

Village Design Statement for Steeple Langford Parish

comprising:

Villages of Steeple Langford, Hanging Langford & Little Langford
& the Settlements at East Clyffe, Ballington and Bathampton

1st March 2016



Looking north over Steeple Langford

Aim

The aim of this Village Design Statement is to provide a descriptive framework of the distinctive and important features of the Steeple Langford Parish in order to inform future planning decisions within the parish boundary.

Review Date It is recommended that Steeple Langford Parish Council review this Village Design Statement 5 years from the date of its adoption

This Village Design Statement (VDS) was produced at a point in time. Therefore, there may be references in it that are now superseded. However, the VDS is still considered to be compliant with local policy on design matters.

The production of the VDS has been guided by advice from the Wiltshire Council officers and considered up to-date and relevant, and has subsequently been approved at the Southern Area Planning Committee as a material planning consideration.

Contents:

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 VDS, its Aim and Purpose
- 1.2 How it was produced
- 1.3 Context of the VDS within the Planning Process

2. History and Life in the Langfords

- 2.1 Location
- 2.2 Historical Background and Archaeology
- 2.3 Recent History
- 2.4 Infrastructure – Churches, schools and other services
- 2.5 People and Employment

3. Conservation and Preserving the Character of the Villages

- 3.1 Description of Dwellings and Villages
- 3.2 The Effects of Change and Development
- 3.3 Development on or Close to the Flood Plain
- 3.4 Designated Conservation Areas
- 3.5 Listed Buildings
- 3.6 Architecture and Materials

4. Wider Conservation including and beyond Designated Conservation Areas

- 4.1 Setting

5. Amenities

- 5.1 Recreation and Sports
- 5.2 Rights of Way
- 5.3 Open Spaces and Public Access
- 5.4 Allotments

6. Maps

- 6.1 Rights of Way
- 6.2 Flood Risk and Conservation Areas
- 6.3 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

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7. Acknowledgements

Photography - Noeline Smith (www.noelinesmith.com)

1. Introduction

1.1 VDS, its Aim and Purpose

The aim of this VDS is to provide a descriptive framework of the distinctive and important features of the parish in order to inform future planning decisions within the parish boundary.

This VDS provides a description of the natural and man-made features of Steeple Langford Parish. The document is a guide to ensure that future development and change is managed to respect and preserve the character and distinctiveness of the villages, settlements and countryside that make up the parish. It should contribute to protecting and enhancing the special nature and qualities of the community that is The Langfords. Any reference to “The Langfords” is inclusive of the three villages of Steeple Langford, Hanging Langford and Little Langford and the settlements at East Clyffe, Ballington and Bathampton.

As such it represents a distillation of the views of the residents of the Langfords that can be referred to by all, including architects, builders, those seeking planning permission, and Steeple Langford Parish Council and the Wiltshire Council’s Southern Area Planning Committee when considering planning applications. Although, Little Langford, East Clyffe, Ballington and Bathampton are considered countryside and the presumption is against development (paragraph 1.3 below), the residents in these locations were consulted fully thereby recognising their inclusion in the parish.

1.2 How the VDS was produced

During 2014 Steeple Langford Parish Council examined the case for and against producing a Neighbourhood Plan and decided against it because of the potential cost, the production time and the designation of the parish as a “small village”. In early 2015 the Parish Council invited the community to produce a VDS. A small team of four resident volunteers produced an outline structure of a draft VDS in the spring of 2015, which was delivered to every household at the beginning of June. The Parish Council funded the printing costs during the consultation.

All the residents of the parish were invited to contribute to the VDS production through public consultation exercise in June and July, including, draft copy through letter boxes, comment return sheets, 2 coffee mornings with the production team in the Parish Hall, colour copy display in the church, and a dedicated e-mail address for electronic feedback. All comment and feedback was captured and retained by the VDS team. The VDS was developed further by the VDS team to reflect the views expressed via the consultation process. The subsequent draft was sent to Wiltshire Council’s Development Services who advised on compliance with protocols and on detailed content. At all stages of the VDS development residents of the parish were advised of progress through the parish magazine.

At the beginning of February 2016 the proposed final copy of the VDS was published on the newly created parish website and in hard copy on display in the church, inviting further community comment. The final version was presented to the Parish Council at their meeting on the 1st of March 2016 prior to the VDS being forwarded to Wiltshire Council for adoption.

1.3 Context of the VDS within the Planning Process

The Wiltshire Council Core Strategy (WCS), which covers several subjects including housing, was adopted in January 2015, and is the statutory Local Plan for the whole of Wiltshire.

Core Policy 4 of the WCS places Steeple Langford and Hanging Langford in the category of a “small village”, which is suitable only for “infill” within the existing, built up area (Core Policy 2). Infill is defined in the WCS as the filling of a small gap within the village that is only large enough for not more than a few dwellings, generally only one dwelling. Little Langford, East Clyffe, Ballington and Bathampton are considered to be countryside for the purposes of planning policy. There is a general presumption against new development in the countryside, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This VDS is consistent with and supports the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy.

