

**Introduction**

**Section 1**  
**A Vision of Sustainability**

**Section 2**  
**Protecting the Natural Environment**

**Section 3**  
**Maintaining the Built Environment**

**References & Useful Contacts**

## Introduction

### A brief history of this parish design statement

The Rous Lench and Radford Design Group was formed in 2001 by local residents, following a suggestion from the Parish Council. Its objectives were to explore ways of improving communication of design considerations amongst parish residents and thereby help preserve the quality of the parish environment.

Throughout a three-year process of survey, meetings and consultation, the residents of Rous Lench and Radford engaged in, contributed to, commented upon and endorsed this design statement, first published in August 2004.

The initial survey of residents' views and concerns was undertaken in May 2001. The main issues raised as part of that survey may be summarised as:

- Sustainability and downturn in rural economy.
- Protection the landscape and wildlife.
- Maintaining the parish's architectural character.

Residents were also asked if they were willing actively participate in the Design Group. For such a small parish, there was an excellent response. Led by Andy Langman, the original members of the Design Group were:

Frank Baldrey	Barry Cottrill	Neil Curnock
Richard Curnock	Chris Dudley	Mary Jones
Phil King	Tony Knight	Andy Langman
Ann Pearce	John Whitfield	

As part of the consultation exercise, the first draft of this document was circulated to a small number of Rous Lench and Radford residents for initial comments. The feedback was constructive and positive. A progress report was given to the annual parish meeting in May 2002.

The Design Group continued its work and in February 2003 a working draft of the design statement was circulated to all residents and businesses in the parish. Again, several constructive comments were received for incorporation into the document.

At the annual parish meeting in March 2003 the Design Group and residents present considered the comments received regarding the draft of the design statement. The Design Group requested approval from all present for design statement to be finalised, adopted and published. Approval was unanimous.

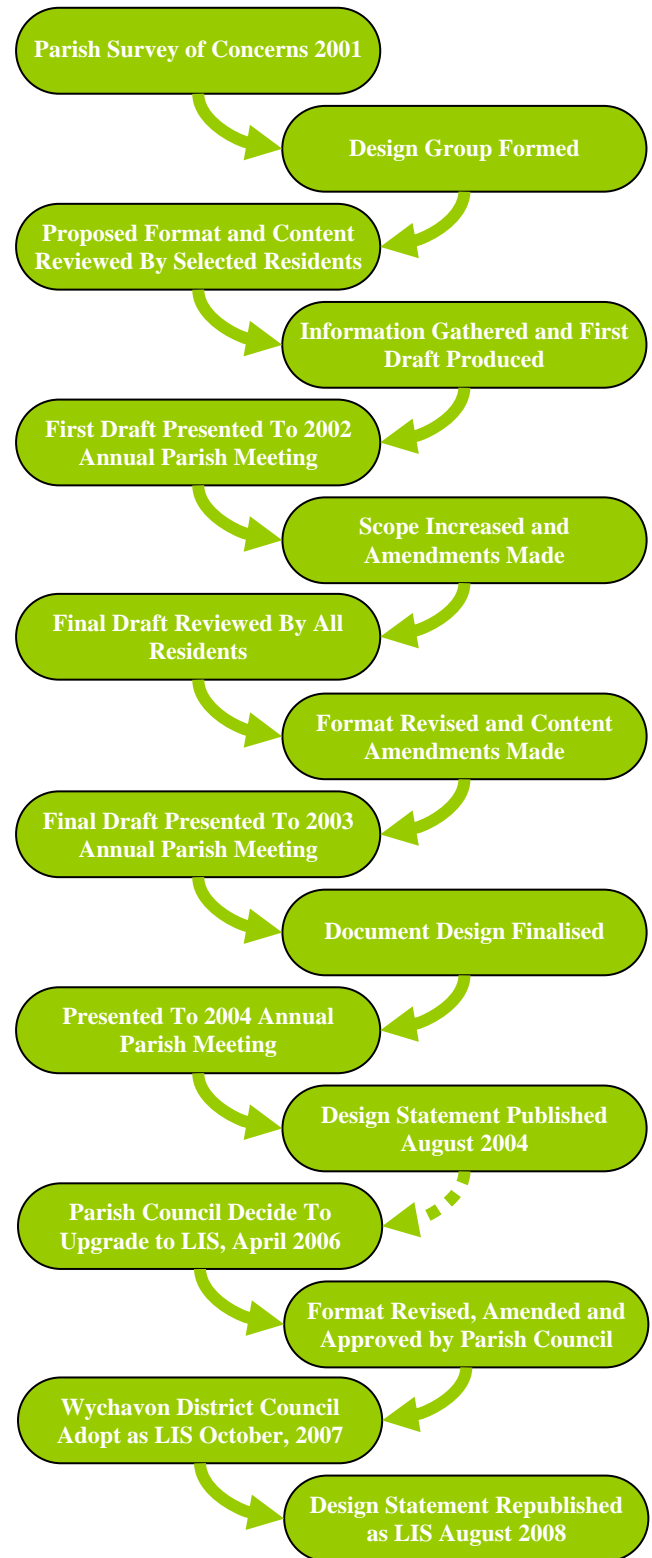
The Design Group finalised layout, pictures and design of the statement ahead of presentation of the finished document to the annual parish meeting in March 2004 and its eventual publication and delivery to every residence in the parish in August 2004.

