An aerial photograph of a rural village, likely Preston on Stour. The image shows a winding river in the upper left, a cluster of houses and buildings in the center, and a tennis court in the lower right. The landscape is green and lush with trees and fields. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text.

Preston on Stour  
**PARISH PLAN 2014**  
*Caring for our Environment*

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## Acknowledgements

The Parish Plan Steering Group wish to thank:

Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Consultative Unit, in particular Simon Purfield.

Fiona Blundell of SDC for her help with the analysis of our survey.

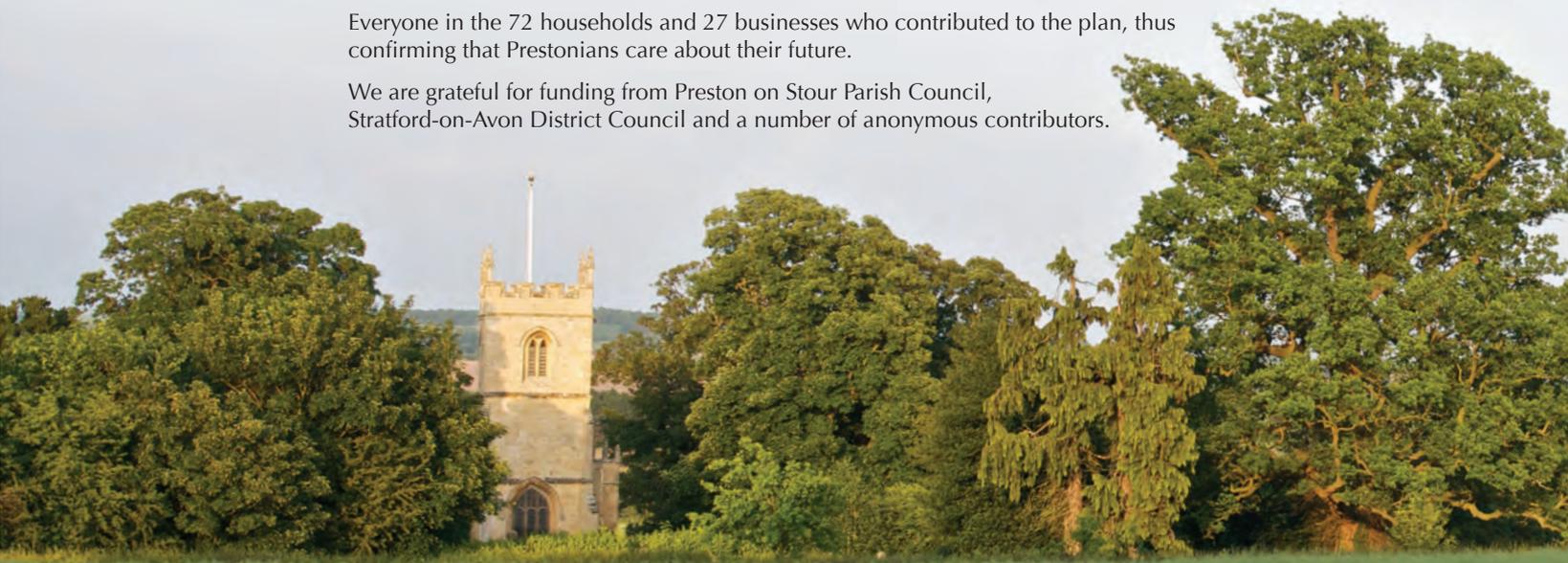
Sarah Brooke-Taylor of Warwickshire Rural Community Council for her wise advice.

Sheila Ribbans of Ilmington, Jerry Stammers of Snitterfield and Robert Thompson of Temple Grafton who gave their time so generously. They provided advice to the Steering Group at the beginning of this project when we were very naïve!

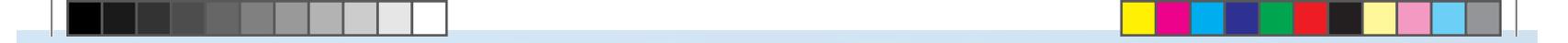
Councillors Mike Brain and Izzi Seccombe, who have been supportive throughout.

Everyone in the 72 households and 27 businesses who contributed to the plan, thus confirming that Prestonians care about their future.

We are grateful for funding from Preston on Stour Parish Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and a number of anonymous contributors.



One of our lovely views. St Mary's Church from the north with Wimpstone in the distance.



# Message from the Chairman

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**I**n June 2012 Preston on Stour Parish Council called for volunteers to create an official Parish Plan. All those who came forward, a good cross-section of locals, were duly convened into the Parish Plan Steering Group (PPSG) and learned about the concerns of our community. Several leaflets detailing our progress were delivered to every household during this activity and regular contact was maintained with the Parish Council.

A Parish Survey was devised by March 2013 and personally delivered to every house and business in the parish. 94% of households and 75% of businesses completed it, thus demonstrating a very strong interest in community affairs. The responses were independently analysed by the Consultative Unit of Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC).

This Parish Plan, including the Village Design Statement, carefully reflects parishioners' views. It identifies the facilities and services that people wish to be improved and it summarises the areas in which they wish our parish to be preserved. It will assist when bidding for funds and will provide guidance to the councils and others. The life of the Plan will depend upon the changing needs of the community, also it must reflect changes to council policies, guidance and services. Regardless, it should be revised at least every five years.

An Action Plan has been submitted to the councils and other interested bodies which lists proposals identified as desirable in the Parish Plan. Based on our various consultative events and parish survey, it provides details on how these proposals can be delivered. The Action Plan is presented as a separate document as it may need updating more frequently - it could be reviewed annually by the community at the Parish Assembly.

I thank the members of the PPSG for sacrificing an extraordinary amount of their own time. We sincerely believe this is a true and effective statement of the opinions and aspirations of residents and businesses in the Parish of Preston on Stour.

**ROGER REED**

Chairman of the Parish Plan Steering Group





# The History of the Parish

The first written, albeit oblique, reference to Preston dates from 804 AD when Ethelric, son of Ethelmund, elderman of the former Saxon kingdom of Hwicce, bequeathed land to the monastery at Deerhurst, which included land at 'Sture'.

In 1059, possession of Deerhurst was granted to the abbey of St Denis in Paris, which according to the Domesday book held 10 hides in Preston. In 1467 the land was granted to Tewkesbury Abbey. The parish's connection with monasteries apparently led to its name: a corruption of 'Priest-town'. The smaller manor of Alscot (originally named Alverscote) was once owned by one of Richard III's principal councillors, Sir William Catesby.



...the Priest's Cottage, probably the oldest house in the village.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the manor of Preston on Stour changed hands many times. In 1747 it was bought by James West, a Member of Parliament and, following in the footsteps of Wren, Pepys, Newton and Sloane, a President of the Royal Society. The present house at Alscot was apparently first built in about 1600 upon medieval foundations, but by 1705 it had fallen into disrepair. It was rebuilt entirely for James West Esq. in two stages, 1750-2 and 1763-5, with a magnificent new frontage. The house, now known as Alscot Park, is a remarkable example of early 'rococo gothic' and survives largely unaltered to this day.

