

## Section 3 ~ Maintaining The Built Environment

### Settlement

Our parish is built on gently sloping and moderately fertile land and consists of the village of Rous Lench and the hamlet of Radford.

Originally, the village of Rous Lench was compact and centred on the village green. Twentieth century linear, or ribbon, development has joined it to the earlier development of Radford.

Radford is a linear development stretching over a mile along the Worcester to Stratford-upon-Avon coach road, from the former brickworks in the East to the former mill in the West.



An aerial view of the settlement around Rous Lench village green

**Names from the past:** Rous Lench took its name from the Rous family, the original owners of the Rous Lench court, which has been prominent landmark since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Lench has a local meaning of a hill flat enough to plough; this corresponds well with the undulating land.

Radford's name is derived from Red Ford, the aptly named crossing of the Piddle brook prior to erection of the bridge.

**Farming community:** There are five main farms in the parish, which account for about 90% of land use. In keeping with the horticultural history of the parish, the majority of properties have good-sized gardens to the front and rear of the dwellings.

**Ambience:** The variation in building line from house to house is an attractive feature of all but the most recent developments. Again, with the exception of the most recent developments, the property boundaries have remained largely unchanged over the last century.

An important and attractive characteristic of the parish is the abundance of trees and hedgerows bounding properties. This gives the residents a high level of privacy and reduces considerably the visual impact of development.

Variety in the height, line and type of walls, hedges and fences adds considerably to the ambience of the parish, adding interest and softening the effect of buildings.

### Guidelines & Recommendations

The Wychavon District Local Plan (June 2006) defines the relevant and applicable policies within the Conservation Area and Development Area of the parish.

- ❖ *Rous Lench is subject to a Conservation Area and a Development Boundary, which must be taken into account in all development activities;*
- ❖ *Radford has no Conservation Area or Development Boundary;*
- ❖ *The Wychavon District Local Plan (June 2006) provides further guidance and is available via the Wychavon District Council web site (see references)*

**Changes and development should be environmentally and aesthetically acceptable.**

- ❖ *Visual and noise impact should be minimised;*
- ❖ *Open spaces should be preserved;*
- ❖ *Trees, hedgerows should be preserved, hedge laying to be encouraged;*
- ❖ *Kempt Vs Unkempt balance should be maintained;*
- ❖ *Further ribbon development should be avoided;*
- ❖ *Characteristic variation in building line should be maintained.*

**Spaces between existing houses are an essential feature of the parish and should be maintained.**

- ❖ *Infilling of inter-house spaces should be avoided;*
- ❖ *Consolidation should be limited to unallocated sites.*

**Careful choice of walls, hedges and fences may greatly enhance the character of an individual property and the parish as a whole.**

- ❖ *Walls, hedges and fences should be of appropriate scale and style to blend with surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- ❖ *Hedges, particularly fast growing varieties, should be planted in due consideration of the affect on neighbouring properties and maintenance effort necessary to keep the hedge under proper control;*
- ❖ *Removal of existing walls, hedges or fences will have a great affect on surrounding properties. Prior consultation, out of courtesy, may prevent misunderstandings and concerns over boundary ownership.*



Use of hedging softens the visual impact of buildings

## Buildings

In the view of many residents, the parish of Rous Lench and Radford is unique. Maybe that uniqueness is why we choose to live here.

However, when we alter its buildings and their surroundings, do we ensure we are retaining their own particular characteristics and appearances? Alternatively, are we introducing into this parish inappropriate features that we may have seen in a magazine or on a visit elsewhere?

This section focuses on locally distinctive building types and materials that give the parish its specific identity.



Listed building: Wheelbarrow Castle Cottage, Radford

The increase in number of dwellings over the last century has not been substantial, newer buildings having replaced older ones.

The proportion of listed features and buildings in the parish is of particular note. Of the 23 listed one is Grade I, which rates it as of national importance, one is Grade II\* being of regional importance and the remainder being Grade II are of local importance.

A summary of listed features and buildings is given below.

**Building form:** A number of 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed houses remain, mostly with painted brick and rendered infill. One or two retain thatched roofs but predominantly thatch has now been replaced with tiles.

A substantial building programme by Sir Charles Rouse Boughton and Dr Chafy replaced the majority of the original housing around the village green in Rous Lench in 1860s and 1870s. The style of the houses, although similar, varies in detail of window, roof, brickwork and chimney features and are in line with the predominant building influences of the period e.g. Radcliffe.

Beyond this programme there has been limited development of new houses in the parish during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with the notable exception of the four sets of former council houses, now largely privately owned, built circa 1940-50.

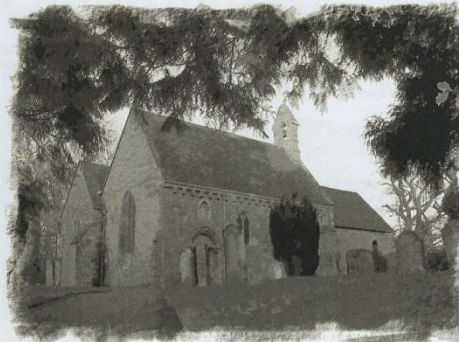
The architectural character of the parish is complemented by the large number and range of outbuildings associated with farm and domestic dwellings.