### Upgrade to a Local Information Source

This design statement was originally intended to be a practical tool for use by residents in reaching decisions affecting design and development within the parish.

However, the April 2006 annual parish meeting requested the Design Group upgrade the design statement and apply to Wychavon District Council for its adoption as a Local Information Source (LIS). As such, it would then be used as material planning consideration in the planning process.

### The steps along the way



### A great team effort

The Design Group is grateful for the support and advice received for this statement from the residents of the parish; to the Parish Council for funding its publication and to Wychavon District Council for help and support in its upgrade to a Local Information Source.

The Design Group's reference material, survey results, photographs, maps, plans and other documents can be consulted by contacting the Design Group leader.

## Introduction

### What is a design statement?

A Design Statement describes a village or, as in the case of Rous Lench and Radford, a parish as it is today. It highlights the qualities valued by its residents and offers guidance for those considering change. In preparing this statement, the residents of Rous Lench and Radford have included local knowledge, views and ideas that will contribute to the viability and growth of the parish while helping to preserve the high quality of its environment.



*The Millennium Shelter, Rous Lench Village Green*

### What is it for?

Our aim in producing this document is to provide practical assistance that will enable further development and change to be based on a considered understanding of the parish's history and in a way that will not detract from its future, thereby protecting and enhancing its special nature.

This design statement aims to raise residents' awareness of what is so special about our parish. We are the present guardians of that heritage. It is our responsibility, collectively and individually, to preserve, protect and help develop it in an appropriate way.

### Who is it for?

Change is brought about not only by large developments but also by the smaller day-to-day adjustments to homes, gardens, open spaces, paths and hedges that may alter the look and feel of the whole parish. The rural economy is also a great contributor to the character and stability of the environment; changes in that economy have the potential for significant change to the parish.

Therefore, this design statement is addressed to:

- Statutory bodies and public authorities;
- Planners, developers, builders, architects; designers and engineers;
- Local community groups;
- Farmers and other local businesses;
- Residents.

### How does it help?

The present day qualities of Rous Lench and Radford are the result of the many economic, social and environmental changes that shaped the history of the parish.

As with our predecessors, today's residents have a duty of care to ensure that changes are not detrimental to the well being of the parish's sustainability, natural environment or built environment.

This statement offers guidelines and recommendations to anyone considering changes or development.

A fold-out page shows the development and conservation areas overlaid on the latest OS map of the parish.

### How does it work?

This design statement is intended to work in three ways:

First, by producing this statement our awareness and appreciation of what makes our parish unique is raised and we are better able to understand the issues involved.

Second, when considering change the best time to accommodate other people's views is during the early stages of forming ideas, before plans become too firm. Regardless of whether or not changes require planning permission, this design statement will provide guidance on topics important to the well being of the parish as a whole.