The first mention of the church of St Mary the Virgin was in 1272. A vicarage was mentioned in 1615 but by then it had been divided into two dwellings. It was perhaps the cottage known today as the Priest's House, probably the oldest house in the village. The church tower was built in the late 15th century. In 1753 James West began to rebuild the church, employing the services of Edward Woodward of Chipping Campden. The result was described as 'remarkable as one of the earliest churches of the Gothic revival' by Howard Colvin, in 'A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects', published in 1954. The windows contain a quantity of fine painted

glass acquired by James West including some, in the north and south windows of the chancel, allegedly taken from Evesham Abbey.

Many of the properties in Preston are hundreds of years old, but the houses in the main street were built as a 'model village' between 1852 and 1856 using bricks made in the Estate's own brick-yard. Also provided at about this time was a school, built in 1848, which remained in use until 1975. There are virtually no recent buildings, there being but three properties (plus two conversions) which have been constructed since the Second World War; they are easily identified as being typical of the late 'seventies.

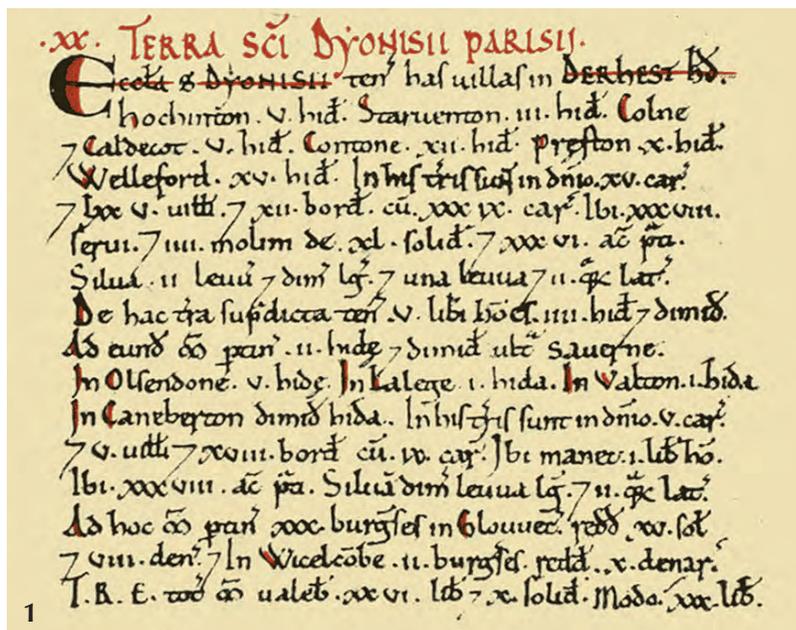
The Stratford & Moreton Railway, a horse-tramway, opened in September 1826 (just a year after the more famous Stockton-Darlington line) and passed through the parish along the main road. It is said to have transported 15,000 tons of coal a year, as well as passengers, up until 1859. However it was not an economic success despite a branch to Shipston opening in 1836. Surpassed by the railway connection between Moreton and Honeybourne (and on to Stratford), gradually it became derelict and in 1918 the rails were removed for scrap to help the war effort. Its course is still clearly visible, running beside the A3400 Oxford-Birmingham road.

At the northern part of the parish, across the main road, are the remains of buildings associated with RAF Atherstone (renamed RAF Stratford in 1942) which operated as a training base for Wellington bombers during the Second World War. They were used after the conflict to house homeless people, which explains the temporary surge in the population of the parish in the 1951 census.

In 1942 the village (which was transferred from Gloucestershire to Warwickshire in 1931) began to raise funds for a hall. By 1952 a total of £708 had been collected; two ex-army

huts were purchased and re-erected by volunteer labour, at a cost of £702. The Coronation Hall, opened by Captain James West in 1953, remained the centre of village social life until it was replaced many years later. The new building, designed in keeping with the architecture of the main street, also

incorporates oak trusses from local woods. It was opened in 1999 by Emma Holman-West and her daughter, Isabella, representing the present and future guardians of Alscot and the ancient parish of Preston on Stour.



1. Domesday Book entry for Preston (1086).
2. The Allotments in the 1970s.
3. The Village Hall c1977.
4. James West, who bought the estate in 1747.
5. Pupils from Class 2, Preston on Stour School 1909-10.
6. The main street c1908.



The Entrance to the Village.

# Our Parish, Our Village

The parish of Preston on Stour consists principally of the village of Preston, Alscot Park (the house, grounds and deer park) and a number of farms and cottages. It lies about four miles south of Stratford-upon-Avon and about five miles north of Ilmington Downs and Meon Hill, which mark the edge of the Cotswolds and the associated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Breathtaking views towards the northern edge of the Cotswolds, the Vale of Evesham and the Severn Valley are part of the character of the wider parish. It is a quiet, rural area, its appearance heavily influenced down the years by farming and its ownership by the family at Alscot. There is an abundance of flora, fauna and open space. Most consider this to be a wonderful place to live, to work, to bring up children and to retire.

The heart of the village is the area beginning at the turning from Preston Lane, taking in the village hall, the former school, a lovely example of a Victorian street, St Mary's Church and the village green with its war memorial. It ends with a single-storey gatehouse at the northern end, with farmland beyond. The wider parish includes houses in Radbrook and dwellings and businesses on what is still known locally as Rough Farm (now the Grove Business Park) on the other side of the A3400. In the south-west there is a specialist fish and aquatics company at Sweet Knowle Farm. A number of firms and houses can also be found within Alscot Park, notably a livery stables, a classic car restorer and a manufacturer of Victorian-pattern bathroom fittings.

Preston's situation is linked inextricably to Alscot Estate. Thus it is considered an 'estate village' – one still predominantly owned by a single family and a trust which manages it. Naturally there is a close association between the Holman-West family and the inhabitants of the village and the wider parish. This is particularly manifest at Christmas-time when many tenants and other parishioners are invited to the 'Big House' for an annual drinks party.

In the past most villagers had direct economic ties to the Estate and its various farms (as labourers, domestic servants, grooms etc.), but this link has now all but disappeared. Most people of employment age work outside the parish and those in full-time education attend schools in Stratford or in other villages, following the closure of Preston's school. Widespread car ownership also means that most shopping takes place in Stratford or beyond, but the village shop and Post Office has remained, providing an essential service and a vital community link.

The houses and cottages are of considerable character and significant historical interest. Many are 'Listed' and the status afforded to much of the village as a Conservation Area is well merited. The vast majority of the land and housing is still owned by Alscot Estate and rented on both long and short-term leases; there are just fourteen privately-owned houses within the village, a significant minority.

Perhaps by virtue of its small size, Preston's community is close-knit. Most of its inhabitants know each other well and there is a great deal of social cohesion. The principal agent of this is the Three Parishes Millennium Hall, which besides being a community centre



Most consider this to be a wonderful place to live, to work, to bring up children, and to retire.



Alscot Park.



1



2



3



4



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- 1. The Queens Diamond Jubilee 2012.
- 2. The Village Green.
- 3. The Bell Ringers.
- 4. Reverend Chris Goble.
- 5. The Old School Building & Village Shop.
- 6. Village Hall Event.
- 7. Some of our lovely ladies.



6



7



for parishioners from Preston, Atherstone and Whitchurch parishes, also plays host to Tiddlywinks Playgroup. The hall is available for hire for private functions (at a reduced rate for parishioners) and its management committee is active in organising social events. Each year starts with a New Year's Day breakfast and continues with an annual quiz; a May Day procession, races and teas; a summer barbecue and a Harvest Supper. In addition concerts and plays are organised, mainly through the auspices of the Live and Local organisation. A gathering on St Thomas's Day (21st December) features storytelling, songs and dancing, to the music of the locally-based Silver Bough Ceilidh Band.

