



# PRESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2020-2031

REFERENDUM DRAFT

## *Introduction by Chairman of the Steering Group*

*Neighbourhood Development Plans come out of the Government's determination to ensure that local communities are closely involved in the decisions which affect them. The Preston Neighbourhood Development Plan has been developed to establish a vision for the village and to help deliver the local community's aspirations and needs for the plan period 2018 – 2031. When finally 'made' our Neighbourhood Development Plan will be a statutory document that will be incorporated into the District planning framework and be used by Cotswold District Council to determine planning applications.*

*Our Plan has been produced by local residents, under the aegis of the Parish Council, using the views of the residents of Preston, with the invaluable assistance of an experienced Planning Consultant. The Steering Group has consulted with and listened to the community and local organisations on a wide range of issues that will influence the well-being, sustainability and long-term preservation of Preston's rural community. Building on the Design Statement published in 2017, every effort has been made to ensure that the views and policies contained in this document reflect those of the majority of Preston residents.*

*An electronic copy of this Plan and the Evidence Papers supporting it can be found online at [www.prestonpc.org.uk](http://www.prestonpc.org.uk)*

*As Chair of the Steering Group I would like personally to thank particularly the members of the Group and pay tribute to their work since May 2017 and our Parish Clerk and Planning Consultant for their continued support. Many thanks are also due to all those in the Parish who helped to write this Plan by filling in questionnaires, attending meetings and offering views, without which it would not have been possible to produce this Neighbourhood Plan; your continued support is still vital to achieve its final adoption.*

**Tony Warren**



## Table of contents

<i>Introduction by Chairman of the Steering Group</i>	1
Table of contents	2
The role of the neighbourhood plan in the planning system	3
NDP structure	4
Neighbourhood planning area	5
Background to Preston Parish	6
Demographic characteristics	9
Engagement	13
Landscape	15
Design	22
Local Green Spaces	27
Employment Land	31
Footpaths and Cycleways	36
Community Infrastructure	39
Transport and Village Amenity	42

## Referendum Draft

1. This referendum draft Preston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2031 will be put to the local electorate of Preston Parish on 6 May 2021.

## The role of the neighbourhood plan in the planning system

2. Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) were introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and enacted in the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 as amended. NDPs are prepared by parish councils for a designated area – in this case, Preston Parish Council prepared this NDP for Preston Parish. Once the NDP is “made”, i.e. has been adopted, it becomes part of the planning decision-making framework for Preston. When this NDP successfully passes its referendum with the Preston parishioners and receives a majority vote in favour of adopting it: consideration of every planning application that is submitted in the parish must pay regard to the policies in this NDP.

3. There are several stages in the preparation of an NDP. This NDP has already been subjected to extensive consultation in its production and in response to comments received to its public consultation under Reg. 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. Subsequently it has been reviewed by an independent examiner, who has determined, that subject to modifications

that have been made to this document, it should proceed to referendum.

4. Neighbourhood plans must meet certain “basic conditions” and other legal requirements before they can come into force. These are tested through an independent examination before the neighbourhood plan may proceed to referendum.<sup>1</sup> Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan that covers their area<sup>2</sup>. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies of the Cotswold Local Plan or undermine those strategic policies.<sup>3</sup> The preparation of planning policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence.<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, 37.

<sup>2</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, footnote 16.

<sup>3</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, 29.

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, 31.

5. The planning authority prepares the Local Plan. This sets out strategic policies that are applicable across the entire Cotswold District. The Preston NDP works within those policies and adds local detail. Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area.

6. Once the NDP has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the local plan for Preston Parish.

### NDP structure

7. The NDP is the main document but each policy is based on evidence such as the results of the community survey, consideration of the Local Plan policies and other information collected by the steering group who have overseen the NDP's preparation. In the interest of brevity, the NDP only summarises the evidence.

8. The Submission Draft was accompanied by this background evidence. In addition, it was also supported by a Consultation Statement which sets out in detail how the community and other stakeholders were consulted about the emerging NDP and describes how the issues raised were addressed.

9. It was also accompanied by a statement that sets out how the NDP meets the Basic Conditions (requirements of para. 8 of the Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.)

10. A Strategic Environmental Assessment has not been prepared because this was deemed to be unnecessary by the Local Planning Authority in its SEA Screening Opinion (2018).

*Applicants and others who are stakeholder in the planning process are advised to consider the detailed analysis in the evidence papers.*

#### Evidence in support of NDP policies

##### Evidence Papers prepared by the Steering Group

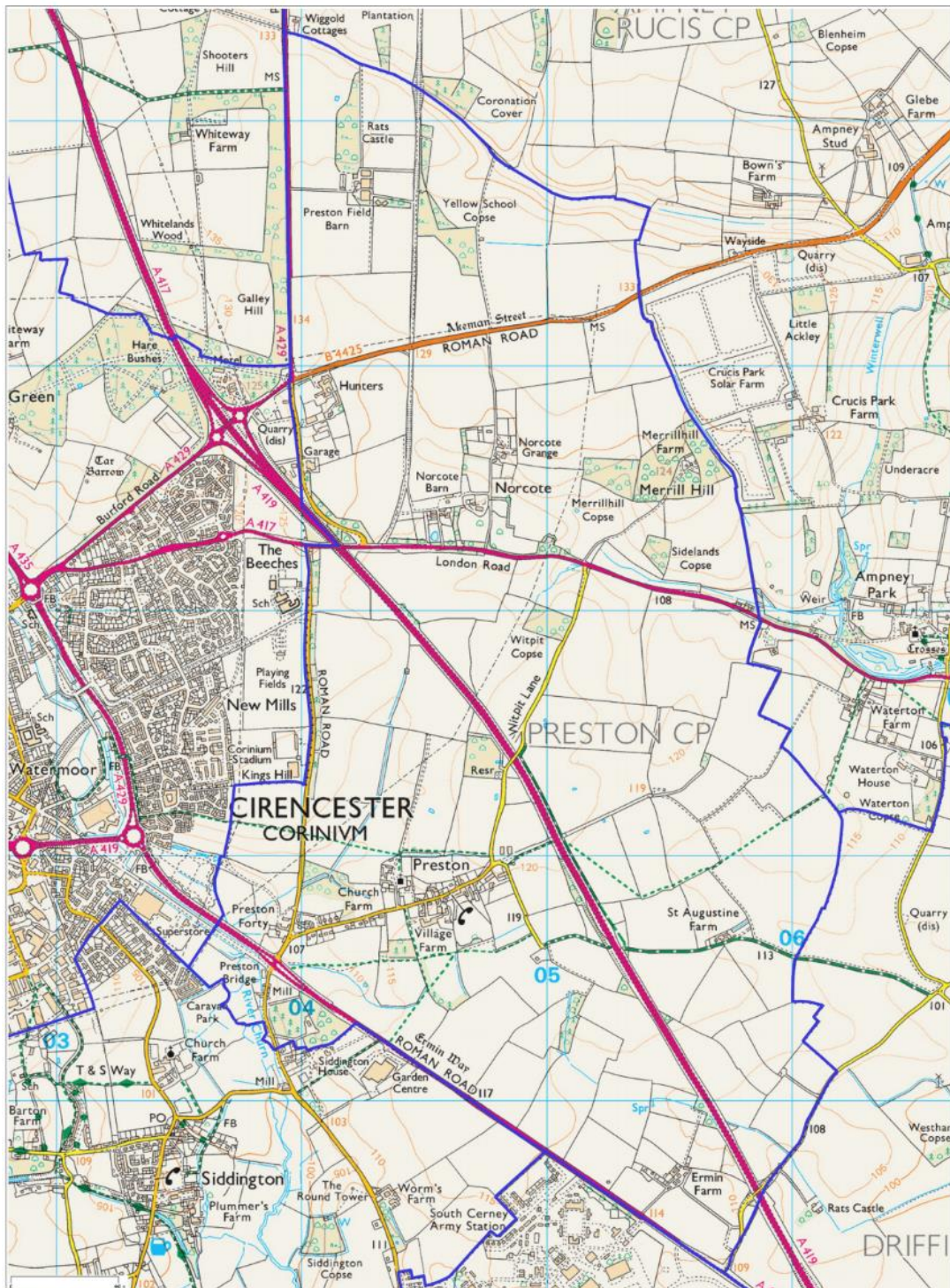
- Community Infrastructure
- Design in Preston
- Employment Land
- Sustainable Transport
- Transport and Village Amenity

Landscape Character Assessment for Preston Neighbourhood Plan (July 2020, Portus & Whitton Landscape Architects)

## Neighbourhood planning area

11. The area covered by this NDP is the parish of Preston shown in **Figure 1**. Cotswold District Council approved Preston parish as the NDP area under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) and Development Management Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016 on 17 May 2017.