Third, once adopted by Rous Lench Parish Council and by Wychavon District Council as a Local Information Source (LIS), this statement can be used as material planning consideration when assessing planning applications.



*Radford Corner*

### And finally:

Remember, it is always helpful to discuss your ideas before they become too fixed. The Design Group are more than happy to offer guidance on topics affecting development of the parish.

For advice about development, alterations or extensions to property in the parish you should initially contact the Development Control Section or the Heritage and Conservation Team at Wychavon District Council.

This design statement will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its continued effectiveness and applicability.

**Introduction**

**Section 1**  
**A Vision of Sustainability**

**Section 2**  
**Protecting the Natural Environment**

**Section 3**  
**Maintaining the Built Environment**

**References & Useful Contacts**

## Community

Our Parish consists of two settlements lying some six miles North of Evesham in well-wooded countryside on ground sloping gently down to the West. The parish is one of the most attractive and unspoilt in the surrounding districts.

Whitsun and Piddle brooks run to the West and North of the parish respectively, the Ridge running from Slade Wood to the South and Gooms Hill to the East complete the well-defined parish boundaries.

As a rural community, we are well served by road for easy access to Worcester, Birmingham, Stratford-upon-Avon and Cheltenham. Additionally, Evesham has mainline railway access to London.

**Rous Lench** - this village is characterised by the concentration of development around the well-managed triangular village green. This arrangement gives the settlement a medieval character, although most of the houses were in fact commissioned by the successive owners of the



historic Rous Lench Court, Sir Charles Rouse Boughton and Dr Chafy, as may be seen from the stones set into some buildings.

Dr Chafy was also responsible for the unique letterboxes to be found in both Radford and Rous Lench and for the magnificent Rous Lench schoolhouse of decorated brick and tile, now converted to a private dwelling.

**Radford** - in contrast to Rous Lench, this hamlet has no central feature or village green, developing as it did in support of various local industries along the old Worcester to Stratford-upon-Avon coach road. Concentrations of houses exist around the former mill to the West and the former brick works to the East.

The Wheelbarrow Castle, now the parish's only public house, continues to serve local workers and travellers alike.

**Challenges** - the key challenges facing the parish are familiar to many other villages:

- ❖ The downturn in the rural economy and the changing work-pattern of the residents has reduced the number of people who both live and work in the parish, leading to the demise of local shops, school and post office.
- ❖ The conservation and development policies adopted in the Local Plan for the parish ensure the population remains stable at around 200. Clearly, this is beneficial in some respects. However, the attraction of the parish to workers in nearby towns has fuelled demand for, and price of, housing.
- ❖ Community facilities are at a premium. With the church, the public house and the village hall being the only communal meeting places.
- ❖ There is little social provision for younger residents. With no local shop or post office, opportunities for informal social contact are very restricted for all residents.

## Guidelines & Recommendations

**To understand the views of the community and the District Council, developers and planners should consult this design statement and the Wychavon District Local Plan (June 2006).**

**Key considerations for developers and planners are:**

- ❖ *Rous Lench is subject to a Conservation Area and a Development Area;*
- ❖ *Radford has no Conservation Area or Development Area;*
- ❖ *Rous Lench and Radford have several listed buildings and an ancient monument.*

**Developers, planners and public authorities should take relevant local advice concerning community facilities to be provided in conjunction with new development, change of use and changing demography.**

- ❖ *It is important that community facilities are retained or, if possible, increased to provide a sustainable community and accommodate the requirements of new residents;*
- ❖ *Additional social and recreational facilities are required, together with informal meeting places for different age groups;*
- ❖ *Protection of landscape, wildlife and open space is paramount to the environmental well being of the parish.*



*Radford Post Box*

**Developments and conversions should enhance the sustainability of the parish in at least one of the following ways:**

- ❖ *Provide community-based employment;*
- ❖ *Provide affordable housing for local workers;*
- ❖ *Provide community facilities or shops.*

## Local Economy

The early growth and prosperity of our parish was based on mixed farming, horticulture, milling and brick making. This employment was mainly in support of the Rous estate and travellers using the old Worcester to Stratford-upon-Avon coach road through Radford.