The Church of St Mary, Preston, is grouped with another five churches and parishes under the leadership of the Rev'd Chris Goble. They work together to promote a faithful Christian community within Preston parish. Services are held most weeks, preceded by the lusty ringing of the church's three ancient bells. Worship can be either traditional or rather more informal and the significant Christian festivals are marked with special services. On Christmas Eve the church is packed with people for the singing of carols and the performance of a nativity play by local children. The Church is aware of its duty to maintain one of the oldest structures in Preston on Stour; it seeks to make the building available each day for worshippers, interested visitors and those wanting merely a few moments of peace and reflection. It aims to serve the whole parish and is always open to suggestions from anyone in the community.

As stated, although Preston lacks a school and has had no pub for a hundred years, the hall, the church and the shop help to maintain a deep feeling of community amongst those living in the village and elsewhere in the parish. Perhaps the best recent illustration of the strength of community spirit was in June 2012. To celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, an ad-hoc committee (composed mostly of those on other committees) organised a series of events which culminated in a grand

evening meal, provided (at no charge) to villagers, former villagers and their guests. The appearance of a sizable group of those who had celebrated the Coronation back in 1953 illustrated the continuity of this community. It has certainly changed in terms of its inhabitants, their occupations, car ownership etc. However its close-knit nature and the strong consensus concerning the beauty of the parish and its unspoilt character (highlighted in the recent survey), point to an optimistic future.

Only 80 years ago, Preston was still somewhat of a rural backwater without many of the amenities we take for granted today. Mains electricity arrived only in 1934. Mains water was provided in early 1955 meaning that wells, pumps and privies became things of the past, although even today some cesspits still exist. In the same year, milk appeared in bottles instead of being collected in small churns. Bathrooms were added to estate properties in the 1960s. Telephone cables were installed many years ago, but the internet service remains rather slow especially compared to what is available in Stratford and major cities. It is noted that Alscot Estate is working to improve this situation, so that superfast broadband may soon be more widely available. Due to the lack of a mains gas supply there is a significant reliance upon oil for Preston's heating and hot water; it could be argued that more needs to be done to supply gas to homes – in conjunction with improved insulation – as part of the principle of sustainable living. In addition, other forms of greener energy could be sought.



...parishioners care passionately about the area in which they live...



1. The Village Hall.  
2. Afternoon tea in the Village Hall.



Celebrating the Queens Diamond Jubilee.

Consistent with the signs of the times and the shift away from manual labour and predominantly agricultural employment, the majority of parishioners today do not work in the parish; however approximately half do work locally i.e. within a radius of six miles. Gone are the local trades such as the blacksmith, the brewer, the tailor and the baker. Instead, it is clear that Alscot Estate is encouraging local businesses and a sense of entrepreneurship and, thereby, the generation of local jobs. Although there is no single defining business sector represented within the parish, plentiful car parking and easy access to the road network and business parks have encouraged companies to move here; amongst them a cleaning firm where staff arrive daily and disperse to properties throughout the district, a car-leasing firm and a national warehouse and distribution centre. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) also exist, such as a TV production firm, a lifestyle retail outlet, a timber yard, a rock school and a specialist cosmetics company.

Today, the evidence gleaned from the survey confirms that parishioners care passionately about the area in which they live and its sustainability for future generations. There is an increased awareness of the damage which can be done to the environment through inefficiency and waste. Parishioners would like to be better at recycling. They would like to have access to more cycle-paths which would lead to a decrease in the use of cars. They are concerned with the costs of modern living, in particular the rising prices of fuel for heating and they wish that their homes were better insulated, for example. There is also considerable interest in the growing of produce such as fruit and vegetables, perhaps in allotments and community orchards, as was done in the past. Parishioners are also interested in maintaining and improving local footpaths which would provide even better access to different parts of the local countryside.



May Day on the Village Green.

Some of our Beautiful Buildings...



No.36 Rose Hip Cottage



The Dell



Number Twenty



No.50 Church House



The Old Mission



Locke's Farm



The Gables



Top Lodge



The Priest's Cottage



The Main Street.



The Close

# The Parish Survey

Most residents received envelopes containing three questionnaires: one covering the whole household (asking for information such as the number and ages of people living there), one 'residents' questionnaire and one specifically for young people.

Extra 'residents' and 'young people' forms were offered and supplied as requested, but only one 'household' questionnaire was delivered to each address. Businesses in the parish each received a dedicated questionnaire. A map was included with all survey packs, showing the parish boundary and the Conservation Area. Completed surveys were returned in sealed envelopes and were opened and independently analysed by Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

36 questionnaires were delivered to businesses and 27 were returned: a satisfactory response of 75%. When both residents' and businesses' responses are added together the combined rate is 88%. This was described by the District Council as 'impressive'.

The total numbers of the various questionnaires received by the council were as follows: residential 103, household 66, young people 20 and business 27.

Of the 158 residents recorded in the survey as living here, 18% were aged 18 or under and 16% were over 65. However the official government Census for the parish in 2011 recorded a population of 244. There were 41 residents (16%) under 19 and precisely the same number were over 65. It is difficult to compare accurately the total population figures above (158 and 244) because completion of the Census is compulsory, unlike our survey. The vast majority of 'household' questionnaires were returned completed, but not every last one, therefore some residents will not have been counted. In addition, given the small numbers in the parish, sometimes there will be short-lived but significant statistical swings. For example just a few temporarily empty houses or the arrival of a large family, at the time of any census, can have a great effect

upon numbers and percentages. There seems to have been a fall in the number of children, but despite the concerns expressed in some of the comments received in the completed surveys, the number of residents aged over 65 appears not to have increased.

The majority of houses and business premises are rented from Alscot Estate, with only around a third of houses being owner-occupied. Very small numbers are privately-rented.

Currently 29% of residents have lived here for up to four years or more, and 28% have done so for over 25 years.

The remaining 43% varied fairly evenly between five and 25 years. This means there is quite a large stable population, nevertheless there is a considerable number of people who stay only for a relatively short time.



When both residents' and businesses' responses are added together the combined rate is 88%.

*Details of these statistics, and those pertaining to all other sections, are available in the report on the results of the Parish Plan Survey, which is on the Preston on Stour website: [www.prestononstour.org](http://www.prestononstour.org)*

# Parish Issues

## *Parking*

Although at first sight parking could be thought of as an issue, the majority of residents and business-owners (85%) do not have difficulty finding parking spaces near their homes or places of work. That said, a small minority of 13% reported problems on occasion.

## *Speed limits*

Our parish and village roads are narrow, often with properties right up to the kerbside and in places there are no footpaths. Many of those surveyed thought that many drivers are travelling too fast through the village of Preston on Stour. It is believed that these offenders are not just outsiders, or the young. Considerable concern has been generated over the efficacy of the 30 mph speed limit: 65% of those surveyed want it to be reduced to 20mph. Coupled with this, 33% of respondents would support an extension of speed limits beyond current boundaries, particularly to include the bridges over the Stour in Preston Lane and perhaps the introduction of a 50 mph limit from the bridges to the junction with the A3400.