**Figure 1: NDP area – the Parish of Preston**



## Background to Preston Parish

12. The Village of Preston lies approximately 2 miles to the south east of Cirencester in Cotswold District. There is good access to Cirencester by car and cycle. The A419 is easily accessible, and both Swindon and Cheltenham can be reached within 20 minutes. The 2018 community survey showed that Preston residents rely upon Cirencester and Cheltenham for leisure, though a high proportion of responders relied almost entirely on Preston and Cirencester to meet their work, study and leisure needs.

13. The entire parish lies outside the Cirencester Development Boundary<sup>5</sup> and therefore, only small scale residential development will be permissible in the parish<sup>6</sup>. New-build open market housing is not permitted unless in accordance with other policies that expressly deal with residential development which is not the case in Preston Parish<sup>7</sup>. The northern part of the parish is designated as AONB and there is a small employment area in the village.

14. The parish is composed mainly of countryside with scattered dwellings and small businesses. The A417 travels through the parish, effectively severing the north and south of the parish, except for the bridge at Witpit Lane.

15. The Parish of Preston extends north along the Fosse Way (A429 Stow Road) to Ragged Hedge Covert, East along London Road (A417) to near the entrance of Ampney Park, south to the A419 road

junction opposite the South Cerney Airfield and west towards Cirencester.

16. Part of the new Kingshill Meadow development on the outskirts of Cirencester was formerly in the parish but, as part of boundary reorganization, the boundary was moved in 2015 to enable the whole of that development to be part of Cirencester. Preston Parish Council supported the boundary change because they felt that to accept a new and large development would change the nature of the parish.

17. Archaeological finds from Preston show evidence of occupation back to Neolithic times, through Roman, Saxon and medieval times to the present day.

18. The agricultural hamlet of Preston has stood in the Cotswold countryside for more than a thousand years. Documented in the Domesday Book as being held by Regenbald, (debatably) the chancellor of Edward the Confessor, it formed a part of the endowment to the Abbey of Cirencester by Henry I in the mid part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century along with the majority of Regenbald's estates. So it remained over the course of the next four hundred years, until the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 1540s. The Church of Preston, like other possessions of the Abbey, stayed in royal hands until it, along with other estates in the area, was purchased from Queen Elizabeth by her physician, Dr. Richard Master, in 1564.

19. That purchase began a relationship between the Master (subsequently Chester Master) family and Preston that continues to this day.

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<sup>5</sup> Cotswold District Council Local Plan 2011-2031, Policy DS2.

<sup>6</sup> Local Plan policy DS3.

<sup>7</sup> Local Plan policy DS4.

20. The community remained stable between the time of the enclosure of the parish in 1772, and the Second World War, with the addition of an imposing new rectory in 1820. Two or three more substantial farmhouses near the centre were interspersed with smaller cottages, forming a ribbon-like settlement along the central part of the village road.

21. Between 1950 and 1980 the village expanded with new dwellings being built on intermittent sites along the roadside from the crossroads at the western end to the junction at the eastern end to the Ampneys one way and Harnhill and Driffield to the other. That development was continued into the 1980s and 1990s with the conversion of farm buildings into both residential and small commercial properties. However, the fundamentally rural nature of the built area of Preston has been maintained, despite a change in the demography of the village from the historical, purely agricultural, to the more varied background of today.

22. In the centre of Preston village is a conservation area. This is the oldest part where the church, letter box, telephone box and village hall can be found. There are 23 listed buildings in the parish. These range from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century Anglican church with some monuments in the churchyard, to individual houses and farmhouses built in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

23. Preston relies upon a number of community facilities:

- **All Saints Parish Church:** this is part of the Churnside Benefice along with churches at Siddington, South Cerney and Cerney Wick.
- **The Village Hall:** this is the social hub of the village. It was renovated by the residents in 2008. It is a well-equipped

and a welcoming space and is used by various clubs and organizations, as well as social events organized in the village.

- **Village Playing Field:** this located to the rear of what were Forty Farm Cottages (now part of Kingsway) and is provided and maintained by Preston Parish Council. It is a safe and enclosed area for children with play equipment and football posts.
- **Allotments:** These are available for rent from the Chestermaster estate and are situated centrally to the south side of the village, behind The Barn.



24. The parish area consists mainly of undulating arable fields, typical of the Cotswold landscape, that are surrounded by hedges and dry stone walls. The area is crossed by numerous drainage ditches and is prone to limited localized field flooding. To the north of Preston village, the fields are dotted with several old dew ponds and an underground reservoir is located to the south of the A417, along Witpit Lane.

25. There are no areas of designated SSSI within the parish, but the area north of Akeman Street is within the Cotswolds AONB.

26. The parish is crisscrossed by the routes of old Roman Roads (the Fosse Way, Ermin Way and Akeman Street) and also includes the route of a dismantled railway, now the main access road to the Organic Farm shop at Abbey Home Farm.

27. Most of the farmland is arable, though the Abbey Estate does have some livestock. The parish is also dotted with a number of copses, which help to break up the skyline. The copses and drainage ditches also provide excellent wildlife corridors. Buzzards and green woodpeckers are resident and red kites, heron, otters and roe and fallow deer are often seen.

28. Despite its proximity to Cirencester, the fact that most of the land is arable farmland and subject to rotational cropping helps to maintain the distinctly rural feel of the parish.



*All Saints Church*



*Preston Village Hall*



*Preston Playing Fields*

## Demographic characteristics

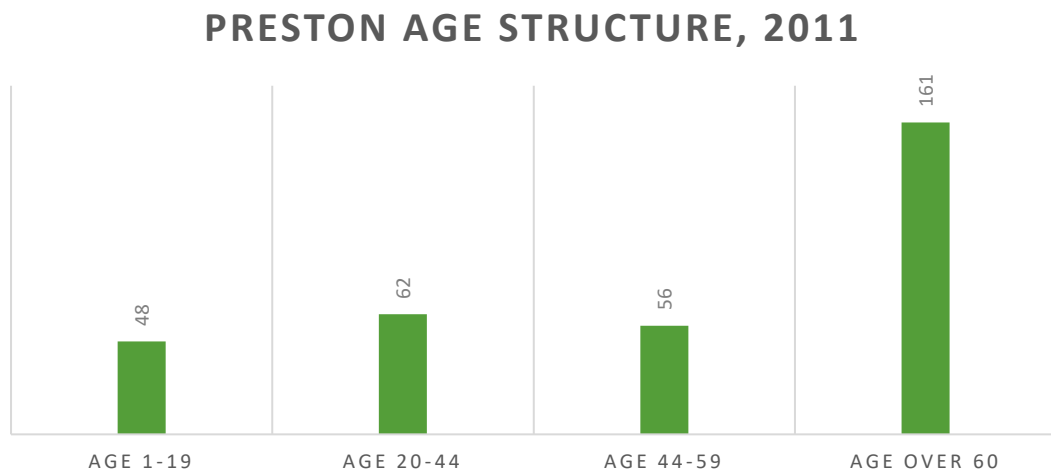
29. The key characteristics in the NDP are taken from the 2011 census<sup>8</sup>.

30. Most residents live within the village though there are some scattered individual dwellings, mainly farms or former farms. Hunters Care Home accounts for around a quarter of residents. There were 327 usual residents in the parish on Census day 2011: 76.1% lived in households and 23.9% lived in communal establishments (Hunters). Excluding Hunters, around 250 people were resident in Preston in 2011 which is the start of the Local Plan period. There are currently 250 people on the electoral roll.

31. In total there were 118 households. There were 327 usual residents (45% male, 55% female). The ethnicity is overwhelmingly white (99.7%) and born in the UK (99.6%).

32. Preston is a community with a relatively older population: the mean age is 54.8. This is skewed by Hunters but it was not possible to determine the age profile for the remainder of the residents. In 2011, there were only 48 young people under the age of 19, and over three times as many people aged over 60. The 2011 age structure is illustrated in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** which shows that Preston has a relatively older population than Gloucestershire or England though again, this is skewed by Hunters Care Home.