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, fruit and vegetable growing were dominant. However, since the Second World War, land-based employment has shifted from horticulture to agriculture with a corresponding decline in need for local workers. During this time, land ownership and farm sizes have remained relatively stable, with little consolidation of farms.

**Employment** - the majority of the working population is now employed outside the parish. This may be surprising given the wide variety of local employment opportunities available from the farming, light industry, cottage and service businesses. However, the pressure on house prices caused by the attraction of the rural environment means that the former indigenous working population has been largely priced out of the parish by new-comers who either continue to work outside of the parish or who have retired to the parish.

**Businesses** – there are more than 25 small businesses within the parish. However, these no longer include any shops or post office. This lack of local retail facility has had a negative effect on maintaining a vibrant community life. The main effect in this respect is that everyone has to travel to other towns and villages for shopping; this reduces the opportunity for informal day-to-day social interaction.

**Farming** – given its current prolonged downturn, the evolution of the rural economy is of particular concern. Its potential effect on local employment; the critical role it plays in landscape and wildlife management and the potential for long term loss of small and medium farming units to large institutional buyers are cause for concern.



Farming has evolved from horticulture to agriculture

**The future** - the vitality, viability and environmental well being of the parish depends on a planned evolution of the land-based rural economy and considered encouragement of economic growth through realisation of appropriate retail, service and leisure opportunities. In this way, the current trend towards becoming a dormitory area for surrounding towns and cities may be stabilised. Thereby avoiding the misfortunes of other parishes suffering from an over abundance of weekend and holiday homes.

## Guidelines & Recommendations



Land Management: Recent plantation of British hardwoods

**It is important to the sustainability of the parish to retain and develop the character of Rous Lench and Radford as a working community offering a variety of employment to all ages of residents.**

- ❖ *Wherever possible development should preserve the viability of associated farming units or other local businesses.*

**It is desirable to re-establish appropriate local retail outlets in order to enhance informal social interaction and maintain a vibrant village culture.**

- ❖ *The parish is considered unsuitable for large-scale business development and for co-location of multiple business units or retail outlets at a single location;*
- ❖ *Residential development could extend the local tradition of adjacent 'Live/Work' units by incorporating offices, workshops or retail outlets.*

**All commercial developments should be designed to harmonise and integrate with the predominantly residential setting.**

- ❖ *Shops and businesses have a potential for adverse visual impact. This can be reduced by careful consideration of design and layout;*
- ❖ *Adopting the local building style discussed later in this document can further protect the look and feel of the parish;*
- ❖ *Additional considerations:*
  - ❖ *Minimise the size or use of plate glass windows;*
  - ❖ *Use non-reflective signs fixed flush to buildings;*
  - ❖ *Avoid window or door canopies;*
  - ❖ *Restrict brightness of internal / external lighting;*
  - ❖ *Reduce visual impact by planting native broadleaf trees and hedgerow shrubs.*

**It may be necessary to harness the buying power of pass-through traffic to maintain sustainable local businesses.**

- ❖ *Shops and businesses have a potential for adverse traffic impact. Provision for sympathetic off-road parking should be made, screened if necessary by planting native broadleaf trees and hedgerow shrubs.*