2. History and Life in the Langfords

2.1 Location

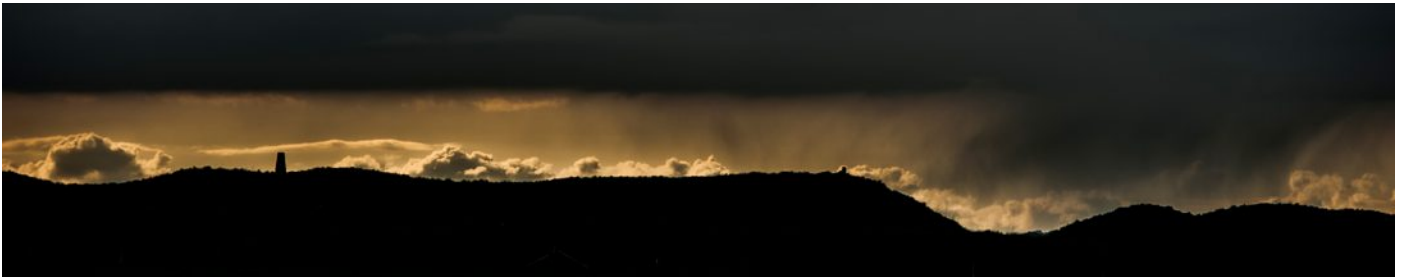
The Langfords lie in South Wiltshire in the picturesque Wylde Valley with the western boundary almost equidistant between Salisbury and Warminster. (See maps in Section 6). Steeple Langford is on the north side of the river with Hanging Langford and Little Langford on the south side. The great majority of existing development is between the line of the A36 to the north and the railway line to the south; however, the parish boundary as illustrated on the map, extends to include large areas of farm land and ancient archaeological sites.



Beside the old A36 at East Clyffe

2.2 Historical Background and Archaeology

Archaeological evidence for the occupation of the landscape, surrounding the villages and within parish boundaries, from the Neolithic period has been recovered from many sites within the parish. Neolithic stone tools, Bronze Age barrows, the Iron Age camp at Yarnbury Castle and field systems show that there was considerable prehistoric activity in the area. Grims' ditch is an important monument above the southern boundary. Yarnbury was occupied during the Roman period but it is likely that by this time most settlement was concentrated along the river valley, as it is today.



Yarnbury Castle

The earliest documentary evidence to Steeple Langford dates from 943AD and the Domesday Book (1086) provides the first specific reference to the then estate.

From the medieval period sheep and corn farming dominated the agriculture of the parish, in common with most chalk downland parishes. In the early 14th century the land of the manor was separated from that of the tenants whose arable strips were located in three open fields. As was the case on many chalk land manors across Wiltshire and Hampshire, large land holdings were being created as farms were amalgamated. This occurred largely in the parish in the early 19th century.



The key historic influences of the parish are summarised as:

- An important fording point of the river
- Medieval water management systems and the mill
- A series of farm complexes
- Regular plots, in part, denoting a planned settlement at least from the medieval period
- Amalgamation of farms in the 19th century which transformed the landscape and had a significant effect on the villages

2.3 Recent History

The parish's early existence was built on farming and employment on the land and trades supporting agricultural work. While agriculture and estate management continues to be important to the local economy and setting of the parish, it provides relatively little employment to today's parish community. As with similar parishes, employment patterns have changed with modern economic activity and a larger percentage of working people travel outside the parish to their employment.

Notable changes in more recent history have included:

- The opening of the railway in June 1856 resulted in a growth in population in Hanging Langford, although the halt closed in October 1857.
- Building the first bridge over the River Wylfe in Duck Street in the late 19th century.
- The Langfords Parish Hall at the junction of Duck Street and Wylfe Road was opened as a new reading room in 1915 to replace the reading rooms in Steeple Langford and Hanging Langford.



New Bridge Construction 2016



Parish Hall

- The extraction of gravel in the mid 20th century created the lakes in the valley bottom, much of which is now part of the Wildlife Reserve.
- The water table was lowered during WW2 by the dredging of parts of the River Wylfe as part of the nation's defences should Great Britain be invaded.



Wiltshire Wild Life Reserve



River Wylfe



Cricket match on the Recreation Ground



A36 bypass

- The recreation ground was opened as a sporting facility after WW2.
- The A36 bypass around Steeple Langford was opened in January 1989.

2.4 Infrastructure

At present there is little infrastructure within the parish. The last shop in Steeple Langford closed in the early 1990s and the primary school closed in 2010. The nearest shop is in Wylde some 1.5 miles away which is a small village shop and post office which is only open in the mornings; otherwise, apart from the garage shop in Stapleford, the nearest shop for daily needs is in Codford. The nearest primary schools are in Codford and Great Wishford some 5/6 miles away. The closest doctors' surgeries are in Codford and Wilton and a dental practice in Wilton. The nearest Veterinary Surgery is in Codford.