**Figure 2: Age Structure, 2011**

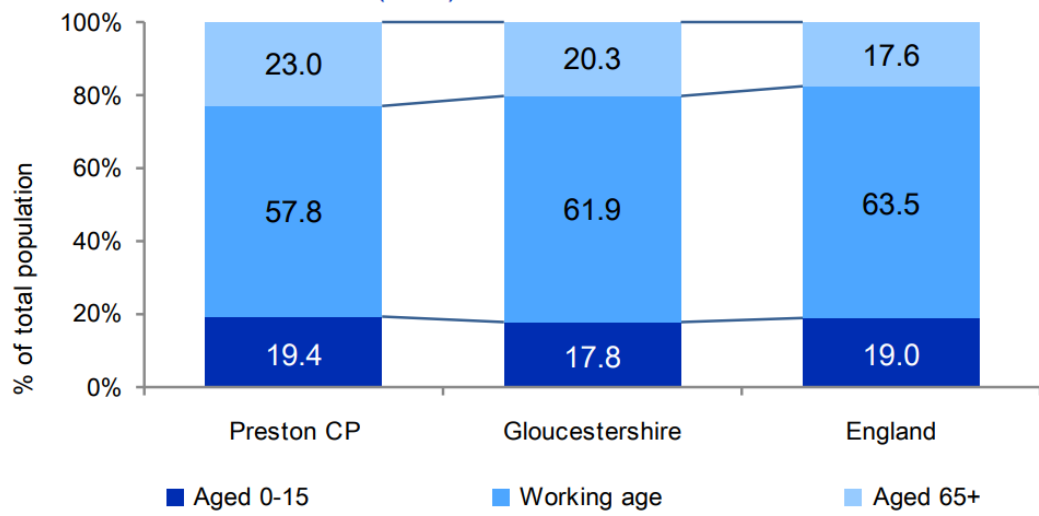


Source: 2011 census

**Figure 3: Comparative age profile, 2014**

<sup>8</sup><https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?comp are=1170214123>

Figure: Population by age  
Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2014



Source: Gloucestershire Parish Profiles Report, created 8 November 2016

33. Of the residents over the age of 16, 49% were married, 23% were widowed, and 22% had never married.

34. The population is healthy, where two thirds of census respondents classified themselves as very healthy or in good health and not limited in their daily activities. These figures would probably be higher if Hunters Care Home is excluded.

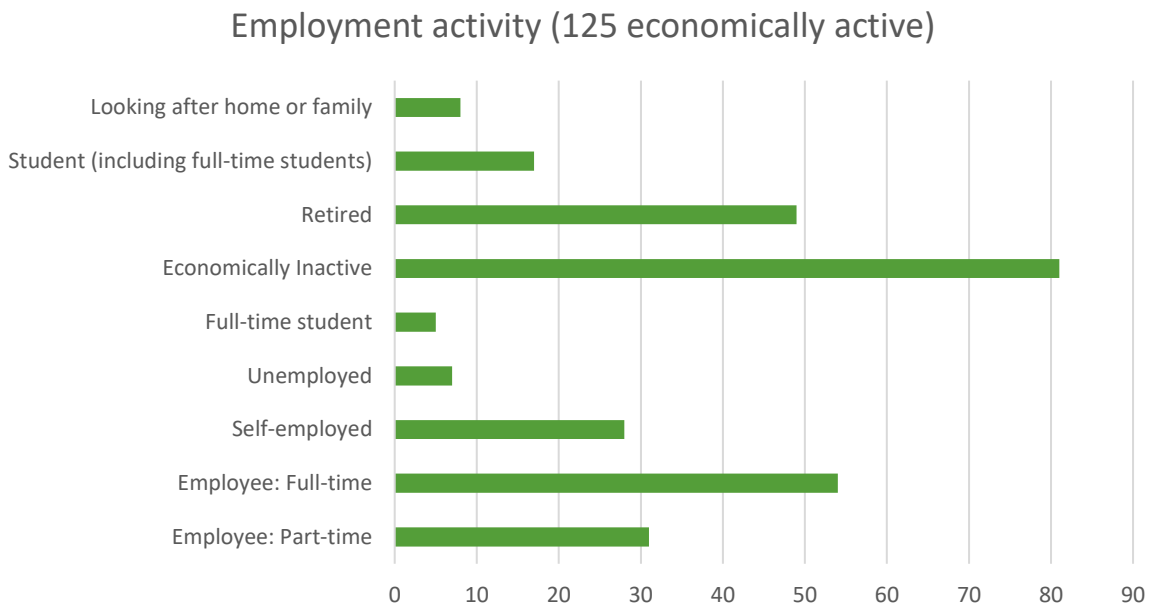
35. Most people lived in detached properties (44%) or semi-detached properties (38%), and the remainder lived in terraced properties (18%). The average household size is 2.3 persons and the average house has 3.4 bedrooms. Most

homes are owned (66%) and the remainder are rented (14% of all properties are social rented). One third of all homes have only one occupant and the remainder are occupied by families. The Community Survey, undertaken in 2018, showed that 55% of respondents lived in detached homes and another 30% in semi-detached homes. On average, responders had been at the same address for 21 years and few responders wished to move or downsize.

36. On average, 36% of adults in each household are in full or part-time employment. **Figure 4** provides a breakdown of economic activity.



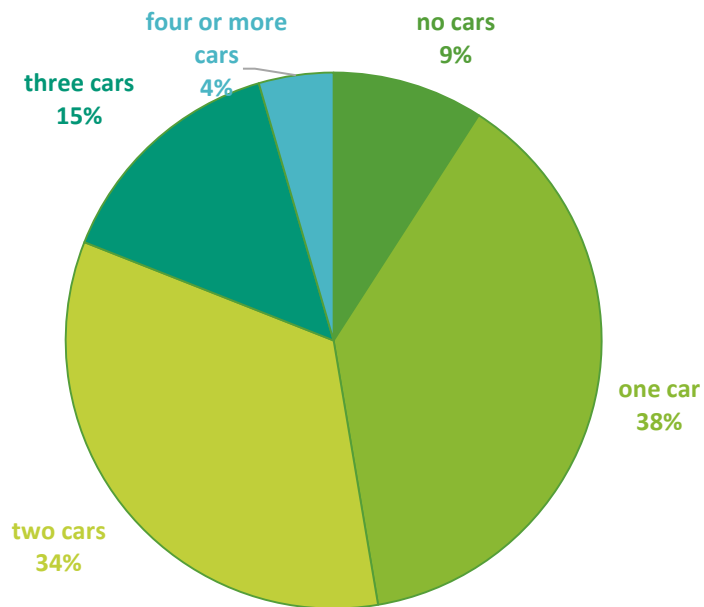
**Figure 4: Economic Activity**



Source: 2011 census

37. Most households have access to at least one car, shown in **Figure 5**.

**Figure 5: Number of cars per household, 2011**



Source: 2011 census

### Engagement

38. The NDP is based on extensive consultation with the Preston community and wider stakeholders. The NDP steering group is made up of representatives from the local community and the Parish Council. It was supported by a professional town planner, Dr Andrea Pellegram MRTPI.

39. The steering group had its first meeting in May 2017 and met monthly while the NDP was actively being prepared. A meeting for local landowners was held in July 2017. A successful community event in the village hall on 26 September 2017 was well attended (49 people plus the steering group) – this was the opportunity for the village to suggest the vision and policy themes for the steering group to refine. The steering group also prepared materials that the Parish Clerk posted on the village website and many of the NDP activities, particularly the surveys, were advertised in the Parish newsletter. A community survey

was undertaken in early 2018 and 50 villagers responded. A separate survey of local businesses was undertaken in Spring 2018. Individual villagers collected and prepared other evidence that is described in the Evidence Papers.

40. The draft NDP was considered by planning officers in a meeting in June 2018, and in further correspondence and amendments were made accordingly.

41. Portus & Whitton Landscape Architects were appointed to provide specialist advice on landscape issues on advice from the planning authority.

42. The Reg. 14 draft was discussed at the 5 July 2018 village consultation event and was generally supported.

43. Following Reg. 14 consultation, extensive modifications were made to the NDP as set out in the Consultation Statement.



## VISION FOR PRESTON TO 2031

Preston Village will retain its Cotswold character within its rural setting, preserving the surrounding countryside and wildlife, whilst maintaining safe, convenient and good quality footpaths and cycleways into Cirencester.

There will be good provision of public and sustainable transport to meet the needs of all residents of the parish.

Preston will continue its strong sense of community with a thriving village hall and a range of recreational facilities for all ages.

The established small rural and agricultural businesses will be retained and the opportunity for small commercial enterprises to become established and thrive will continue.