1. Parking in the village.
2. We would prefer a 20 mph speed limit.
3. Dangerous cross-roads at the entry to the village.



## *Cycle-paths*

Almost two-thirds of respondents thought there was a need for cycle-paths to link the parish to local villages and Stratford-upon-Avon.

## *Street lighting*

There were very strong feelings shown within the community: 82% did not want light pollution caused by any form of street lighting within the village of Preston on Stour.

## *Dog Fouling*

Exactly half of all respondents do not consider 'dog mess' to be a problem, compared to 34% who do. Threequarters of the latter believe there is a need for dog-waste bins in the parish.

## *Crime prevention*

Just over a third did not think more could be done to enhance crime prevention in the parish, compared to 24% who felt to the contrary. There was however considerable comment about the lack of community police presence in and around the parish. There was very strong feeling in favour of the resurrection of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.





# Future Development in the Parish

Within the views of survey respondents (both residents and businesses), the greatest support for increased residential accommodation was in the form of the conversion of derelict structures. It was also agreed that these could usefully be made into workshops, or buildings for community or agricultural uses.

The responses indicated that residents are split as to whether new houses should be built, with a slim majority (50%) supporting some new houses in the parish, compared with 41% against. The value placed by both residents and businesses on the preservation of the unique features of the village of Preston on Stour was demonstrated by the results of the survey.

Although 50% of respondents favoured the building of new houses within the parish overall, the majority of people wanted none in the Conservation Area. Only 34% were in favour of any new building within that protected zone.

There were wide differences of opinion over optimum numbers, types and sites for new housing. One aspect upon which there was a very high percentage of agreement was that any new building should be strictly in keeping with the character of the village and

its surroundings; also that these same standards should apply equally to all conversions, extensions and alterations.

The views of business owners were also similarly divided (50% supporting new house-building and 38% against). This indicates the need for careful consideration, consultation and planning should new housing be proposed in the parish.

By far the greatest number of respondents cited new building as the biggest issue facing the community over the next ten years, but were divided over whether the threat to the parish was the construction of new housing, or the lack of new housing. Comments such as "Housing could ruin the village" and "A dying village with an increasingly ageing population and few families" demonstrated this disagreement, although the majority were in favour of some development in the parish, but not in the Conservation Area.

It is also important to note that a time-scale for the construction of new housing was not stated, so it is unclear whether the numbers of houses expressed by respondents relate to a short period, say five years, or over a longer term such as 20 years.

## Essential Services

### *Police, Fire and Ambulance*

Significantly, the majority of those completing the survey did not have a view on the standard of each of the emergency services in question. Of those who did 33% felt the police and ambulance services were satisfactory or better and 25% said likewise of the fire service.

### *Utilities*

90% rated the mains electricity and water services as satisfactory or better. A slightly lower figure (80%) expressed similar views of the sewerage service. General waste collections are made on every other Monday alternating with the collection of recyclables and garden waste. 90% of respondents rated refuse collection/recycling /garden waste

disposal as satisfactory or better. There was considerable interest in an oil buying syndicate. In fact a scheme exists already, managed by Warwickshire Rural Community Council, which aims to reduce domestic heating oil costs by bulk buying.

67% of households would like to be connected to a mains gas supply. In the village, mail is delivered and collected from Monday to Saturday. There is one post box outside the sub- Post Office and a telephone box is adjacent to the village green. The BT telephone service was considered satisfactory or better by 75% of respondents; however it was strongly felt by 66% that mobile 'phone reception was patchy and at best, poor. 54% felt that a current broadband speed of 2-3Mb/s is completely unacceptable. To facilitate efficient business

and home-office working, superfast broadband must come as soon as possible. There was some dissatisfaction about the condition of the telephone box though 50% considered its condition acceptable. Television and radio reception was considered by 84% to be good. Although 75% felt that generally, ditch and footpath maintenance across the parish was satisfactory or better, there was concern that it was inconsistent. There was particularly strong feeling about the inadequacy of water drainage at the crossroads to the south of the village and in Radbrook Road, particularly in heavy downpours when the drains are quickly overcome. The surface water flowing down Cow Lane has created potholes and eroded verges leaving debris on the road surface. In very wet weather the Stour floods the road by the bridges but often there are no flood-



67% of households would like to be connected to a mains gas supply.

warning signs to alert drivers on either approach.

### *Transport*

From Monday to Saturday the No. 23A Stratford-Ilmington bus service runs close to Preston, with a shelter located near to the crossroads to the south of the village. Two school buses are provided, one for Shipston and the other for Stratford. Although the vast majority (86%) never take a bus, 23% would do so if the cost was lower; additionally almost half would use one if the Stratford service was more conveniently-timed, including a bus service in the evening. A few (9%) indicated they would use the buses if they

catered more for people with disabilities. There were several comments complaining about the poor state of maintenance and cleanliness of the bus shelter. Half of those surveyed would be interested in using a community bus with volunteer drivers but only 16% confirmed they would join a car-sharing scheme. However, approximately half were in favour of supporting an idea involving the owners of four-wheeled-

drive vehicles providing a transport service to and from Stratford in bad winter weather.

There was much dissatisfaction over the condition of some road surfaces, for example in Radbrook Road. There was strong support (59%) for the construction of a safe cycle-way to Stratford.

### *Health and Welfare*

Medical and dental facilities are provided at Lower Quinton, Shipston and Stratford. There was general satisfaction with these services. There was very strong support (79%) for the provision of a defibrillator in the village. No-one had used the Meals-on-Wheels service.

### *Education*

There are no primary or secondary school facilities in Preston on Stour and only 27% of respondents felt that education provision was satisfactory or better; 73% offered no opinion. Pre-school activity is provided by Tiddlywinks Playgroup which operates from the village hall five mornings a week.

### *Local Services*

Generally, there was a very high level of satisfaction with the provision and maintenance of the village greens and the churchyard. There was some disquiet, from a minority, about damage to the verges caused by heavy vehicles and the parking of cars on the greens. Whilst 84% considered the grass cutting to be satisfactory, some felt that it should be cut more frequently. There were many adverse comments about the detrimental effect of leaving grass-cuttings on the greens; 75% of respondents felt maintenance of paved pathways was satisfactory or better.

There was considerable dissatisfaction with the provision and maintenance of salt bins and the standard of snow clearance and gritting was considered by 36% to be poor.

There was general satisfaction registered with the shop and Post Office, although a minority requested that opening hours and the range of goods and services be extended.

Most households are aware that a mobile public library visits Preston regularly, but the service is rarely used.



Our one and only telephone box.



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1. Our bin men doing a great job.
2. Posting letters outside the Village Shop.
3. The postman.
4. A well maintained footpath.
5. The bus timetable.
6. The River Stour in flood.

# Community

The majority of people thought that there was a strong sense of community in the parish. One telling comment was “I feel part of a community even though I have not lived here for long”. Many cited it as what they valued most and that it could be enhanced by careful consideration of several issues raised. However, in such a small parish it is difficult to provide new facilities with the limited resources available. A small number thought it is difficult for new residents to integrate and that more information on community life would be beneficial.



...strong sense of community in the parish.