The Wiltshire Council Library van provides a regular service to the parish. The day centre in Edgars Close, Steeple Langford, provides a much valued facility for the elderly of the parish and neighbouring parishes.

The remaining Public House is the "Rainbow" in Steeple Langford, following the closure of the Railway Tavern in Hanging Langford in 1966 and the Bell Inn in Steeple Langford in the early 1990s.



All Saints Church in Steeple Langford was dedicated in 1326 and the Church of St Nicholas of Myra in Little Langford has features believed to date back to circa 550. The Methodist Chapel in Hanging Langford was closed in 1960 and is now



*All Saints Church
Steeple Langford*



*Church of St. Nicholas of Myra
Little Langford*

incorporated into a private house. Regular weekly services are held in All Saints Church and regular monthly services in St Nicholas of Myra

Salisbury and Warminster, which offer market town facilities, are some 10 and 11 miles away respectively.

The key components of the parish infrastructure are described in the table below:

Village	Church	Shop	School	Doctor Dentist	Bus	Rail	Pub
Steeple Langford	Yes	No	Private Nursery School	No	Hourly till 6pm to Salisbury & Warminster and Bath.	No	Yes
Hanging Langford	No	No	No	No	Regular 'Shopping bus' to Salisbury 3 times a week	No	No
Little Langford	Yes (Monthly)	No	No	No		No	No

2.5 People and Employment

The evidence for this section of the VDS is drawn from the 2011 Census and the Housing Needs Survey conducted by Wiltshire Council in February 2015.

People

The population in 2011 was 515 comprised of 234 households. 99% of the population regard their homes as their main homes, from which it is possible to conclude that there are very few second homes or holiday lets in the parish.

The 2011 Census data for Steeple Langford indicates that 64.5% of households in the parish were owner-occupying with the remainder living in rented housing provided by social or private landlords. This pattern of owner-occupiers being in the majority is reversed in Little Langford where 3 houses are owner-occupied with the majority owned and let by Wilton Estate. The 2011 Census also recorded 34 affordable homes in the parish. Affordable homes being defined as properties available to rent at up to 80% of the market rate. However, the figure of 34 includes 19 properties in Edgars Close, which are restricted to those over 55 years of age. While the overall figure of affordable housing is in line with the County 2011 average, the 2015 housing needs survey identified a shortage of affordable housing and shared ownership starter homes. Residents have expressed a wish for some development to close the gap in identified need and a group of parishioners is working to realise that ambition.

The population has grown slowly over recent years as housing stock has increased by infill. Some 65% have lived in the Langfords for over 10 years. The age profile is mixed; however, 38% are aged 65 years and over, with 31% aged between 45 and 64 years suggesting an older age profile than the norm.

Employment

Employment opportunities within the parish are limited and consist of farm and estate work, offices and light industrial units at the former farm buildings at East Clyffe and the properties at Ballington Manor. Working from home improved with the arrival of higher speed fibre optic broadband in 2014.

The distances travelled to work were surveyed in 2015. The following table summarises the results of that survey by showing how far people in the respondents' households travelled to work:

Persons in household	Distance to work in miles				
	Up to 2	3 to 10	11 to 50	Over 50	Total
Person 1	12	14	23	8	57
Person 2	5	13	18	2	38
Person 3	0	3	1	1	5
Person 4	0	0	0	0	0
Person 5	0	0	0	0	0
Total	17	30	42	11	100

Of the respondent households 47% of working members usually travel less than ten miles to their place of work, 53% travel more than that, suggesting a lack of local sources of employment.

3. Conservation and Preserving the Character of the Villages

3.1 Description of the dwellings and villages

Although there are differences in the various villages they are all of mainly ribbon development with dwellings adjacent to the main access roads and, apart from the "Wirr" and Berwick Lane in Steeple Langford, with only a few houses in cul de sacs or short access roads. In most parts of the villages the houses front on to the road and have open views across farmland to the rear.

The settlement pattern of the villages is notable for being compact and contained within the valley resulting in an unobtrusive appearance within the overall setting. This preserves the views and vistas



across wide areas of attractive countryside from both within and outside the settlements. The intimate scale of the settlements, the quality of the houses (with only a few exceptions), the quiet tranquillity and semi-rural character all contribute to attractiveness of the parish.

With the exception of established manor houses, most dwellings are single or double story with pitched roofs of tiles, slates or thatch. The majority have enclosed gardens to the front and rear of the property with space to park a number of cars. Any new development should blend with the layout and height of existing buildings, window design and proportions and the use of appropriate materials for cladding buildings and roofs.