Any residential development in the parish will have had minimal impact on the area's distinctive character and environment and will accommodate everybody.

There will be a reduction in traffic noise and the traffic speed and volume will be controlled through the village.

Light pollution will not be increased, and the tranquil character of the village and surrounding countryside will have been preserved.

## Landscape

44. Since its first settlement, Preston village has maintained a separate identity from other villages in the area, particularly Cirencester. Villagers have demonstrated their passion for retaining Preston’s separate identity throughout the NDP consultation. The importance to them of retaining this - geographically in terms of built development, and socially in terms of preserving a village where people know and like one another - was stressed time and time again during public consultation. What residents fear the most is the coalescence of Preston with Cirencester and a merging of the two areas.

45. Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in their relevant Local Plan. In Preston, the strategic policies are set out in Local Plan policies DS1 (which sets out the Cirencester Development boundary) and DS2 and DS3 which preclude development outside the development boundary and allow only small scale development in Preston.

46. There are also strategic landscape policies in the form of the AONB designation (Policy EN5) at the northern part of the parish and the Special Landscape Area (Policy EN6) which does not cover any land in Preston Parish but which is immediately adjacent to the north west.

47. However, though Preston Parish is not wholly protected by these strategic policies, its landscape is still worthy of protection. Local Plan para. 7.2.3 refers to ‘green wedges’ and views of Cirencester’s parish church tower as important when approaching the town from various directions – there is a prominent view from Preston when approaching Cirencester of

the Parish Church. Para. 7.2.7 sets out adjacent parishes that are effectively part of Cirencester but Preston is excluded, indicating that it is NOT part of the Cirencester developed area.

48. Policy EN1 seeks to safeguard the sensitive built, natural and historic environment from the less positive aspects of development and simultaneously seeks enhancements where possible (para 10.1.4). The policy requires development to promote the protection, conservation and enhancements of the historic and natural environment.

49. Policy EN2 requires proposals to respect the character and distinctive appearance of the locality and Policy EN4 protects the wider natural and historic landscape. Policy EN 4 protects the Cotswolds AONB and Policy EN7 protects trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

50. NPPF para. 28 allows NDPs to establish design principles and set out policies that conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment. Locality toolkit ‘How to consider the environment in Neighbourhood plans’ sets out the basic principles how this should be done. This method has been followed in the preparation of the NDP evidence in support of this policy.

51. This NDP policy and its supporting evidence add another layer of protection to the existing strategic designations and provide fine grained local evidence in support of Local Plan policies EN1, EN2, EN4, EN5 and EN7.

52. This policy is supported by Evidence Papers ***Design in Preston*** and ***Landscape***.

53. Preston Parish Council commissioned Portus & Whitton Landscape Architects to undertake a comprehensive **Landscape**



**Character Assessment for Preston Neighbourhood Plan (LCA) which includes an appendix on Key Views(July 2020).**

**These documents should be considered when planning applications are prepared in Preston Parish.**

carriageway changes to the A417 in name northwards of the junction leading to Cirencester where it takes the name of A419 (also known as Swindon Road) but is a single carriageway.

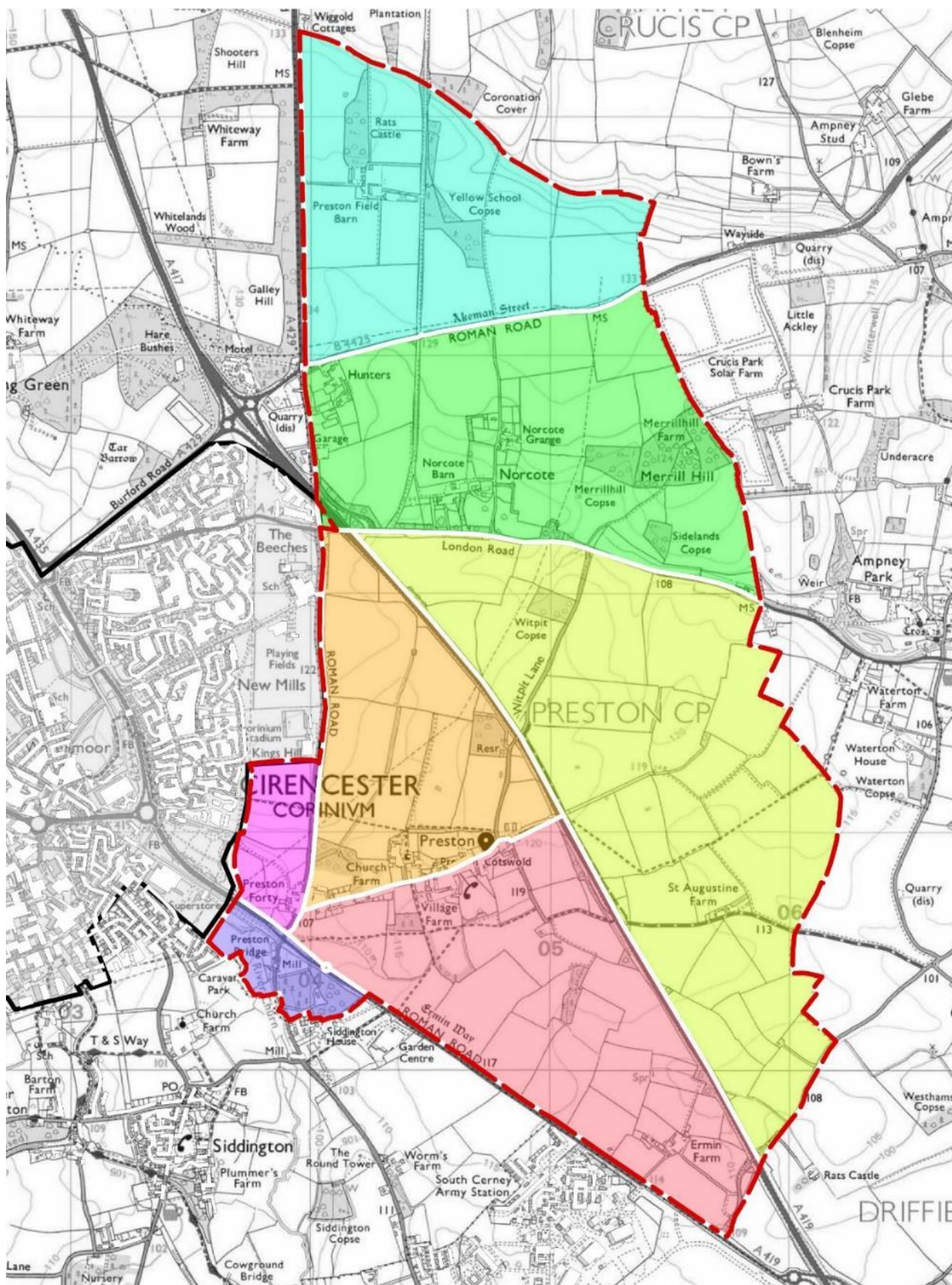
54. The LCA identified several Landscape Areas in the Parish, shown in Figure 6 and Appendix A. The commentary on the Sub-Areas in Appendix A includes an assessment of how the landscape may affect the potential for and the constraints on development.

55. The LCA concludes that in the whole of the Parish, there is a remarkable uniformity of defining landscape features, namely the presence of rectilinear woodland copses, linear shelterbelts, the use of hedgerows as field boundaries, dry stone walling, gentle variations in topography and several areas of very flat, low-lying ground. Land uses include arable land and pasture for the largest part, but also include forestry, horticulture, parkland, and renewable solar farming.

56. The presence of numerous transport routes which criss-cross the parish have in time contributed to shaping the development of its landscape. Whilst the presence of Public Rights of Way within the parish are limited, many of the roads have been important transport links since Roman times. These are recognised as primary visual receptors and this analysis is based primarily on views from the roads rather than the minimal PRow network, which is within a limited area. The two main public footpaths are further compromised in that their route now has to travel across a busy dual carriageway.

57. These roads split the landscape into legible individual parcels which are experienced by road users as they travel along these routes. The A419 dual

Figure 6: Preston Landscape Areas



58. The A417 dual carriageway is used mainly for regional traffic and is screened by maturing vegetation along most of its course across the parish. Most of the other routes are very minor rural roads where drivers are likely to be driving slowly and appreciating the views. These minor roads are also used by walkers. Some traffic links experience very high levels of traffic and sometimes congestion, and whilst traffic is a main detracting feature in the landscape of the parish, road users do experience and enjoy Preston's rural landscape character. This is especially relevant for users of the A419 Ermin Street driving towards Cirencester where they can glimpse the the church tower of St John the Baptist Church in Cirencester.