The survey identified that other valued aspects of living in the parish were: the peace and quiet of the countryside setting (but being close enough to Stratford for access to more than just basic services); the historical and unique

character of the village; the suitability of the place for children; and the generally limited traffic, making it a tranquil haven in the countryside. The parish currently benefits from a range of local groups and activities based in the village. These include dance classes, a reading group and some sports/fitness activities. Many of these are based at the Three Parishes Millennium Hall and are well supported. Survey respondents expressed an interest in the formation of additional organised group activities, such as a walking/rambling group, a local history group and a flower show. Residents also showed support for a cycle-way linking local villages to Stratford, a children’s

play area, allotment gardens, a community orchard and improved access to the riverside. Almost three-quarters stated they would participate in a village tidy-up day and many expressed support for a managed wildlife walk.

The Six Parishes Magazine, which is produced and distributed by the Church, is an important form of communication in the parish - over 80% of respondents listed it as an important source of information on the parish and surrounding areas. The majority thought that a parish directory would be a valuable addition.

When asked what residents considered to be the biggest issues facing the community over the next ten years, the majority of concerns centred on topics relating to new housing development. These included meeting a perceived need for housing for young families or older residents, as well as significant disquiet that such development could have a detrimental impact on the community. A significant number of parishioners also expressed concerns relating to the ageing population, the maintenance or improvement of existing services and an increase in the cost of living, including rents. Other worries regarded the lack of affordable housing (to buy or to rent) within the parish, especially for younger people and families. Almost half did not know if there is sufficient provision for elderly people in the parish but 22% considered it inadequate. There was a wide range of comments on what facilities for old people are needed, including housing, more social opportunities and better public transport.

# Environmental Issues

72% of residents and 90% of businesses felt that the parish should consider the effects of climate change when planning for the future. This matter and other associated issues have been outlined in the Action Plan to ensure they are taken into account.

There was also a very large amount of concern expressed, both in response

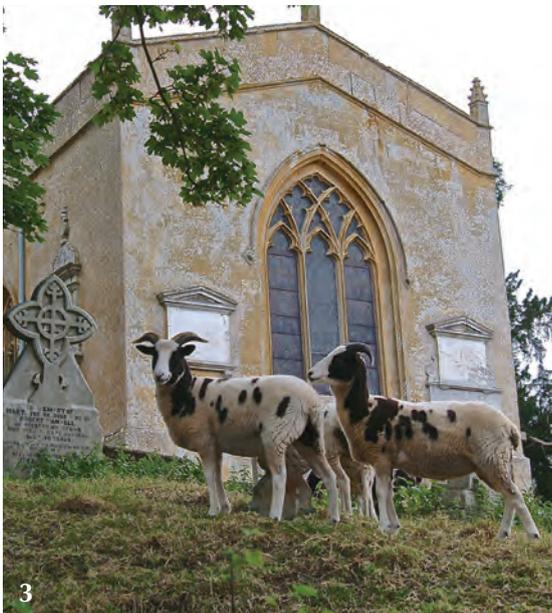
to questions and in voluntary comments submitted, about the preservation of the built environment. Many aspects of this have been addressed in the Village Design Statement.



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- 1. "Wow, this looks interesting!"
- 2. A Parish Plan meeting.
- 3. "The churchyard maintenance team".
- 4. Queens Diamond Jubilee bonfire.
- 5. The Village Church.
- 6. The Village Shop & Post Office.
- 7. 'Blues 2 Go' live music event.

# Local Government

Over four-fifths of respondents were aware that Parish Council meetings are open to all residents. 58% confirmed they had not attended a meeting, although 42% had. Nine out of ten did not know how much of their Council Tax the Parish Council uses, versus 11% who did.

Over four-fifths of those surveyed were satisfied with the way the Parish Council spends its share of Council Tax, as opposed to 19% who were dissatisfied. Around a third stated that decisions and activities of all tiers of council (parish, district and county) are poorly publicised.

# Businesses and Jobs

75% of businesses within the parish responded to the survey which demonstrates their interest in the area. 44% of residents work locally, 32% work further away and 31% are retired or will be within five years. One third of employed parish residents would be interested in

more job opportunities locally.

It is hoped that in future, with the assistance of Alscot Estate, it will be possible to foster a closer association between the residential community and local businesses so that residents know the names, locations and functions of these firms. Also, vacancies and opportunities for work experience and/or apprenticeships could be publicised via the website and the village shop notice-board.



Just a few of the many businesses within the Parish.



# Young People

Preston on Stour is considered by many to be a wonderful environment in which to raise young people. Over the years, many families have chosen to reside here for that very reason. Parishioners are blessed with wideopen spaces, a predominantly natural rather than built environment, footpaths, wonderful views and plenty of fresh air. Noise and pollution are largely absent. An atmosphere of well-being is fostered and a strong sense of community exists – folk look out for each other. Many feel that the young of the parish are being nurtured in a safe and beautiful environment: “Freedom for children and general safety” was how one respondent put it.

Nevertheless, there are some threats to this enviable situation; a demand for action to meet these has been shown by the survey. A majority feel that it is possible to drive through the parish at too fast and thus too dangerous a speed, but (at present) quite legally. Parishioners feel that there is a need for urgent action and the Parish Council should take the lead. This issue is highlighted again in the next section.

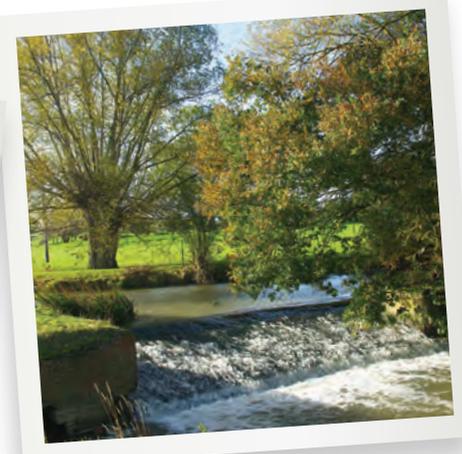
A second point concerns the organisation of youth-orientated social events. The parish is lucky to possess a wonderful village hall and an energetic Village Hall Committee; nevertheless public entertainments have tended to be aimed at adults. More could be done to support activities for the young; a youth-club, for

example. Art, drama, nature and sport could be promoted more actively and thus encouraged. This is particularly important during the dark winter months when it is not ideal for children to play outside in the evenings. Community action is needed here, with change being likely only if interested parents come forward with the necessary energy and commitment.

Finally, local young people have pointed out that there is a shortage of physical infrastructure which is sometimes enjoyed by larger communities. For example, whilst possessing beautiful outdoor spaces the parish does not have a community garden and/or an orchard; there is support for the creation of both. There is no community play area. There are no designated nature trails, to encourage an appreciation of wildlife within those who must protect it in the future. It seems certain that fundraising activities and associated collective action will be needed. Furthermore the active involvement of Alscot Estate will be vital. The establishment of such infrastructure by like-minded volunteers would aid further social cohesion. It must be remembered that the current residents of Preston on Stour are merely its custodians for the next generation.

1. Straw fight on May Day.
2. The May Queen and attendants on May Day 2014.





# Rural Living

Both residents and business-owners particularly appreciate living and working in such a beautiful and unspoilt area of countryside. This was cited by the majority as the first or second most important aspect that they valued.

## *The Village and Surrounding Countryside*

“The beauty of the village and countryside” and “Exceptionally attractive environment, close to essential services” were typical of comments received.