Although Steeple Langford has continuous pavements alongside the former A36 and The Wirr, the remaining roads do not have pavements. There is no street lighting.

3.2 The Effects of Change and Development



As the villages of the Langfords have developed and increased in size over past times, particularly in living memory, a diverse variety of design and building materials were introduced. This includes varieties of brick, stonework and roof cladding. Some of the past development has not been sympathetic to the overall character of the villages, although some buildings of considerable character and historical interest remain and continue to enhance the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the parish. Many of these buildings have been accorded listed status.

Future development in Steeple Langford and Hanging Langford will be controlled by policies in the WCS, which is the Local Plan adopted in 2015. Both Steeple Langford and Hanging Langford have designated conservation areas within the villages. Core Policy 58 of the WCS seeks to ensure that designated heritage assets, such as conservation areas, are conserved, and where appropriate, enhanced.

3.3 Development on or Close to the Flood Plain

During the winters 1999/2000 and more recently 2013/2014 Steeple Langford Parish suffered flooding as ground water levels rose through those wet winters. The meadows in the valley bottom were under water for long periods, as the River Wylde overflowed its banks and the resulting water swept



down the valley. There was flooding in Duck Street (between Steeple Langford and Hanging Langford) and in Wylde Road in Hanging Langford, which resulted in their becoming impassable to some vehicles. Some properties were flooded, particularly in the 1999/2000 winter both in Steeple Langford and Hanging Langford. It was noted that, particularly in Hanging Langford, springs appeared as the hills to the south of the village became saturated.

The WCS (Core Policy 67) deals with flood risk issues and should be used as the appropriate policy reference document. One of the keys to managing the flood risk successfully is the maintenance of drainage systems throughout the parish to allow excess water to flow downstream. This is particularly important since the historical system of sluice gates and drainage channels which diverted water on to the meadows was abandoned as a means of medieval flood control.

A map of the Flood Plain is shown on Page 17.

3.4 Designated Conservation Areas

The Steeple Langford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2009 explains that conservation areas are designated in recognition of an area's special qualities, which are to be safeguarded as an important part of the south Wiltshire's heritage through strengthened planning controls and guidance. It is the accumulation of an area's positive architectural or historic attributes, rather than just the quality of its individual buildings. The Conservation Area's attributes include the landscape setting of the area, the groupings of traditional and listed buildings (such as Little Langford Farm), the scale, design, type and materials of the buildings; historic boundaries; landmarks, views and vistas; and the present and former pattern of activities or land uses.

A map of the Designated Conservation Areas is on Page 17.

Key conservation characteristics of the parish are described as:

- An attractive and tranquil riverside setting
- Extensive use of the local Chilmark type limestone
- Some mixed use of buff and red bricks in 18th century buildings
- Stone and cob boundary walls that tie groups of buildings together and define boundaries
- The distinctive regional vernacular tradition of chequer work walling; particularly stone and flint.
- Survival of key groups of historically important buildings: e.g. the churches, manor houses and former rectory, Little Langford Farm and mill houses.
- The visually striking lead broach spire to the All Saints Church which is seen from many views within the parish and surrounding countryside
- The churchyard at Saint Nicholas of Myra in Little Langford is managed as a wild flower meadow rather than simply cutting the grass



All Saints Church, Steeple Langford

- Important groups of trees that penetrate and punctuate the built areas
- The ever present ridge lines to the south and particularly the north that give the valley the sense of enclosure
- Interesting and unusual groups of cottages such as Church Cottages in Steeple Langford



- The character of the surrounding countryside, which has been shaped by farming and the shooting estates that have maintained wooded areas and hedgerows



There are no Scheduled Monuments in or immediately adjacent to the conservation areas.

3.5 Listed Buildings

The parish has many listed buildings and structures ranging from manor houses, farm buildings, walls and monuments in graveyards. Historic England maintains the record of listed buildings and structures, which can also be found at

www.historicalengland.org.uk.

The rules governing the management of listed buildings provide a further control mechanism when considering planning issues and hence helping to retain some of the character of the built environment and the conservation areas. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also sets out statutory



requirements for preservation of the character of listed buildings, and are separate from planning controls.

One of the most prominent and well known listed buildings is the All Saints Church, Steeple Langford, which has Grade I status and is in the heart of Steeple Langford village. The Church of Saint Nicholas of Myra in Little Langford is Grade II* status. There are Grade II listed buildings and structures at Steeple Langford, Hanging Langford, Little Langford, Ballington and Bathampton.

The listed buildings status maintains the richness of the built environment through not only preserving the character and style of buildings but also the views and vistas enjoyed by the whole parish community and visitors. They are also a living memorial to our rich history.