59. The character of Cirencester is strongly informed by areas of open landscape which, through varying degrees of parkland and agricultural character, reach close to the town centre from several directions, principally from the west (Bathurst estate), the north-east (Abbey Home Farm estate) and the south-east (Preston parish & Kingshill Country Park)<sup>9</sup>. The largely unspoilt agricultural section of the parish serves this important 'green wedge' purpose, which is described by the Local Plan as follows:

*'The 'green wedges' and views of [Cirencester] Parish Church tower, are particular characteristics of Cirencester when approaching the town from various directions.'* (para 7.2.3)

60. In this context, Preston Parish lies at a critically important location. Its immediate proximity to Cirencester forms a major

constituent of one of the 'green wedge' approaches (particularly Area 4b). It also emphasises by contrast to the open views of the urban town itself, the importance of the parish as an open landscape setting to the largest of the Cotswold towns.

61. The approach to Cirencester from the south east on the A419/Cirencester Road/Ermin Way allows the viewer to orientate and visualise the location of Cirencester's historic core, shown in **Figures 7**. The church tower is in the distance and is viewed over green fields. It increases in visual importance as one approaches Cirencester - it is a visual focal point that shows the centre of the town and helps the viewer identify where the historic core is.

62. Cirencester is approached by six principal roads. It is a well-established historic feature of the town that the church tower stands aloft above the roofscape and acts as a prominent landmark. The A419 Ermin Way is one of four that retains framed views of the tower in summer and broader views in the winter and in a similar manner to the Whiteway road to the north and the old Tetbury road to the west.

63. Ermin Way additionally forms a boundary to one side of a green wedge that visually connects Cirencester to the wider agricultural setting in a key view. It is a very well used road and therefore the sense of arrival is experienced by many.

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<sup>9</sup> Study of land surrounding Key Settlements

in Cotswold District: Update, October 2014.

Figures 7: Approach to Cirencester through Preston Parish from the south east showing the church tower (arrow) as a marker for Cirencester’s historic core





## Policy 1: Preston Countryside and Landscape

Other than within the AONB, new development should where appropriate promote the following:

- i. Replanting non-native tree plantations with native broadleaved native species as part of the woodland succession planting;
- ii. Avoiding unsympathetic new woodland planting including new dense linear shelterbelts, particularly in character areas 4a, 4b and 5, which would enclose the character of the landscape at points where it is currently open;
- iii. Managing existing shelterbelts with selective thinning to retain native specimens and open up views below their canopies; maintaining dry-stone wall boundaries and restore any in disrepair;
- iv. Restoring historic hedgerow lines;
- v. Maintaining the existing network of open ditches and streams to ensure continuity of irrigation to fields and surface water management to grass and agricultural fields;
- vi. Protecting open views between buildings of Preston’s agricultural setting when viewed from the village main street (Witpit Lane);
- vii. Establishing a pedestrian link using the route of the old railway line to create a public footpath which connects the whole of the parish on a north/south axis;
- viii. Resolving footpath links across the dual carriageway to improve connectivity across the parish.

## Design

64. Evidence paper *Design in Preston*, which was based on a consultation exercise that pre-dated the NDP, describes the features that contribute to Preston’s unique local character.

65. In the centre of Preston village is a conservation area. This is the oldest part of the village where the church, letter box, telephone box and village hall can be found. The conservation area stretches on the north side of the road from Church Farm to the Old Farmhouse and on the South side of the road from Preston House to Village Farm Cottage. This includes a number of listed buildings which are an important part of the village’s history. The conservation area and listed buildings are shown in **Figures 8**.

66. Local Plan policy EN2 requires good design that accords with the Cotswold Design Code. Policy EN10 sustains and enhances designated heritage assets, EN11 preserves and enhances the special character and appearance of conservations areas, and policy EN12 enhances the character of non-designated historic assets. This NDP policy and Design in Preston add local detail to assist in the delivery of these policies.

Figure 8: Preston Village Conservation Area Listed buildings and AONB

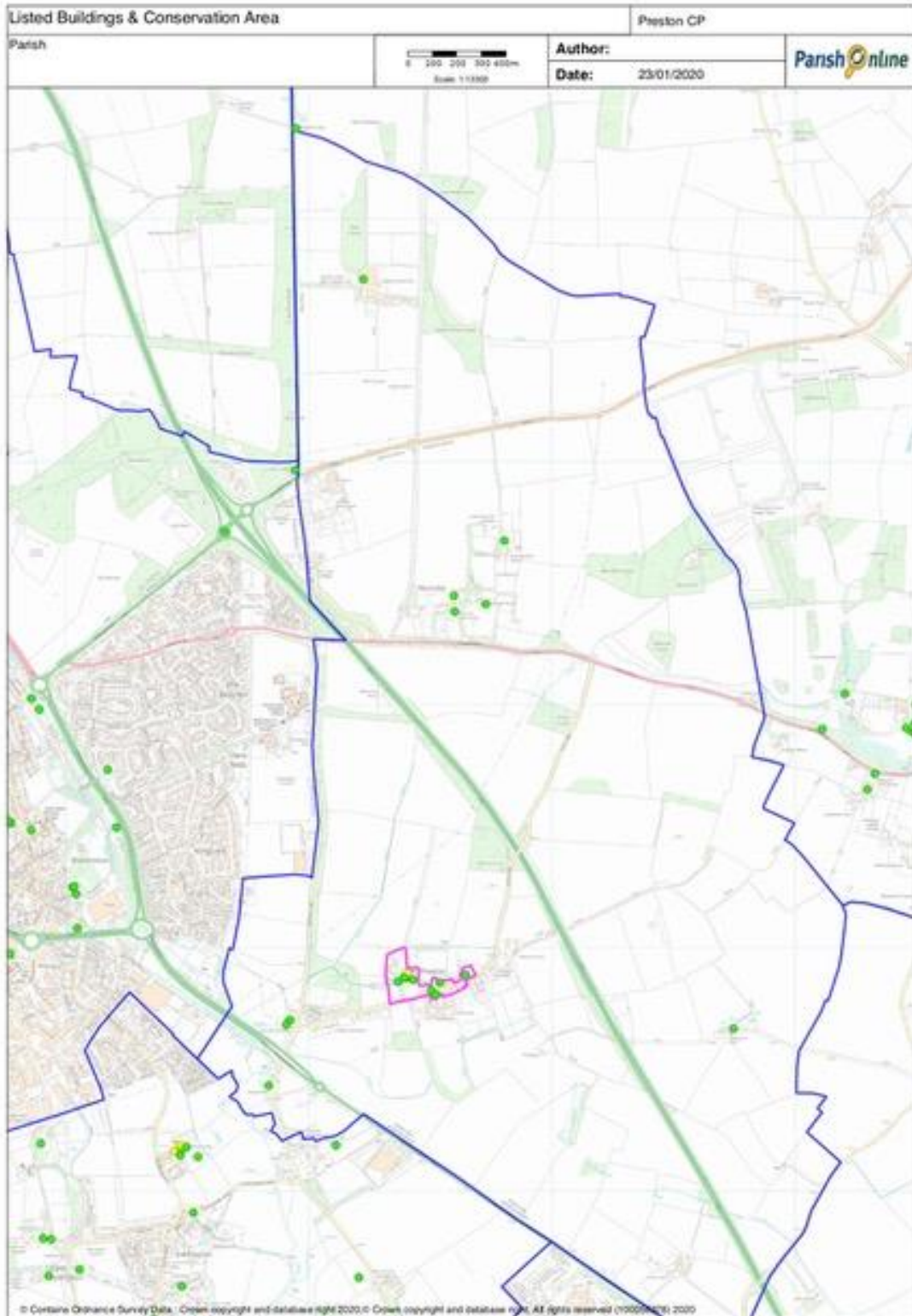
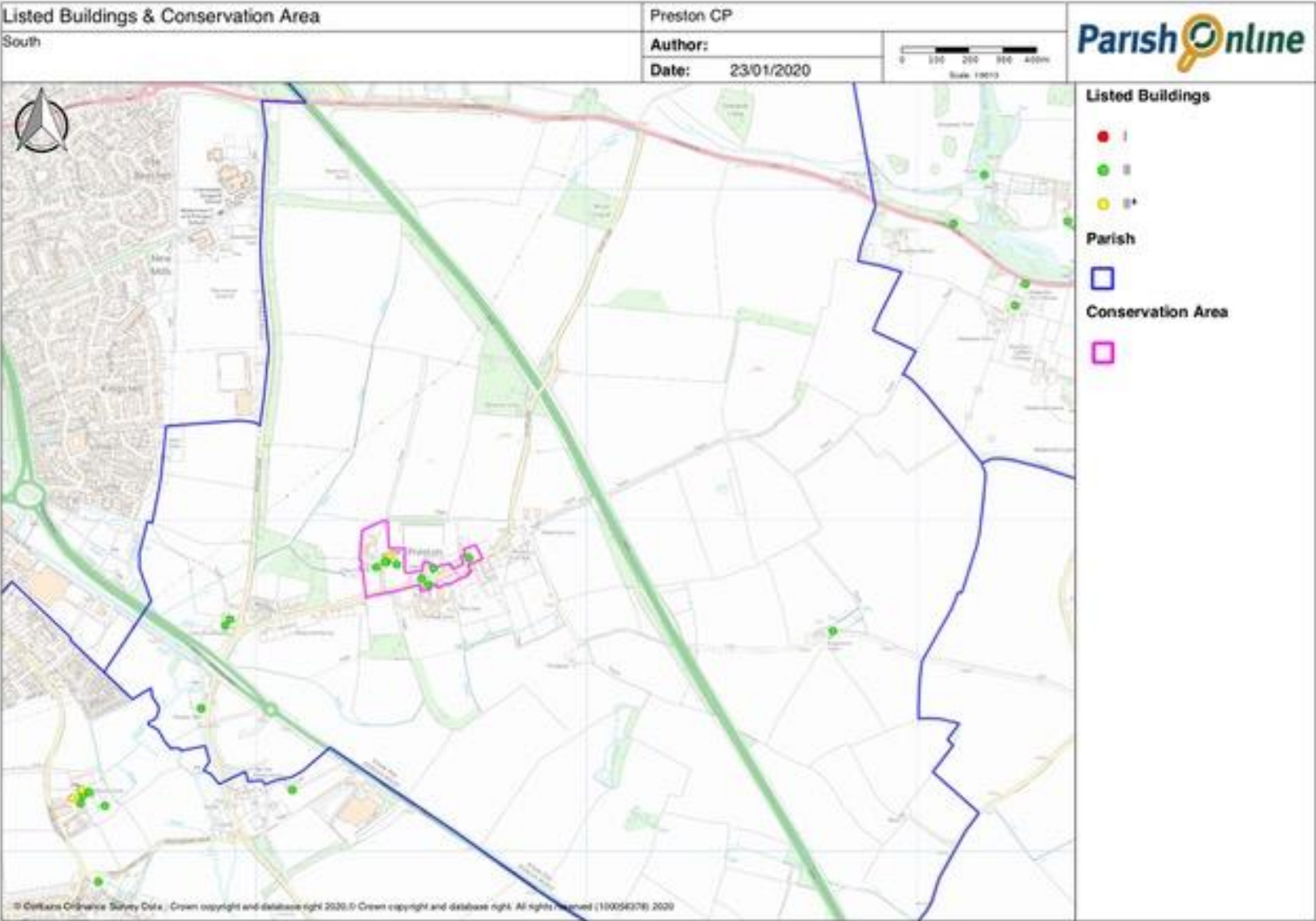