A few recent architect-designed buildings have contributed to the continued diversity of building style. The more successful examples have been sensitive to and in keeping with local building style and their impact has been softened by the use of natural screening.

## Guidelines & Recommendations

**Due consideration of listed building regulations must be taken when planning and undertaking any work on the following:**

- ❖ *Barn at The Farmhouse, Radford Grade II C17;*
- ❖ *Barn at Grange Farm, Rous Lench Grade II mid C18;*
- ❖ *Beehive Cottage, Rous Lench Grade II C17;*
- ❖ *Checkett's Farmhouse, Rous Lench Grade II C16;*
- ❖ *Church of St Peter, Rous Lench Grade I mid C12;*
- ❖ *Mill Cottage Radford Grade II C17;*
- ❖ *Mistletoe House, Rous Lench Grade II C17;*
- ❖ *Barn at SP 009528, Rous Lench, Burned down 1988;*
- ❖ *Oak House / Malt House, Rous Lench Grade II C17;*
- ❖ *Old school House, Rous Lench Grade II 1864;*
- ❖ *Providence House, Rous Lench Grade II C17;*
- ❖ *Rose Cottage, Rous Lench Grade II C17;*
- ❖ *Rous Lench Court, Grade II\* C16;*
- ❖ *Rous Lench Court Steps and Terrace, Grade II C19;*
- ❖ *Tudor Cottage, Mill Lane Radford Grade II C16;*
- ❖ *The Farmhouse, Radford Grade II C17;*
- ❖ *The Old Rectory, Rous Lench Grade II 1830;*
- ❖ *The Post Box, Rous Lench Grade II 1870s;*
- ❖ *The Post Box, Radford Grade II 1870s;*
- ❖ *Timber Framed Well, Rous Lench Grade II 1870s;*
- ❖ *Tower East of Rous Lench Court Grade II 1860s;*
- ❖ *Wheelbarrow Castle Cottage Radford Grade II C17.*



Listed Building: St Peter's Church, Rous Lench

**Due consideration of Registered Parks and Gardens regulations must be taken when planning and undertaking any work on the following:**

- ❖ *Rous Lench Court, Grade II\**

**Due consideration of ancient monument regulations must be taken when planning and undertaking any work on the following:**

- ❖ *Moated site, east of St Peter's Church, Rous Lench*

## Section 3 ~ Maintaining The Built Environment

### Buildings ~ Continued

**Relationship:** The nucleated nature of Rous Lench village is an important and attractive characteristic. In addition, both Radford and Rous Lench derive much of their character and charm from the evolution of broken clusters of dwellings and outbuildings which present an attractive variety of building line and roofscape, punctuated by open spaces between buildings.



Examples of ornate chimneys

**Materials:** Buildings in the parish have been constructed from a gradually evolving range of materials.

With the exception of the 12<sup>th</sup> century church of St Peter, which is of sandstone construction, the earliest surviving buildings are 16<sup>th</sup> century timber framed houses built from local timber. Some retain thatched roofs and the earliest examples stand witness to the longevity of wattle and daub walls. Later examples exhibit the use of painted brick or rendered infill.



Examples of variations in detail between buildings

Much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century building utilized red brick known in the Evesham area as Rouse Boughton brick. This was produced locally at the Radford Brickworks using the abundant supply of clay from the surrounding area. The brickworks ceased operation early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with building later than that date using a variety of modern bricks, natural and reconstructed stone.

The majority of roofs utilise plain clay tiles, either red or blue, with several examples of ornate ridge tiles. Decorative inset patterns have been used to break up the larger expanse of the schoolhouse roof.

While the buildings of both Radford and Rous Lench exhibit a varied range of materials in their construction, the impact of new building that is out of keeping with that of the surrounding architecture can be very intrusive.

**Style, proportion and detail:** Much of the architectural character and quality to be seen in the two villages comes from the wealth of detail in their buildings. While it would be inappropriate for new buildings to try to replicate the very ornate features evident in some of the Victorian properties, attention to detail and proportion is very important in maintaining the balance between old and new buildings. Such considerations also apply to conversions and extensions.