The parish owes much to its rural heritage. This has created an enviable environment crafted over many centuries – particularly through farming, estate ownership and associated agricultural activity. The village seems to nestle into the landscape rather than to dominate it and, when walking to surrounding higher points, the views are amongst the most spectacular in Warwickshire.

Despite the historical and present-day emphasis on cultivation there is still a wide variety and abundance of wildlife and flora. Fallow deer graze Alscot’s parkland while muntjac live in and around the village. Badgers are active at night and foxes are sometimes seen by day. Birds thrive here, including less commonly-seen species such as woodpeckers, owls, jays, mistle-thrushes, swifts and buzzards. Swans, ducks, geese and even kingfishers can be spotted on the River Stour as it meanders through the parish. Trees of many varieties such as oak, ash, sycamore, horse chestnut, poplar, beech and yew are numerous. Rare insects are seen too, for example humming-bird moths.



View towards the Vale of Evesham.



### *Green Spaces and Footpaths*

The village has an open and spacious feel; the large greens are the focus of outdoor events and are used daily by the children as play areas. A particularly attractive footpath leads from the bridge on Preston Lane, through the heart of the settlement and on to open countryside overlooking Alscot Park. From there it leads to Atherstone on Stour; it is well used by both locals and walkers from elsewhere. Otherwise there are relatively few clearly-defined and easily-accessible footpaths. Over 90% of respondents thought them important and almost half said they would like more pedestrian rights of way. A large majority of those would like some access to the river.

Exactly half would like a community orchard and 40 respondents (39%) were keen for allotments to be made available once again. 23 of those would prefer them to be in the

previous location. Asked about the following features, 92% felt they were important or very important:

- Wildlife, wild flowers and meadows.
- Heritage and history.
- Views across the countryside.
- Views in and around Preston on Stour.
- Traditional buildings.
- Country footpaths.

80% believed it was important or very important that most of Preston on Stour village is a Conservation Area. Many of the additional comments listed in the survey responses further emphasise how important parishioners' home and work surroundings are to them.

**...92% felt wildlife and the countryside was important or very important**



# Village Design Statement

## *Purpose*

The Village Design Statement should be read alongside the report on the results of the Preston on Stour Parish Plan Survey, the resulting Action Plan and the rest of the Parish Plan. There is also a list of references and links for associated information at the back of the Parish Plan. The village website gives further details.

The aim of this Village Design Statement is to reflect the views expressed by the residents and businesses in the recent Parish Plan Survey. The majority strongly supported shaping any future development in such a way as to ensure the village's unique and highly-valued character is preserved.

For a village and its surroundings to remain sustainable it must reflect the changing needs of the people who live and work there. However, this should never be at the cost of diminishing the special aspects of the area, not only for those enjoying and appreciating them now, but for the benefit of future generations, too.

If approved by the Parish Council and adopted by Stratford District Council this Statement will be taken into consideration when dealing with planning applications. It also aims to be a guide for anyone who plans to build, adapt or extend buildings in the parish.

## *Guiding Principles*

These are based on the analysis of the Preston on Stour Parish Plan Survey and the subsequent public meeting:

- The rural character of Preston on Stour should be preserved.
- The landscape should be protected, especially views into, out of and within the village.
- The important balance between open and built areas should be maintained.
- Any new building, including extensions, conversions and alterations should be in sympathy with local building styles and materials.

## *Special Character*

The peaceful setting of Preston on Stour and its surroundings is much enhanced by the many attractive and varied historic buildings, balanced by well-maintained greens, views and ancient trees.

The majority of the buildings are listed and many are of both architectural and historic significance. There is a rare example of a rural Victorian street, several fine half-timbered houses, a good brick-built Queen Anne house, a few characterful half-timbered cottages, a blacksmith's forge, a couple of smart Victorian farmhouses, two cottages of cob (mud and straw) construction and an old chapel, to list just some of the varied buildings to be seen. Half of the old school-room now serves as a village shop and Post Office. The other half is rented as a yoga studio, but the exterior and the old teachers' houses attached remain unaltered.

Approaching the village either from Atherstone on Stour or along Preston Lane, the splendid and historic church is a prominent part of the view, being one of the most elevated buildings. Of course, it is also the tallest. There are only three recently-built houses, which are examples of in-filling. Most of the other buildings are small Victorian brick cottages, some with rendered exteriors; small in size, nevertheless containing many original features. These and many other examples of the special character and valued features of Preston on Stour are extensively illustrated throughout this document.

## *Future Development*

The issue of future development in the parish, specifically housing, is considered by many to be crucial, as was highlighted in the pre-survey consultation workshop, so an entire section of the survey was dedicated to questions relating to new housing, refurbishment of derelict buildings, extensions and conversions. As can be seen in the results from the Parish Survey "consensus has been very difficult to achieve".

Given the complex issues involved in planning and the mix of views expressed, it

may be helpful to provide some context to the situation by outlining the present national and district planning policies and providing links to further sources of information. A brief summary of current planning guidance is presented in Appendix A.

### *Conservation Area and Listed Buildings*

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not restrict development from taking place in a Conservation Area (CA). However it does require that the historic environment is preserved, so any development should be designed to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Almost all of the village of Preston on Stour has been designated a Conservation Area (see map), which is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” (Planning [Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas] Act 1990). This means that there are additional requirements with regard to obtaining planning permission. This also applies to ‘permitted development’ which, outside a CA, may normally be allowable without permission. In most cases it is necessary to apply for official approval to extend or demolish a part of any property within a CA and one must notify SDC if tree felling or pruning is desired, even for a tree which is not covered by a Tree Preservation Order. Information on the requirements can be obtained from Stratford District Council Planning Department.

Additionally, a large number of buildings within the parish are recorded as Listed. These are structures that the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport considers to be of special architectural or historic interest. This status offers legal protection from demolition and alterations which may harm historic features. The whole of a Listed Building is protected, including the interior and anything attached to the exterior (such as railings) and other structures located within the curtilage or grounds of that building, such as outbuildings, walls and sheds. Further information on Listed Buildings can be obtained from English Heritage.

### *Housing Needs Survey*

A ‘housing needs’ survey was carried out by Warwickshire Rural Community Council on behalf of Preston on Stour Parish Council in July 2010. The aim of the survey was to collect accurate information on housing requirements in Preston on Stour Parish. The results can be used in a number of ways, but perhaps the most important is to help to justify a small scheme of affordable homes for people with local connections. This type of scheme is referred to as a ‘Rural Exception’ scheme, because the development of new homes in rural areas is an exception to normal planning policy. The 2010 survey identified a need for a single, shared-ownership, two-bedroom house. It may be appropriate for the Parish Council to commission a further survey to identify current needs: certainly, a number of respondents made remarks on their questionnaires displaying concerns such as “Housing for young and old people”.

### *Other Development Considerations*

The village greens and other open areas of the parish are much valued by residents and particularly by the children, as shown in their responses to the survey and the many written comments from them. Such areas also encourage the presence of wildlife. New developments should enhance rather than detract from this most appreciated public possession. Any conversions or new developments should meet high standards in terms of energy-efficiency and use of resources. They should make a positive contribution to the village environment, should respect its traditions and should be in suitable context. It is crucial that their scale, design and use of traditional materials demonstrates that they are in harmony with neighbouring buildings.

### *Infilling:-*

In Preston-on-Stour most of the houses are already quite close together so there appears to be little remaining opportunity for infilling. If a case could be made for this any building should be in proportion to the site.