Figure 8b (south)



## Policy 2: Design

- A. Proposals for new development, including extensions to existing buildings, and conversions of farm buildings, should be of the highest design standards in accordance with the relevant policies of the Cotswold District Local Plan, including the Cotswold Design Code.**

Proposals should have specific regard to the following conclusions derived from the Design in Preston Design Statement (2017):

i) Publicly accessible green spaces (such as the formal spaces around community infrastructure and incidental spaces such as grass verges) within the village built-up area should be retained if possible.

ii) Proposals should use locally characteristic building materials, for example Cotswold stone and reconstituted Cotswold stone for walling, roofing and timber for windows and doors, where appropriate.

iii) Properties should have high quality boundary features, such as hedges and Cotswold Stone walls where appropriate, particularly where these are visible from public vantage points.

## Local Green Spaces

67. Neighbourhood Plans may designate land in their parish that is of particular importance to the community as Local Green Spaces.<sup>10</sup> Local Green Spaces should only be designated where they are capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period and once designated take on the status consistent with Green Belts.

68. Two Local Green Spaces are designated (shown in **Figures 9 and Figure 10**): the Playing Fields and the Allotment.

Both are leased to the Parish Council by the landowner who has indicated her wish for them to remain in community use for the foreseeable future.

69. To be suitable to for Local Green Space Designation, a sites must be reasonably close to the community they serve; of local significance; and local in character. Both sites meet all three criteria.

70. Local Plan policy EN3 does not allocate local green spaces in Preston. This NDP policy adds two new Local Green Spaces under provisions of NPPF paras. 99-101.

### Policy 3: Local Green Spaces

**A. Local Green Spaces are designated at the Preston Playing Fields and the Preston Allotments as shown in Figure 11.**

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<sup>10</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paras. 99-101.

**Figure 9a: Preston Playing Fields**

<p><b>ADDRESS:</b> Off Kingsway, Preston, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 5XA</p>

<p><b>OWNERSHIP</b></p>
<p>Land owner: Mrs P M Chester-Master, Leased to: Preston Parish Council</p>
<p><b>MANAGEMENT :</b> Managed by Preston Parish Council</p>
<p><b>SIZE IN HA.</b> 0.5749 hectares</p>
<p><b>DESCRIPTION OF VALUE TO PRESTON COMMUNITY</b></p> <p>The Playing Field is the only public space in the Village that is available to residents for sports and recreation. There are two areas – the football field and the children’s play area.</p> <p>The football field is used by children and young people of the Village as well as occasional use by local football teams for practice.</p> <p>The play area was refurbished by the Parish Council in 2016, costing in the region of £10,000, and provides play equipment for the young children of the Village and surrounding area. The facilities are well used and include: swings, adventure play house, slide, jungle gym climber and multi-play climber.</p> <p>The Playing Field is occasionally used for Village-wide events.</p>

**Figure 9b: Preston Allotments**

**ADDRESS:** (Next to The Barn) Preston, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 5PR



**OWNERSHIP**

Land owner and manager: Mrs P M Chester-Master

**SIZE IN HA.** 0.3463 hectares

**DESCRIPTION OF VALUE TO PRESTON COMMUNITY**

There are 6 Allotments on the site which are privately rented to local residents. This is the only facility of its kind available in the Village which are residents and, therefore, there is a great deal of support to ensure that it is retained.

Figure 10: Local Green Spaces – Allotment and Playing Fields



## Employment Land

71. The vision exercise indicated that villagers wish to retain small businesses in the parish, and the business survey indicated that they intended to remain. Furthermore, the business survey provides evidence that these small businesses provide employment for people who live in the parish or very nearby. The community survey substantiated this conclusion and it appears that a good portion of Preston’s working population is employed locally, though there is some out-commuting.

72. The development plan supports the vision to protect local businesses in B class use and the Village Farm Units are identified as an Established Employment Site in the Local Plan under Policy EC2(EES25/Map 7). The Village Farm units are shown in **Figure 11** below.

73. Around half of the businesses in Preston are on individual sites, some of which are ancillary to residential uses, and it is therefore not possible or desirable to seek to prevent these economic activities from ceasing or reverting to purely residential uses.

74. However, there is scope to add detail to policy EC2 to protect the Village Farm Units employment area for the future. To do this, the NDP amplifies the policies in the Local Plan and NPPF by seeking to retain Class B uses in a flexible manner.

75. It would harm the overall viability of the Village Farm employment area if individual units were to be lost to change of use.

76. Permitted development would allow the change from Class B uses to residential uses under classes M, O, and P of the General Permitted Development Order (2015).

However, if units were to change use, the integrity of the employment area as a whole would be compromised. Therefore, the loss of individual units will be resisted were possible. In addition, compelling evidence will be required to justify that the overall estate can no longer serve an economic or commercial function before change of use to non-commercial or non-agricultural activities can be considered. This approach is in conformity to Local Plan policy EC2.

77. In addition, if individual Class B units were to change use to residential uses, it would be difficult to mitigate the conflict between the two. Residential amenity will most certainly be affected by ongoing noise, dust, odour and traffic generated in the estate, and it would be difficult to ensure that new residents would enjoy high quality domestic amenity.