3.6 Architecture and Materials

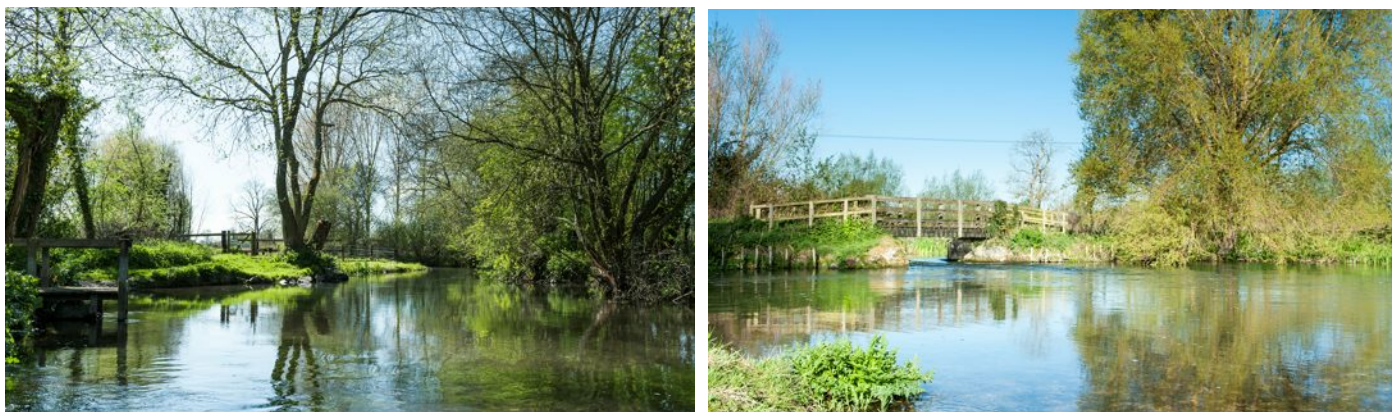
The following are guidelines to preserve the character of the local surroundings which also help to protect the future without being too onerous in restricting innovation in energy efficiency and use of materials from sustainable resources.

- Where development is permitted, either within or outside the conservation areas, the materials used to clad and roof buildings should match or at least blend in with neighbouring or nearby buildings. This is especially important in proximity to listed buildings. Recent examples of new houses using modern construction design, which have been clad in local limestone and flint, have successfully blended with older buildings without compromising the use of modern materials and building techniques that enhance energy efficiency.
- The underlying and ever present use of local Chilmark –type stone in houses, outbuildings, boundary walls, (examples being the former school and All Saints Church) is often combined with flint to form chequerwork.
- Roof lines should match the levels and material of neighbouring buildings.
- Any new development should include off road parking sufficient for the number of cars likely to be parked at properties of a particular size. (e.g. 4 bedroom 2/3 cars)
- Gardens that are fenced or hedged are preferred to open plan except in the Wirr, which has already been built as open plan frontage.
- Any new development should be designed to hide power and other cabling feeding into new properties thereby reducing the visible overhead network of cables.
- New housing should have pitched roofs rather than flat roofs.
- Windows should match the scale and proportion of neighbouring buildings.
- Buildings should be of similar size and spacing as existing dwellings (single, one point five and two storey buildings).
- New buildings should respect the existing townscape and layout of the villages.
- Consideration of the sewage and waste water disposal options and capacity since this has historically been a problem in the villages

4. Wider Conservation including and beyond Designated Conservation Areas

4.1 Setting

Most of the parish is in the Cranbourne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and much of the developed areas in the villages are within conservation areas. The River Wylde flows through the heart of the parish and with the meadows alongside the river form a flood plain, which is prone to flooding in wet winters as ground water levels rise. The flood plain provides a natural restriction on development in low lying areas and should not be built upon.



The River Wylde and its associated mill streams and carrier streams throughout the parish are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The River Wylde is a chalk stream, which is largely spring fed and is not a spate river. Other SSSIs within the parish include Yarnbury Castle, Little Langford Nature Reserve (under Grovely Wood) and parts of the Ballington Estate.

There is a finely balanced ecosystem, particularly in the river valley, where the considerate management of public access alongside conservation and protection of the wildlife is critical to the value and character of the parish.

No development should be permitted where the balance of this eco system may be damaged and lost forever.

See the maps illustrating the AONB and SSSIs on Page 18 and the Flood Plain and Conservation Areas on Page 17.

The lakes that lie alongside the river, between Steeple Langford and Hanging Langford are former gravel pits which are spring fed. One of the lakes is used for coarse fishing while the remainder form the Langfords Nature Reserve owned by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

There are areas of land and stretches of the river margins that are managed under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This scheme encourages conservation and the maintenance of delicate bio-diversity.

The views and vistas from within the villages and the surrounding areas of the Wylde Valley and the high ground to the north and south form much of the valued character of the parish. Wherever possible the compactness of the villages and settlements should be maintained and the surrounding countryside unspoilt by development.