### *Extensions:-*

These should be in proportion to the original building and size of the site. The design should carefully respect the character of the main building.

### *Conversions:-*

These should retain the character of the original building including distinctive features. Facades should be altered as little as possible.

### *Details and Materials:-*

- Most of the buildings are constructed of brick; therefore new houses should also be in that material, especially if the use of another could be considered unsympathetic in regard to neighbouring properties. However Preston contains an interesting mix of historic styles and materials, so in some cases following the appearance of other elevations seen in the village may be appropriate, such as rendered or timber-framed facades.
- Bricks should be of a local type and in colours close to those of adjacent buildings.
- Timber used should also be painted/stained to blend with neighbouring dwellings.
- Preston on Stour has a varied roof-line, although most roofs are steeply-pitched. In the main street chimneys are grouped in the middle, where the semi-detached houses join. These dwellings also have decorative ornamentation on the roof ridges.
- New roofs should reflect the local traditions in pitch, variety and detail. Traditional tiles generally should be the material of choice.
- Dormer windows and roof-lights should not dominate and dormers should be designed to reflect local styles and proportions.
- Attention to detail is important. For example windows and doors in an extension should reflect the original patterns and those of new buildings should respect the designs of those existing. The use of uPVC for windows and doors, in either existing or new buildings, would have a negative effect on the character of the village.

- To avoid light pollution external lighting should be minimal and focused downwards.
- Cabling for services should be underground.
- Signage should be sympathetic; businesses should take note.
- Any new housing should have provision for parking.
- Proposals for new development must demonstrate consideration for the preservation of trees and the provision of gardens. Boundaries should be constructed of appropriate materials, e.g. walls of brick or stone, picket fences or, of course, hedges.

## Appendix A: Current Relevant Planning Guidance

In 2006, Stratford District Council (SDC) adopted a District Local Plan, which set out the council's policies for the development and use of land in the area. The document expired in 2009; subsequently significant changes have been made to national policy. These include the Localism Act 2011, the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 and the resultant abolition of regional development guidance and agencies.

SDC is developing a new Core Strategy in line with current national guidance. Meanwhile 139 of the policies from the old District Local Plan have been 'saved' and will continue to be used to inform planning decisions, until the new Core Strategy is adopted.

SDC believes 10,800 new houses are needed between 2011 and 2031. Currently (February 2014) it is in consultation as to the quantity and distribution of new building within the district; one option is for increased housing in 'sustainable communities'. This supports a significant amount of development in larger rural villages which have been

designated 'Local Service Villages'. However there is allowance for some development in smaller settlements, to provide scope to meet the needs of those communities and to help support the services that they require. Local Service Villages are those deemed to be 'sustainable' in that they offer a range of services and public transport. Locally these are Alderminster, Clifford Chambers, Halford, Ilmington, Newbold on Stour, Lower Quinton and Tredington.

SDC intends the Core Strategy to be adopted in November 2014. Therefore when reviewing development policies, it is sensible to consider those presented in SDC's Draft Core Strategy (2013), as opposed to the outdated Local Plan Policies (2006). There are several which are pertinent to potential development in a rural parish such as Preston on Stour and these are outlined in Error! Reference source not found.. This presents only brief outlines of a selection: it is strongly recommended that reference is made to the Core Strategy document for any policy in full and its accompanying explanation. Prior to adoption, amendments may be made to some of the policies.

*Table 1: Selected SDC Core Strategy Policies relating to Rural Housing*

Policy Reference	Brief Description
CS 1 Sustainable Development	States that all development should contribute to the development and maintenance of sustainable communities.
CS 6 Landscape	Requires that development should have regard to the local distinctiveness and historic character of the area and includes the impact on trees, woodland and hedges.
CS 9 Historic Environment	Includes the distinctive character of villages (including local vernacular style and materials) and the protection of historical assets including listed buildings and conservation areas.
CS 10 Design and Distinctiveness	States that all forms of development are expected to be of a high quality design and reflect the character and distinctiveness of the locality.
CS 16 Distribution of Development	Supports the provision of additional dwellings in or adjacent to those settlements which are smaller than Local Service Villages through small scale, community led schemes which meet housing or other needs identified by the local community.
CS 17 Housing Development	Sets out the amount of housing allocated to different types of settlement.

# Values and Concerns

*A cross-section of individual comments recorded in the survey.*

## RESIDENTS

### MOST VALUED

- Being part of a community of people who care about each other.
- Exceptionally attractive environment.
- Close to essential services.
- Historical and unique character of the village.
- Peace and quiet.
- The beauty of the countryside and sense of freedom.
- Rural way of life.
- Away from main traffic routes.
- No light pollution.

### CONCERNS

- Ageing population.
- Lack of affordable housing for young people to rent or buy.
- Pressure for inappropriate development/ loss of rural character (local and national government housing plans).
- Decline in public services.
- Flooding.
- Fuel poverty due to dependency on oil for heating.
- Finding ways to reduce energy use and to develop local alternative energy sources.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### MOST VALUED

- It's not too noisy and not too quiet.
- I can walk to my friend's house and not have to drive.
- Going through forests and building dens.
- The free will of exploring.
- Speaking to older villagers.
- Sledging in the snow.
- May Day and other events.
- Being part of a community.

### CONCERNS

- Dog poo.
- Traffic driving too fast in the village.
- Lack of play facilities.
- Not enough teenagers/isolation. Lack of transport.
- No permissible access to river front.

## BUSINESS

### MOST VALUED

- Being part of Alscot Estate.
- Convenient location.
- Peace, countryside.
- Providing work for local people.
- Unspoilt area.
- Beautiful village.
- Supporting the community and bringing wealth to the area.

### CONCERNS

- Over-development (residential and commercial).
- Shortage of affordable houses.
- Traffic between Stratford and Shipston.
- Inadequate public transport.

# The Next Steps

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**W**hen adopted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council, the Parish Plan will provide additional guidance to all parties. It is hoped that the views of the local community as expressed in this document will be taken fully into account by individuals, groups, businesses and government bodies when planning the future of this community.

In particular, it will be used:

- To assess the merits of schemes put forward, in relation to local needs.
- As a material consideration in making planning decisions.
- To identify opportunities for environmental and other enhancements; sustainability etc.

It is also worth considering whether the development of a Neighbourhood Plan may be of benefit to the parish. A Neighbourhood Plan is different to a Parish Plan in that it deals

exclusively with issues relating to development, including the type, number and location of new housing in a specified area, such as a village.

The Steering Group encountered very strong views on this matter, far more so than on any other subject. A Neighbourhood Plan would require more detailed public consultation and must pass a local referendum before it can be officially accepted. However, when adopted a Neighbourhood Plan has considerably greater legal weight than a Parish Plan.