Figure 11: Village Farm Units, Preston



#### **Policy 4: Employment Land**

**The establishment of new, or the retention of existing small-scale businesses in the Parish will be supported where they comply with other policies of the development plan. Planning applications which would result in the loss of a small-scale employment site will be supported provided that detailed evidence is submitted to demonstrate that the site can no longer practically or viably be used for employment purposes. The evidence should demonstrate that the employment site has been actively and recently marketed for a period of at least 12 months.**

## Footpaths and Cycleways

78. Preston is well provided with public footpaths and safe cycle routes in the southern portion of the parish, as shown in **Figure 12**. These are discussed extensively in Evidence Paper Sustainable Transport. The system of footpaths around Preston clearly originates from the farming heritage. The paths link local villages and churches and provide access to Cirencester. In places they have been altered by new road building, but the basic system persists.

79. There is only one designated cycle path. This runs alongside the A419 from Dobbies Garden Centre, crosses the South Cerney Road and follows the Old Cricklade road as far as Tesco Supermarket. From there, a mix of cycle paths and roads leads into Cirencester. This is a shared foot/cycle path with no separation between the two modes of transport. The Bridle paths PB/13 provide cycle access to Harnhill and Driffield that was cut off when the A417 dual carriageway was built.

80. The community consultation event and the community survey showed that villagers valued their local walking and cycling opportunities and regularly walked for pleasure or to access the local shopping areas. The survey indicated that improvements to these networks would lead to greater use which is supported by development plan policy INF3 that encourage sustainable transport.

81. A member of the local walking group undertook an extensive survey of the condition of the local footpaths and cycle routes and this is described in the evidence paper. The foot and cycle routes from Preston to neighbouring villages, town and schools and those around the village used for leisure, were evaluated for their amenity value, condition, signposting and adequacy.

82. The current sustainable transport network is appropriate for the current number of Preston residents and visitors. However, should new development come forward, for instance that introduced more school age children or led to a greater use of the existing network, it would be appropriate to introduce improvements to the network to accommodate the increase in demand. New development should provide necessary improvements that have been identified as set out in Local Plan policy INF3.



Figure 12: Public Rights of Way and Cycle Paths



**Policy 5: Footpaths and Cycleways**

- A. Support will be given to proposals that improve the network of cycle ways, footways and footpaths in the parish.**
- B. Developer contributions will be sought where necessary to fund improvements to the existing networks as well as the provision of new connections, in particular where these have been identified in the Sustainable Transport evidence paper.**
- C. Projects to improve the network or provide new connections may also be funded through the Parish’s share of any CIL which may be due.**

**List of possible projects to be the subject of developer contributions and/or CIL**

- i. A new foot and cycle path between Kingshill Schools and the village/other residential development;**
- ii. Improvement to the crossing point on the South Cerney Road;**
- iii. Slowing of traffic on the A419 and provision of a pedestrian crossing;**
- iv. A footbridge over the A417 connecting the Harnhill Road;**
- v. Continuation of the village footpath around the corner into Witpit lane to connect with PF6;**
- vi. Establishing a pedestrian link using the route of the old railway line to create a public footpath which connects the whole of the parish on a north-south axis.**

*The above list is not exhaustive and other projects may be added.*

## Community Infrastructure

83. As a small rural community, Preston must work hard to retain and build strong and positive social interactions. Critical to this is the ability to meet locally and to come together as a village. Evidence Paper **Community Infrastructure** illustrates how and why key community infrastructure is valued and also, how it is deficient.

84. Maintaining this infrastructure, shown in **Table 2**, is an ongoing process and the Parish Council and local volunteers work hard to keep it up to date and pleasant to use. However, as the survey shows, much of this infrastructure, particularly the village hall,

is heavily used and cannot sustain growth in demand.

85. Local Plan policy INF2 supports the provision of new community infrastructure and protects where possible against the loss of existing infrastructure. This NDP policy sets out how this policy should be interpreted in Preston.

86. Should new development come forward either within or near the parish that would lead to increased demand for these facilities, it will be necessary to ensure that capacity can be maintained to an acceptable level. What this means is that development proposals should carefully consider how the rise in demand for community infrastructure can be sustainably managed for the future.



*Preston Village Hall*



**Table 2: Community Infrastructure in Preston**

Necessary community infrastructure improvements	
<b>Village Hall</b>	The village hall is the most important community asset but it is too small for some activities and there is no room for expansion. There is also a need to continually manage and maintain the fabric of the building and there are no funds for this. Should any further development occur in the Parish, this village hall would not be able to accommodate the growth in demand and additional/new facilities would be required.
<b>Playing field and children’s play area</b>	The Playing field and children’s play areas are important for a sector of the community and should be retained and protected. Expiry of the lease in 2026 is a major threat and the Parish Council is taking steps to extend it. Future development, where it significantly adds to usership of either the playing field or children’s play area will need to make a proportionate contribution towards ensuring that the facilities are sufficient to meet demand. Assistance with securing the long-term lease for the land would be beneficial.
<b>Allotments</b>	The allotments are important to only a small sector of the community, however, some people place high value upon them. The Parish Council is seeking to secure their long-term availability. Future development, where this significantly adds to the demand for allotment space, could assist by providing long-term allotment space.
<b>Other Facilities</b>	Additional litter bins are needed at the village hall, playing fields, children’s play area and Witpit Lane. Additional dog waste bins are needed at the children’s play area, allotments and churchyard. Additional grit/salt bins are needed on Kingshill Lane, Witpit Lane and at the village hall.

## Policy 6: Community Infrastructure

- A. Support will be given to proposals that improve the provision of community infrastructure, whether as new provision or improvements to existing provision in the parish.**
  
- B. Loss of existing community infrastructure described in the Table 2, or any new infrastructure provided over the course of the NDP, will not be supported unless it can be clearly demonstrated that:**
  - a. the asset is no longer financially viable, or**
  - b. considered necessary or of value to the community, or**
  - c. a suitable replacement can be provided elsewhere in the parish.**
  
- C. Any replacement provision should meet or exceed the existing benefit to the community of the current facility especially with regard to safety and accessibility.**
  
- D. Major Development proposals as defined in the NPPF should consider:**
  - i. How the development might give rise to increased demand for community infrastructure;**
  - ii. Options how the increased demand could be met;**
  - iii. Evidence that the community or Parish Council were consulted on the options and their views considered;**
  - iv. Provision of appropriate additional community infrastructure or support, as evidenced and justified by the consultation.**



## Transport and Village Amenity

88. The Evidence Paper on **Transport and Village Amenity** concluded that whilst the survey evidence indicates a strong feeling amongst villagers that traffic speeds are too high and that traffic volume is a problem, the data supplied by Gloucestershire Police indicates that though there is speeding, it is generally within tolerable limits (less than a mean of 5 miles per hour over the posted limit.) Therefore, no management action is currently required to control the amenity impacts of traffic volume which can lead to noise or speeding, and which can lead to feelings of being unsafe.

89. It may be beneficial to address villagers' concerns by putting in place speed monitoring signs or other means to remind motorists to be careful of the amenity of the village and other residents. New developments that would potentially cause significant increases in traffic volumes in the Parish should manage traffic speed and flow so that the 2018 baseline situation is not exacerbated in line with Local Plan INF3 (c). The 2018 police survey is a suitable baseline for consideration of traffic impacts.

90. Local Plan policy INF4 sets out provisions for highways safety in new development. This NDP policy sets out considerations for Preston parish.

