f) Does not generate unacceptable levels of traffic movement; and**
- g) Contributes to the character and vitality of the local area; and**
- h) Is well integrated into and complement existing businesses.**

**The following types of employment development will be supported:**

- a) the small-scale expansion of existing employment premises across the parish;**
- b) small-scale new build development within the Limits to Development.**

## **Farm Diversification**

There are 5 working farms remaining in the Parish. To help maintain the rural economy and protect the open countryside from inappropriate development, the Plan supports the sustainable growth and expansion of business and enterprise through the conversion of existing buildings in the countryside. Specifically, this is intended to:

- promote a viable and sustainable farming and rural economy in Swinford Parish;
- promote the diversification of rural businesses;
- encourage new businesses to provide a wider range of local produce, services and leisure facilities, to provide local employment and attract visitors to the Parish;
- maintain and enhance the local environment of rural and agricultural lands.

The change of use of some rural buildings to new uses is already permitted under the General Permitted Development Orders. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment and Consequential Provisions) (England) Order 2014 allows, under certain circumstances, the change of use of agricultural buildings to residential use and change of use of agricultural buildings to registered nurseries providing childcare or state-funded schools, under the prior approval system.

### **Policy E3: RE-USE OF AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS**

**The re-use, conversion, and adaptation of rural buildings for small businesses, recreation, or tourism purposes will be supported where:**

- **the use proposed is appropriate to the rural location;**
- **the conversion / adaptation works respect the local character of the surrounding area;**
- **the development will not result in any unacceptable harm in respect of any archaeological, architectural, historic, or environmental features;**
- **the local road system is capable of accommodating the traffic generated by the proposed new use and adequate parking can be accommodated within the site;**
- **there is no unacceptable harm to neighbours through noise, light pollution, increased traffic levels or increased flood risk.**



## **Broadband Infrastructure**

The modern economy is changing and increasingly requires a good communications infrastructure as a basic requirement for commonly adopted and effective working practices. The internet is driving business innovation and growth, helping people access services, opening up new opportunities for learning and defining the way businesses interact with and between their employees, with their customers and with their suppliers. This is particularly important in small rural settings where better broadband will enable home-working, reducing dependence on the car; will enable small businesses to operate efficiently and compete effectively in their markets; and where improved access to an increasing number of on-line applications and services provided by the public and private sector can help to reduce social exclusion.

The 2011 Census highlights how people are working differently to a generation ago – in Swinford Parish 11.8% of people work from home (above the District-wide total of 5.7% and over three times the regional and national percentages) and 17.7% are self-employed, again significantly higher than district, regional or national levels.

The need for high speed broadband to serve Swinford is therefore very important. Broadband speeds are reported by residents to be poor and it is therefore a fundamental constraint to the continuing expansion of self-employed activity for those working from home or from a small office. In the community questionnaire, 13% of respondents referenced high quality broadband as being necessary.

### **Policy E4: BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Proposals to provide access to a super-fast broadband service of at least 30mbps and improve the mobile telecommunication network that will serve businesses and other properties within the Parish will be supported. This may require above ground network installations, which must be sympathetically located and designed to integrate into the landscape and not be located in or near to open landscapes.**

## **Homeworking**

Many current businesses are sole traders and microbusinesses, and many operate from a home office or workshop.

In rural areas, such as Swinford with limited full-time employment opportunities the benefit of supporting home working is that it helps to promote business activities, encouraging local employment and reducing the dependency of the car for long journeys to employment sites outside the Parish.

The intention of Policy E5 is to recognise that people may not have a suitable space within their home from which to run a business, or they may wish to distinctly and deliberately separate their work and living space. Policy E5 supports the construction of extensions, the conversion of outbuildings, and the development of new free standing buildings in gardens from which businesses can operate. This is intended to maximise the opportunity for home run enterprises to be created and supported in the long term in Swinford Parish, recognising the reality of employment patterns and work habits in a rural location.

Policy E5 would apply where a material change of use occurs, such that planning permission is required. It reflects positive support for entrepreneurial activity

#### **Policy E5: WORKING FROM HOME**

**Proposals for the use of part of a dwelling for office and/or light industrial uses, and for small scale free standing buildings within its curtilage, extensions to the dwelling or conversion of outbuildings for those uses, will be supported where:**

- **no significant and adverse impact arises to nearby residents or other sensitive land uses from noise, fumes, odour or other nuisance associated with the work activity; and**
- **any extension or free standing building shall be designed having regard to policies in this Plan and should not detract from the quality and character of the building to which they are subservient by reason of height, scale, massing, location or the facing materials used in their construction.**

## 7. Monitoring and Review

The Neighbourhood Plan will last for a period of 14 years. During this time, it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be regularly monitored. This will be led by Swinford Parish Council, in conjunction with Harborough District Council as the local planning authority, on at least an annual basis. The policies and measures contained in the Neighbourhood Plan will form the core of the monitoring activity, but other data collected and reported at the Parish level relevant to the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan will also be included.

The Parish Council proposes to formally review the Neighbourhood Plan on a five-year cycle commencing in 2022 or to coincide with the review of the Harborough Local Plan if this cycle is different.

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