### Guidelines & Recommendations

**The relationship between buildings and of buildings to their surroundings should be preserved:**

- ❖ *The nucleated nature of Rous Lench should be protected;*
- ❖ *Excessive in-filling and ribbon development should be avoided in any future developments;*
- ❖ *Any new building should be planned to preserve the un-crowded nature of the two village environments by maintaining adequate open spaces between buildings;*
- ❖ *Wherever possible, the design and positioning of new buildings and extensions should maintain the visual interest of staggered building lines, which are a feature of both villages.*

**Roofscares of new building and extensions should maintain visual interest by the avoidance of excessive unbroken rooflines:**

- ❖ *The choice of building materials for new development or extensions should be in sympathy with the surrounding buildings.*
- ❖ *Particular care should be taken in the selection of complementary brickwork and roofing materials.*

**The style, proportion and choice of building materials in any extensions to existing buildings should be in keeping with the existing building. Particular attention should be paid to:**

- ❖ *Roof pitch; roofing materials and tile pattern;*
- ❖ *Style of exposed timberwork, finials, and decorative bargeboards;*
- ❖ *Brickwork, style and use of brick fascias and polychrome brickwork;*
- ❖ *Window style and surrounding details such as lintels, corbels, mullions and sills;*
- ❖ *Doors, doorways and porches.*

**While architectural interest and variety is to be encouraged, the design of any new buildings should be sensitive to the local vernacular style. In particular:**

- ❖ *The adoption of further misplaced regional architectural styles is to be discouraged;*
- ❖ *Architectural detail such as windows, doors and porches should be in proportion and keeping with existing surrounding buildings;*
- ❖ *The use of strongly coloured masonry paints should be avoided;*
- ❖ *Dormer windows in roofs should, where possible, be gabled.*
- ❖ *Where roof lights are essential they should be discrete;*
- ❖ *Roof tiles, where possible, should be in keeping with the predominant local use of small plain clay tiles rather than large pan-tiles.*

## Highways & Street Furniture

Three roads and three lanes, all with a low level of street furniture, serve the parish, which generally benefits from an overall lack of obtrusive signage, lampposts etc.

**Quaintly confusing:** The lack of street name signs can be confusing to the casual visitor: the main road through Radford being Alcester Road, the main road through Rous Lench being Radford Road and Bishampton Road running from Rous Lench to Ab Lench. Further, with the Alcester and Radford roads changing their names to Gooms Hill and Court Hill respectively before they exit the parish, giving directions to deliverymen is a common pass-time.

If street names cause a minor problem, house names certainly do not. Over 90% of the residences in the parish have names rather than numbers. This adds considerably to the character of the parish with houses sometimes being better known than their occupants.

**Road safety:** The recent Worcestershire Villages 30mph initiative has had a beneficial effect on the speed of vehicles through the parish albeit achieved at the expense of some of the rural character by the installation of speed signs and red coloured road sections at the boundaries of each village.

The state of repair of the roads is at best mediocre. The increased volume, width and weight of through traffic cause considerable damage to the edges of the largely kerb-free roads that were not constructed for such traffic.

With a few exceptions, kerbstones exist only where there is a pavement. The low ratio of pavements to verges generally enhances the rural character of the parish. A mixture of kerb types exist with granite setts being predominant around Rous Lench Village Green, these being more in keeping with the surrounding buildings.

**Lighting:** Public street lighting is non-existent in the parish; this can be of mixed blessing to the after-dark walker. However, most residents, especially those astronomically inclined; agree that the difficulty of navigation is considerably out-weighed by the lack of light pollution overhead.

Domestic security lighting is commonplace and usually kept to the minimum required brightness, duration and coverage. Some problems to motorists have been known through the inadvertent setting of security lights although a polite word with the property owner is usually sufficient to correct the situation.

**Flagpoles:** Several private flagpoles exist in the parish. The one public flagpole is situated on the village green in Rous Lench this, in common with the village green, is maintained by the parish. The Parish Council ensures that appropriate flags are flown on 12 occasions each year.

**Notice boards:** The Parish Council provides general notice boards in both Rous Lench and Radford together with a walkers' notice board on the Bishampton Road in Rous Lench. Notices may be posted via the clerk to the Parish Council.

Additionally, the village hall has notice boards internal and external to its front door. Notices may be self-posted; the village hall committee will remove inappropriate notices.

## Guidelines & Recommendations

**The lack of street names and the high proportion of property names help define the unique character of the parish.**

- ❖ To aid visitors and deliverymen, ensure that your house name / number is clearly visible from the road;
- ❖ Signage should be made of material that is in keeping with the surrounding buildings;
- ❖ Business signage should be subdued and fitted flush to wall, fence or building.



The aptly named beehive cottage, Rous Lench

**All developments have the potential to impact upon the volume or type of traffic in the parish.**

- ❖ Consider the change of road use that may arise from planned development and plan to minimise undesirable affects.
- ❖ Ensure adequate off-road parking with suitable entrance is provided;
- ❖ Extending the length or number of roadside footpaths and kerbed verges is felt to be generally undesirable;
- ❖ Where felt to be absolutely necessary and appropriate, additional kerbs should be of natural stone in preference to concrete.

**In the absence of street lighting, some level of exterior lighting may be felt to be essential.**

- ❖ Adjust all exterior lighting so as not to dazzle passing pedestrians or motorists. Use appropriate wattage bulbs for the application;
- ❖ Adjust all exterior lighting to light up only the minimum area necessary;
- ❖ Use properly adjusted automated switches for security lighting. Lights that switch on too readily or which stay on for too long reduce burglar deterrence.