### Policy 7: Transport and Village Amenity

**A. Where appropriate, development proposals that are likely to lead to an increase in motorised traffic in the parish, particularly at the Toll Bar junction, on Kingshill Lane and on the village high street, will be encouraged to mitigate impacts to maintain or improve upon the 2018 baseline with regard to:**

- a. Traffic speeds;**
- b. Noise and vibration;**
- c. Conflict with other road users and feelings of safety.**

Appendix A. Visual Sensitivity Sub-Area commentary

<p><b>Area 1</b></p>	<p>Sensitive receptors to this sub-area are primarily the users of Abbey Home Farm and walkers on the Farm permissive footpaths. Views from these and generally from land within the Farm are not strictly public views. Other, less sensitive receptors include users of the Fosse Way and of the B4425 Akeman Street, as there are no PRoWs. Views from the Fosse Way are for the largest part screened by deciduous trees planted consistently along the road verge to the parish side. Views to the north from along the B4425 are more open as the verge is planted with fairly low hedgerows and sparse trees; however, due to the flat topography, views are limited by field boundaries on a low horizon. Notwithstanding that this part of the parish is designated as AONB, the value of the landscape in this area is heightened by the communal and educational facilities, and due to the fact that Abbey Home Farm is accessible to the public. Detracting landscape features in this area include the presence of low pylons along the B4425. The operations and visible paraphernalia within the Farm are intrinsically linked to the functions it performs and contribute to the character of this area. Changes to the landscape which result from developing the educational, horticultural, and communal offer of Abbey Home Farm, should continue to respect the agricultural character of their surroundings, and remain subject to the guidelines and overarching constraints set by the AONB designation.</p>
<p><b>Area 2</b></p>	<p>Sensitive receptors to this sub-area are primarily the users of the B4425 Akeman Street and London Road, as there is no PRoW. This area has a more intimate, discrete character and views from the south and west are mostly screened by structural vegetation - trees and hedgerows, with some limited detracting features. These are primarily linked to the recent development of the road and commercial development along Cherrytree Lane. There are panoramic views south of the B4425 (Akeman Street) which are very sensitive to any change, due to the road verge being mostly short hedgerows. The remainder of the sub-area is not in full view from other adjacent roads or from publicly accessible points. Due to the level of enclosure and topography, the area to the north of the A417 London Road may have some potential capacity to absorb a limited amount of new residential development in association with the prevailing agricultural use.</p>
<p><b>Area 3</b></p>	<p>The more sensitive receptors in this sub-area include the users of the two PRoW, of Witpit Lane and, to a much lesser extent, of the A417/A419. The course of both public footpaths has been severed by the dual carriageway and though crossing points exist, these are</p>

	<p>extremely dangerous to attempt on foot. Users of Witpit Lane have elevated views over this area of the parish when they approach the bridge. In terms of landscape detractors, the A417/A419 is a major intrusion in the landscape and, notwithstanding that the dual carriageway is flanked by maturing vegetation, the tranquillity in this sub-area is greatly affected by noise and traffic. Lighting impact of cars driving along the dual carriageway also detracts from the rural character of this area at night. Most of the landscape of the parish is effectively hidden from views to users of the dual carriageway and vice versa, both by the steep banks and the vegetation planted along the verges. Some views are available towards Witpit Copse. Views southwards from London Road are limited by rising topography. Any proposed changes that may affect the landscape in this area should strive to bring about positive enhancements to the area, including the restoration of historic hedgerows by sub-division of larger fields. There is an aspiration to achieve improved connectivity across the parish by resolving the footpath links across the dual carriageway. Any potential residential development in this sub-area would be remote and disconnected from the rest of the village. Other constraints to potential built development include the lack of connecting routes, the presence of traffic noise and the impact that this would have on the open agricultural character of this area. Views from along Witpit Lane overlook most of the area, which due to the sparse presence of vegetated enclosures present itself as a very open landscape that would not be able to accommodate development without the introduction of very robust mitigation measures.</p>
<p><b>Area 4a</b></p>	<p>Sensitive receptors include primarily the residents of the village. Other receptors are the users of both Kingshill and Witpit Lane and the PRoW. Views from Kingshill Lane are mostly screened by the extensive verge planting, whereas from the main route through the village there are open views across fields in the gaps between one group of houses and the next. The main public footpath runs on an east-west axis north of the village and intersects a footpath running northwards from the parish church. These footpaths offer panoramic views both of the surrounding landscape to the north and back towards the village. Detracting features of these key views include the presence of the A417/A419, and numerous pylons in the view. A key characteristic of Preston village is the way in which the rural landscape permeates into the village and its main road, with the presence of gaps between the houses enabling views out into the adjacent countryside. Any proposed development should respect this character of the village and of the</p>

	<p>Conservation Area and not inhibit existing views through to the open countryside.</p> <p>Any further built development, even if of suitable scale and design, would be difficult to accommodate without significant negative effect on the landscape character within this sub-area, and due to inter-visibility and the presence of important public vantage points, whose visual amenity would be negatively affected. It would be desirable to implement a succession tree planting plan to replant the woodland copse between Church Farm and Kingshill Lane with native tree species to screen views of the urban edge of Kingshill Meadow and to extend the shelterbelt along Kingshill Lane southwards. The openness of the landscape and the amenity of views from the PRoWs and from within the village that this provides should be maintained and the agricultural setting to the village should be preserved in its current integrity. This is to ensure that the sense of identity of Preston is not further compromised by sub-urban residential development of a scale and density which would be incongruous with the historic open and loose grain of the village. For any proposed development to be considered appropriate in this sub-area, it would have to ensure that the open landscape character of the landscape around the village of Preston is retained, the visual amenity of PRoWs is retained, the agricultural setting of the village is respected, and the historic open and loose grain of the settlement pattern is preserved.</p>
<p><b>Area 4b</b></p>	<p>Sensitive receptors include the residents of the village, the users of both the Ermin Way and Witpit Lane, and of the PRoW network. Views southwards from the village are available because of the intermittent character of the settlement, these contribute importantly to the perception of the village within its agricultural landscape. This has been eroded by the presence of development to the south of the Ermin Way, which is very prominent from the village, including the recently completed Preston Leigh development. Public footpaths link to both east-west.</p> <p>In terms of landscape detractors, these can be summarised as large-scale development along the Ermin Way, both recent residential and less recent commercial, the trafficked A417 and the military base just south of the parish boundary. Approaching the parish from the south, the rural character of the landscape is obfuscated by the presence of the airfield and barracks located south of the Ermin Way. As one drives towards Cirencester, the historic town and the church the church tower appear in view, and the village, separated by the Kingshill Estate with its dense and urban character. The developed edge of Cirencester was</p>

	<p>already part of the picture from views along Ermin Way, however the new development has brought it further into view and reduced the extent of open landscape and the physical distinction between the distinctive rural character of the village and the urban densities of the new estate, which is even more prominent as is located on high ground. The large scale of buildings to the south-west of the A419 Ermin Way (Garden centre, Tesco, recent housing) also comes in view as one approaches the town, creating a strong contrast with the tranquil character of the agricultural fields and village to the north-east of the A419.</p> <p>The character of this sub-area is very rural in contrast to the largely developed landscape south of the Cirencester Road, this provides a visible strong edge to the built development. Any proposed development within this sub-area would be very hard to incorporate within the agricultural landscape without negatively affecting the openness and the setting of the village and the visual amenity of users of the footpaths.</p> <p>The character of Cirencester is strongly informed by areas of open landscape which, though varying degrees of parkland and agricultural character, reach close to the town centre from various directions, principally from the west (Bathurst estate), the north-east (Abbey Home Farm estate) and the south-east (Preston parish). The largely unspoilt agricultural section of the parish serves this important ‘green wedge’ purpose, which is described by the Local Plan as follows: ‘The ‘green wedges’ and views of Cirencester Parish Church tower are particular characteristics of Cirencester when approaching the town from various directions.’ (para 7.2.3)</p> <p>On the approach to Cirencester, the open landscape of this sub-area is then visually linked to Kingshill Meadow Country Park and the small area of parkland south of the A419, which is perceived as a whole entity. Any proposed development in this subarea would need to respect the importance of this open rural landscape and maintain a meaningful green wedge that continues to provide this setting function for Cirencester.</p>
<p><b>Area 5</b></p>	<p>Sensitive receptors are the users of the Country park, the village residents, users of Kingshill Lane and of the public footpath which runs east to west along the north of this area, and users of the A419 Ermin Way. Views of the Kingshill Meadow estate are prominent on the approach to Cirencester, although the presence of the recently established parkland along the road will create screening to this development in the longer term. For any proposed development to be</p>

	<p>considered appropriate in this sub-area, it would need to retain the open agricultural character of the landscape, ensure the identity of the village of Preston to be retained as a separate settlement and with its own countryside setting, maintain the visual amenity of PROWs, and ensure that the green wedge approach to Cirencester is retained. It would be appropriate if the existing country park along the Ermin Way is extended to the east.</p>
<p><b>Area 6</b></p>	<p>Sensitive receptors are users of A419 Ermin Way / Swindon Road, the lane to Siddington village and users of the public footpath within area 4b and village residents. Historically, Preston was an agricultural village surrounded by countryside and scattered isolated farmsteads. There has now been a significant amount of development in this area in recent years resulting in its agricultural setting being eroded both from the south-west and the west. Any further larger scale development to the north west of Preston Bridge i.e. adjacent to Tesco's development would have the potential to link built development from Dobbies Garden Centre to Cirencester. However, by nature of the low lying land and its close proximity to the River Churn, development is anticipated to be unlikely.</p>