Sustainability Impact Statement

**Sustainable Development Improves Our Quality Of Life In Ways That Protect Or Enhance The Environment**

Community Sustainability Refer To Recommendations On Page 5	Impact On Sustainability			Reason
	Improves	No Impact	Detrimental	
Enforce restrictions of Conservation and Development areas	✓			Preserves housing density and open spaces
Enforce listed buildings and ancient monuments regulations	✓			Retaining local character and building tradition
Retain or increase community facilities	✓			Encourages community spirit, self help groups and clubs
Increase social, recreational and informal meeting places	✓			Encourage active participation in a vibrant community
Protect landscape, wildlife and open spaces	✓			Preserves residents' ability to enjoy the natural environment
Development to provide community based employment	✓			Contributing to the local economy
Development to provide affordable housing for local workers	✓			Minimising the need for travelling to work
Development to provide community facilities or shops	✓			Contributing to the local economy
Local Economy Sustainability Refer To Recommendations On Page 6	Impact On Sustainability			Reason
	Improves	No Impact	Detrimental	
Development to preserve viability of associated farming units	✓			Maintains a viable long term local economy
Discourage large scale business developments	✓			Detrimental to the natural and built environments
Extend the local tradition of "work/live" units	✓			Retaining local tradition of adjacent working and living units
Adopt the local building style	✓			Retains the local character and tradition of the built environment
Minimise the size and use of plate glass windows	✓			Reduce visual impact of new or existing developments
Use non-reflective signs fixed flush to buildings	✓			Reduce visual impact of new or existing developments
Avoid window or door canopies	✓			Reduce visual impact of new or existing developments
Restrict brightness of internal / external lighting	✓			Reduce visual impact of new or existing developments
Plant native broadleaf trees and hedgerow shrubs	✓			Reduce visual impact of new or existing developments

**Introduction**

**Section 1**  
**A Vision of Sustainability**

**Section 2**  
**Protecting the Natural Environment**

**Section 3**  
**Maintaining the Built Environment**

**References & Useful Contacts**



### Landscape

Our parish is typified by small undulating hills and is set on a generally west facing and well-wooded slope. Slade Wood and Gooms Hill are clearly visible from many miles away. This same high ground, which forms the upper parish boundaries, is some 100 feet above the lower parish boundaries of the Whitsun and Piddle brooks and provides several excellent vantage points for views of the parish and beyond. Particularly good views of the Malvern's to the West are complemented at several locations by views of the Lickey, Bredon and Cotswold Hills to the North, South and East respectively.

**Geology** - the parish is generally Keuper Marl, a narrow strip of Triassic sedimentary formation stretching from Mid-Cheshire to Devon. Locally the Keuper is 600 feet deep resting conformably on New Red Sandstone. Soils range from fertile sandy loam on the higher ground to the East, through middle ground of red marl which, although not particularly fertile was of great benefit to the 19<sup>th</sup> century brick-makers of Radford. The lower ground to the West of the parish is generally heavier, water retaining clay.

**Drainage** - the combination of the East - West slope of the parish and the high clay content of the soil make water drainage a defining element of the landscape. Springs and natural ponds are plentiful. Hedgerows follow ditches forming the historic, irregular shaped fields. Regular maintenance of field and roadside ditches and drains is essential in avoiding flooding throughout the parish. The lowest points of the parish, where the Whitsun and Piddle brooks flow under roads, are particularly prone to flooding. Several marshes exist in these low-lying areas.

**Woodland** - Beyond the confines of the well-wooded high ground, native trees are also plentiful in the well-maintained hedgerows, providing an ideal habitat for wildlife. The village green at Rous Lench boasts some superb specimen trees. Well-established trees enhance all entrances to the parish. As well as providing excellent habitats for birds and mammals, the woodlands are home to a huge variety of fungi.

### Guidelines & Recommendations

**The rural setting of the parish must be preserved.**

- ❖ *Visual and noise impact should be minimised;*
- ❖ *Open spaces should be preserved;*
- ❖ *Maintain the balance between kempt & unkempt land.*

**The woodland features of the parish should be managed and preserved, always considering the impact of species selection and planting position on local character, views and vistas.**

- ❖ *The planting of trees, especially indigenous broad leaf varieties, is encouraged;*
- ❖ *The planting and maintenance of hedgerows is encouraged;*
- ❖ *The use of hedge-laying techniques, where appropriate, is encouraged.*

**There are several geologically and historically significant features of the parish to be preserved:**

- ❖ *Ancient monuments e.g. Rous Lench Moat. Advice may be obtained from English Heritage or CPRE;*
- ❖ *Listed buildings e.g. Rous Lench Court. Advice may be obtained from Wychavon District Council;*
- ❖ *Other features e.g. Ridge and furrow fields Advice may be obtained from CPRE;*
- ❖ *The geological features of the parish that produce environmentally important wetlands and ponds. Excellent advice is available on the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) web site*