5. Amenities

5.1 Recreation and Sports

The recreation ground in Steeple Langford is owned by the Parish Council on behalf of the parish and managed by the trustees of a registered charity for the provision and maintenance of sports and recreation facilities. There is a high quality cricket field, which attracts matches beyond the local leagues, space for a soccer pitch, a single tennis court, a children's play area and a sports club single storey building. The parish hall hosts table tennis and a youth club.

All of these sports and recreational activities are run by teams of very hard working volunteers who provide a service to the community, which is valued by the parish and beyond.

The River Wylde is recognised as a classic chalk stream with a good head of trout, grayling and other species of fish. There are several beats within the parish boundaries maintained by riparian owners. There is also the Langford Trust water (see 5.3) and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust provides fishing on the river through their reserve.

The C10 road that runs through Little Langford and Hanging Langford is part of Route 24 of the National Cycleways.

5.2 Rights of Way

A feature of the Langfords and the areas of open countryside in which it sits is the extensive myriad of Rights of Way that crisscross the parish and provide routes through and beyond to neighbouring parishes. Many of these routes can be traced back into distant history. These include byways, restricted byways, bridle paths, footpaths and permissive paths.

The preservation of this network of routes to which the public have access is regarded as essential to retaining the character of the parish.

A map of these routes is shown on Page 16.



5.3 Open Spaces and Public Access

Most of the farmland and managed estates cannot be regarded as open spaces due to private ownership, farming activity and game shooting. However, as can be seen from the map of the rights of way the access through these areas is greater than in many similar sized parishes.

The Langford Trust owns and manages a section of land and the river in the middle of the parish (between Duck Street and Maskell's Bridge) with the dual aim of conservation and public access. This Trust also provides access to river fishing at a much reduced cost particularly for local youth wishing to learn the arts of fly fishing.

The Upper path alongside the river between Hanging Langford and Steeple Langford is a popular walking area.

The recreation ground is a much valued amenity for residents of all age groups, which is an open space except on the sports pitches during games.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust owns and manages the nature reserve based on the spring fed lakes formed from the old gravel pits and Salisbury District Angling Club provide fishing on the other remaining lake.

5.4 Allotments

There are allotments in Steeple Langford and Hanging Langford.

The Steeple Langford allotments are on land bequeathed to the parish in the early 20th century for use in the relief of the poor and needy of the parish. These allotments are currently run as a charitable trust and the site is managed by trustees and includes individual allotment plots for residents to hire and a community orchard planted in 2013.



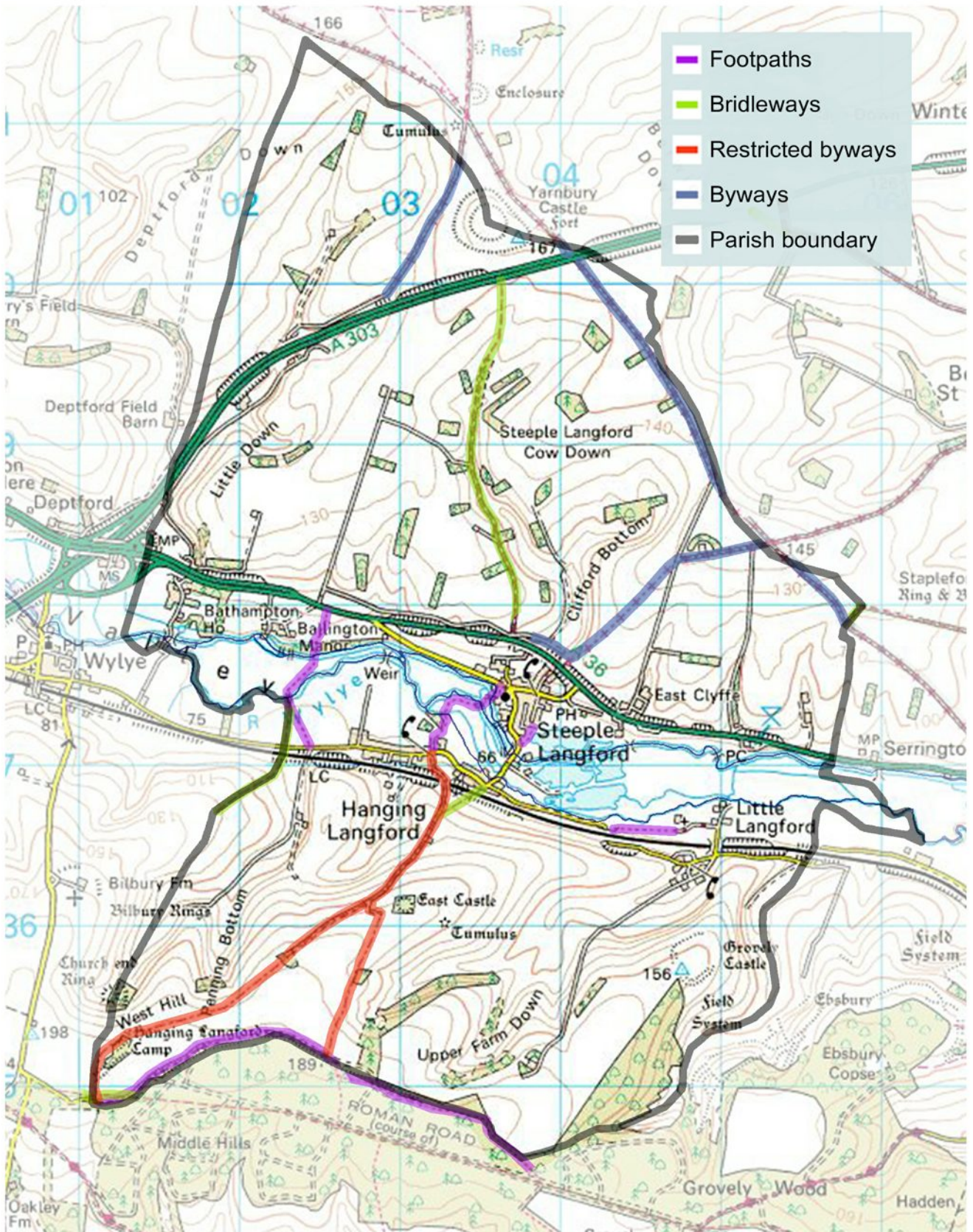
The Hanging Langford allotments are owned and managed by the Parish Council and plots are available through annual rent by residents of the parish and residents of neighbouring parishes should there be insufficient uptake from Langfords' residents.