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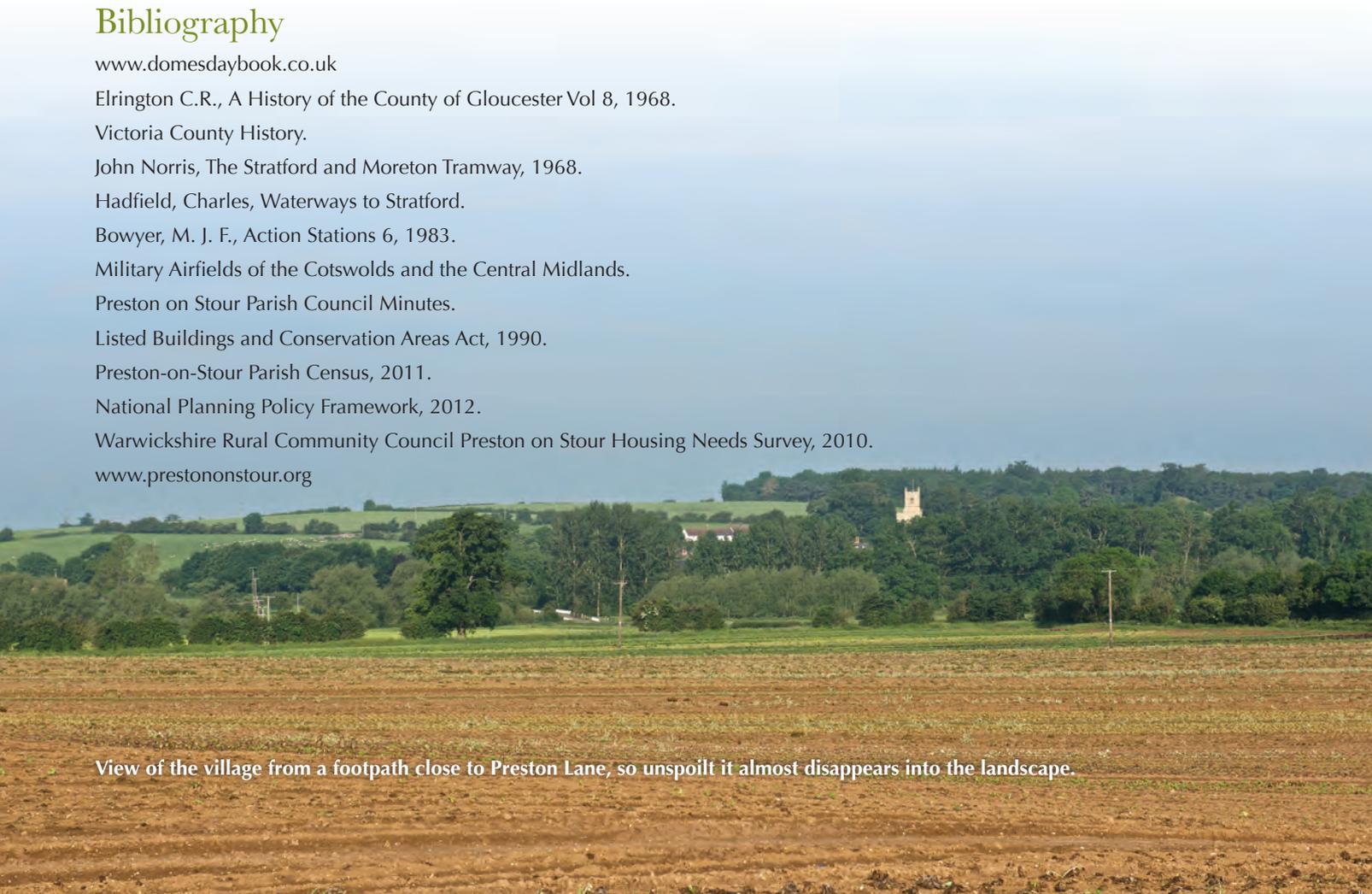
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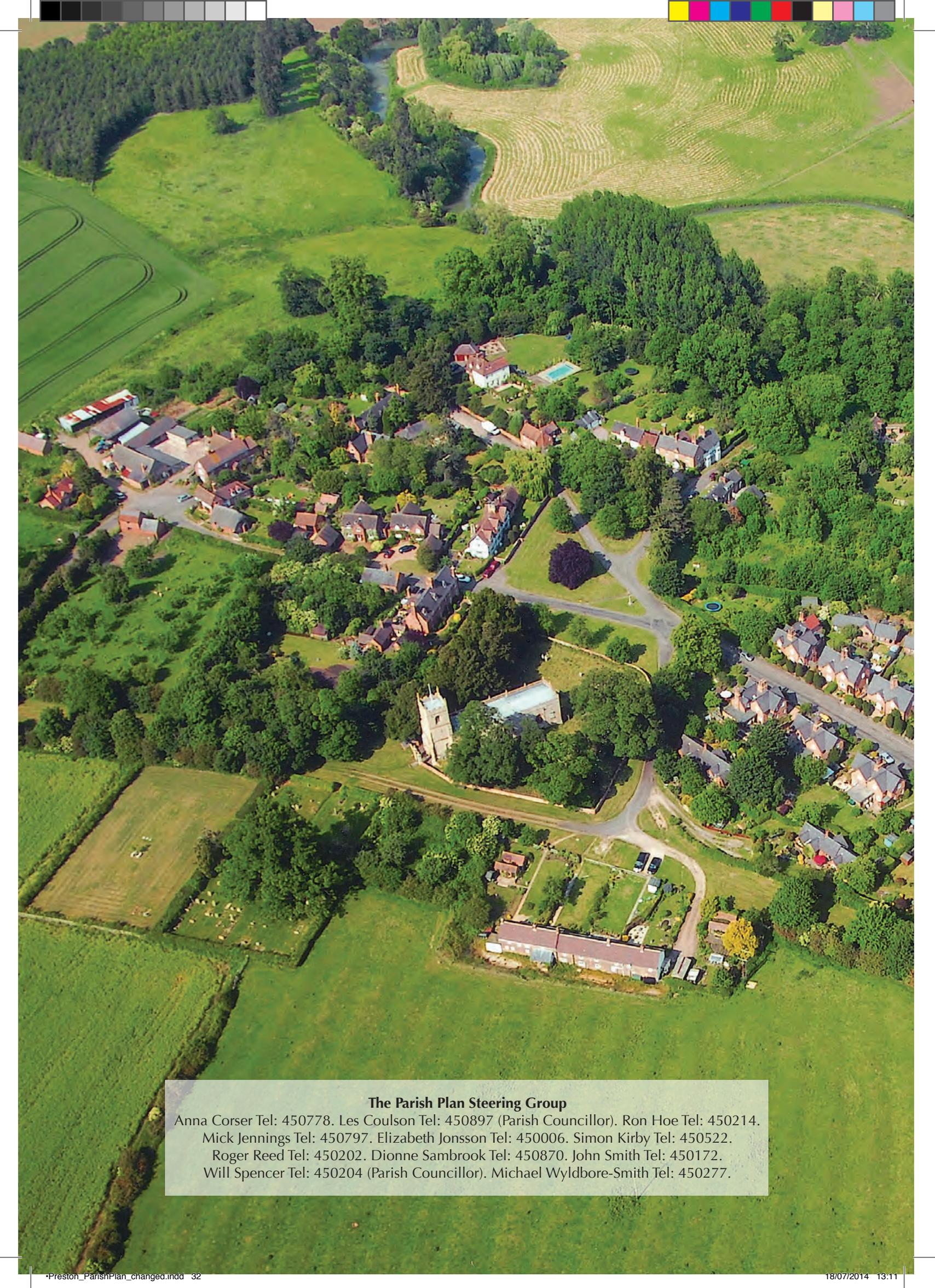
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View of the village from a footpath close to Preston Lane, so unspoilt it almost disappears into the landscape.



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