**Positive measures to alleviate flooding should be taken, such as:**

- ❖ *Continued ditch maintenance in consultation with the Environment Agency, to minimise impact on habitat and species diversity;*
- ❖ *Avoiding development in flood areas.*



## Wildlife

Wildlife in our parish is best described as prolific and well preserved. From the frequently seen foxes, badgers, rabbits and hares to the more recently established Muntjack and Fallow Deer, wildlife abounds. A comparison of wildlife to a survey from 1883 showed an overall improvement in local flora and fauna. Details of the surveys are available from the Parish Council and on the parish Internet web site

**Animals:** The animals present in 2001 remain as they were in 1883 with the addition the deer species introduced into the Ragley estate and now spread from there. Deer have reached sufficient numbers now to require controlled culling due to crop damage. Crop damage is also a problem from protected species such as badgers.



**Birds:** Out of the 64 birds on the 1883 list, 9 have disappeared and 28 new species have been spotted. An excellent example of the success of the environmentally friendly land management policies adopted locally is the growth of the Buzzard population.

**Butterflies:** The butterflies sighted in 2001 are considerably less than the 1883 list with 15 species apparently no longer existing locally.

**Plants:** Out of the 53 plants on the 1883 list we have only 8. However, between the months of May and August 2001 168 plants were recorded along the parish's public footpaths alone, and there are more to add to the list. Although there appear to be some losses there are a great many gains, overall we have an abundance of flora.



**Trees:** 25 species of trees are found in public places, there are many other fine specimens in private gardens. Mistletoe is to be found in abundance in the parish.

**Fungi:** Over 160 mushroom varieties have been recorded in local woodland. Unfortunately, no 1883 comparison is available. Please beware, not all mushroom varieties are edible, many are poisonous and should not be picked or eaten.

**Fish:** Only Carp and Eel were noted in 1883, to these we now have trout that were relatively recently introduced successfully to Piddle Brook.

**Reptiles:** Four species of reptiles are to be found in the parish: the grass snake, the adder, the slow worm and the common lizard. It is particularly sad that adders are frequently killed as they present little danger to an adult.



**Amphibians:** Four species of amphibians are to be found in the parish: The common newt, the great crested newt, the common frog and the common toad. They spend much of their time on land returning to water to breed as their eggs and tadpoles are purely aquatic. They do not favour running water and are ideally suited to the many ponds in the parish.

The great crested newt is common locally, although rare nationally, and protected by European order.

## Guidelines & Recommendations

**The wildlife in conservation areas should be protected and encouraged to grow:**

- ❖ *To the Northwest of the parish is an area of marshland adjacent to Piddle Brook. Home to orchids, this area is protected by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust;*
- ❖ *To the Southwest of the parish is an area of marshland adjacent to Whitsun Brook known variously as Stakumford Marsh; Osier Beds or The Moors. In 1998 this was in the top 25 Worcestershire Wetlands surveyed and is protected by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. With restricted grazing rights to further protect orchids and other wildlife, it is hoped otters may be reintroduced here.*



*Marshland provides an ideal wildlife habitat*

**The continued well-being of the wildlife depends on protection of wildlife habitats:**

- ❖ *Woodland, Hedgerows, Field / farm boundaries should be actively maintained;*
- ❖ *Unkempt land and dead wood is of positive benefit to wildlife providing much needed insect, animal and fungi habitats;*
- ❖ *Excellent advice is available on the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and Natural England web-sites (see references) for ways to help:*
  - ❖ *Trees, Hedges, Mistletoe, Fungi;*
  - ❖ *Animals, Birds, Butterflies;*
  - ❖ *Fish, Amphibians, Reptiles.*

**Greater appreciation of local amenities should be encouraged through the active promotion of:**

- ❖ *Preservation of historic features – e.g. moat, well;*
- ❖ *Community projects – e.g. wasteland, ponds, woods;*
- ❖ *Interest groups – e.g. Birds, butterflies, rambling;*