Conclusion

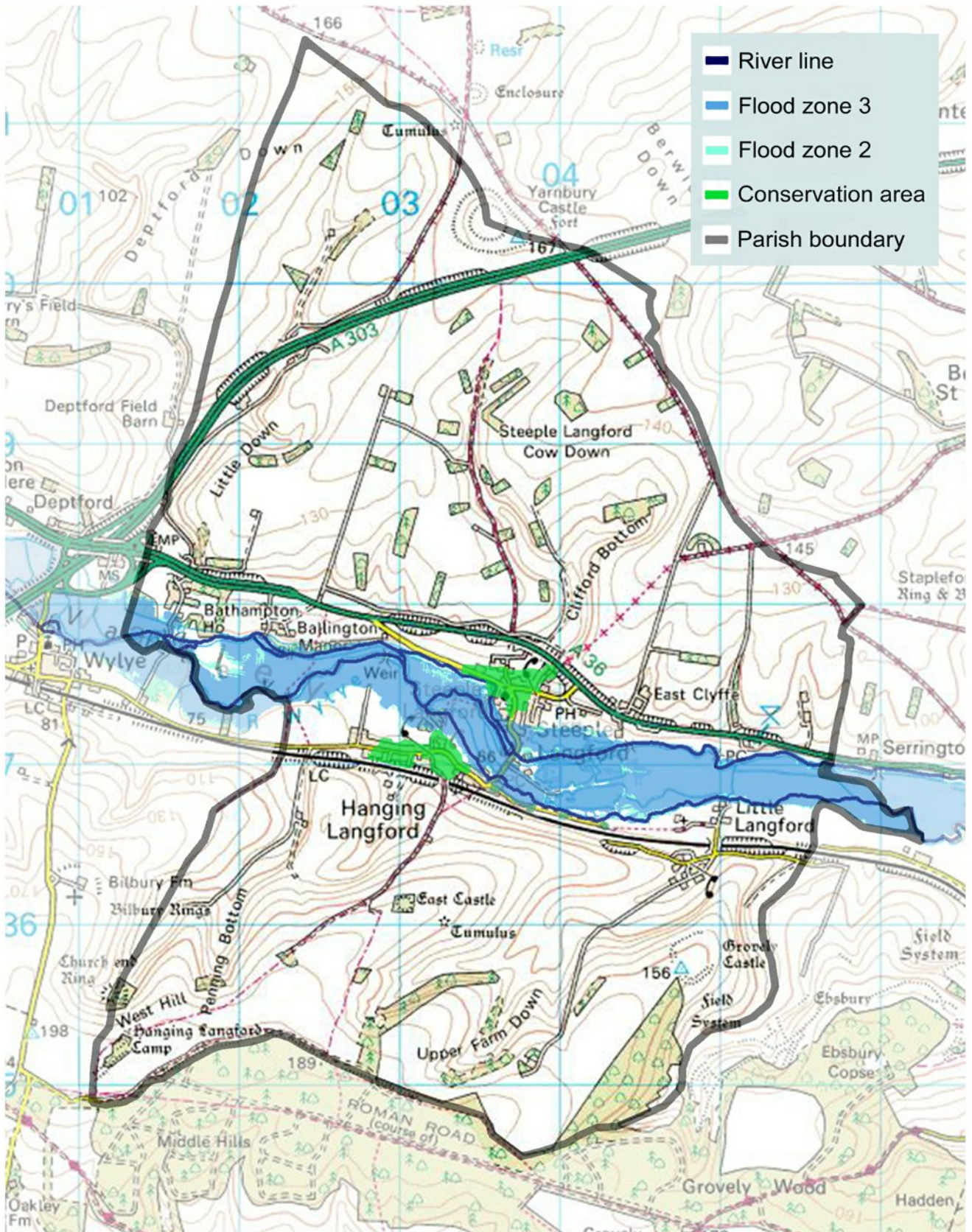
This document should be used to help inform the development of the parish over the coming years with a view to enhancing the excellent features identified and encouraging change, which supports a viable and sustainable community.

The wish is to retain the best whilst improving the weaknesses.

6.1 Rights of Way

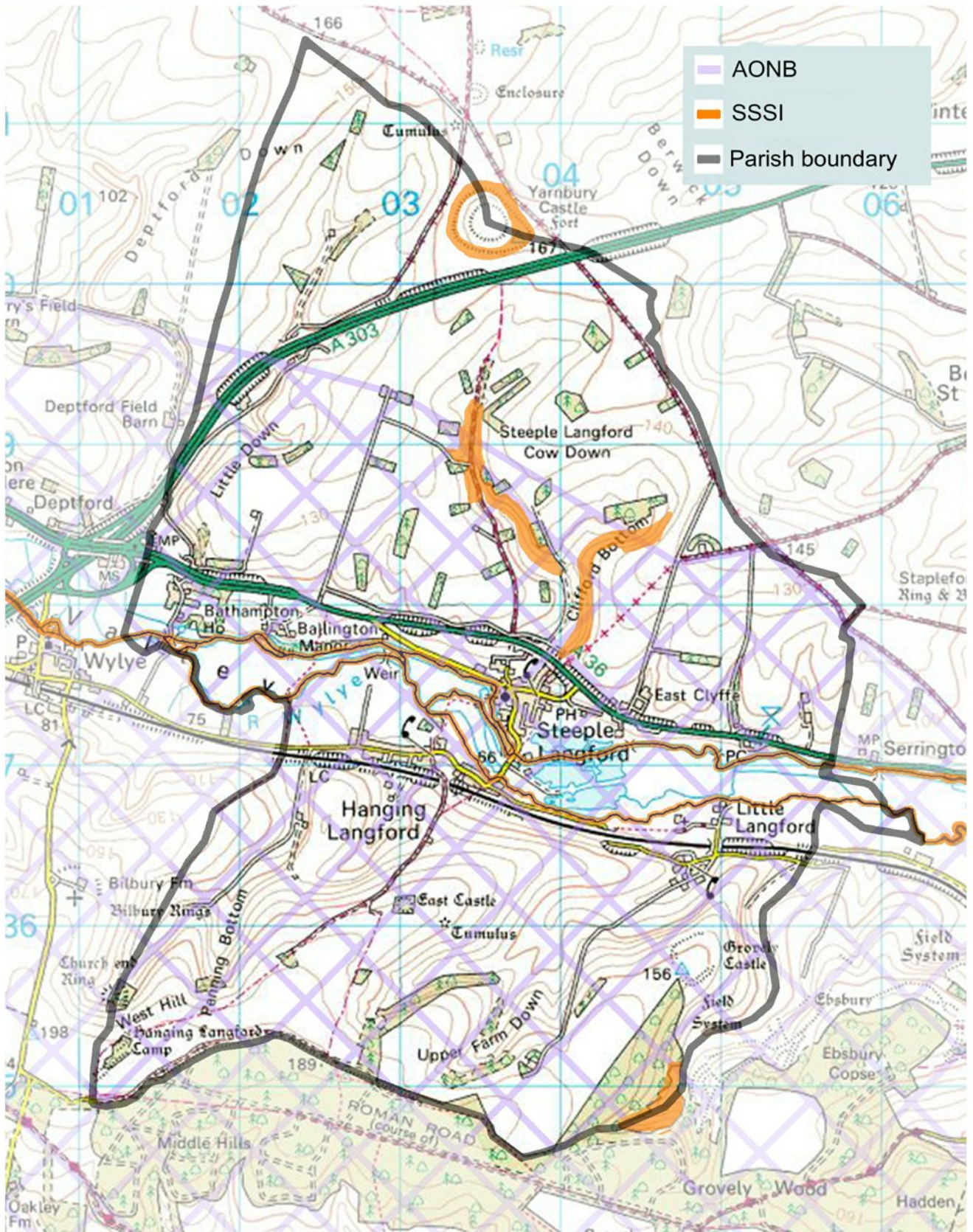


6.2 Flood Risk and Conservation Areas



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6.3 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest



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