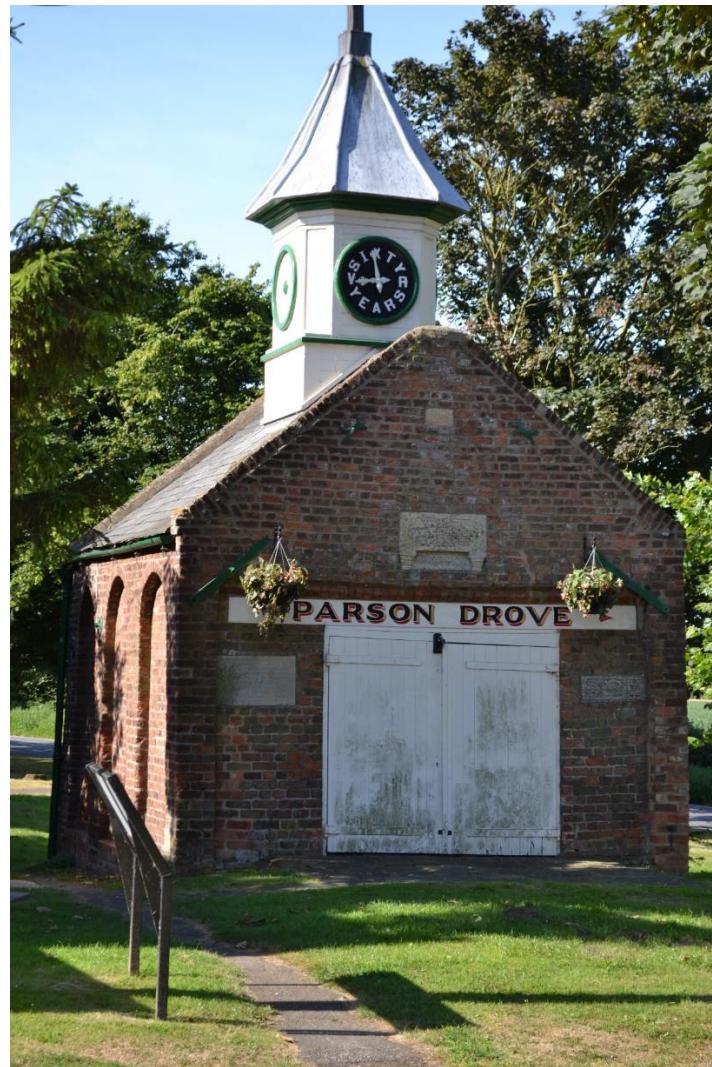
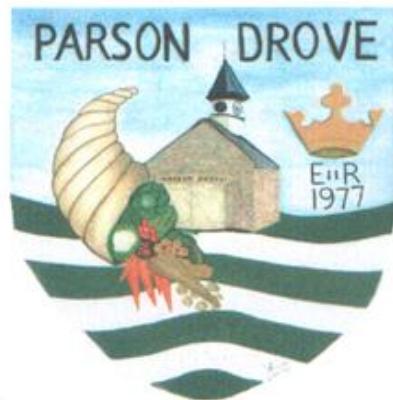


# **Parson Drove Neighbourhood Development Plan**

## **2019 to 2032**

Referendum Version



# **Parson Drove Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**2019 to 2032**

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## 1 Introduction

1.1. The Parson Drove Neighbourhood Development Plan has been prepared under the rights conferred on local communities under the Localism Act 2011. The Plain English guide to this Act states that

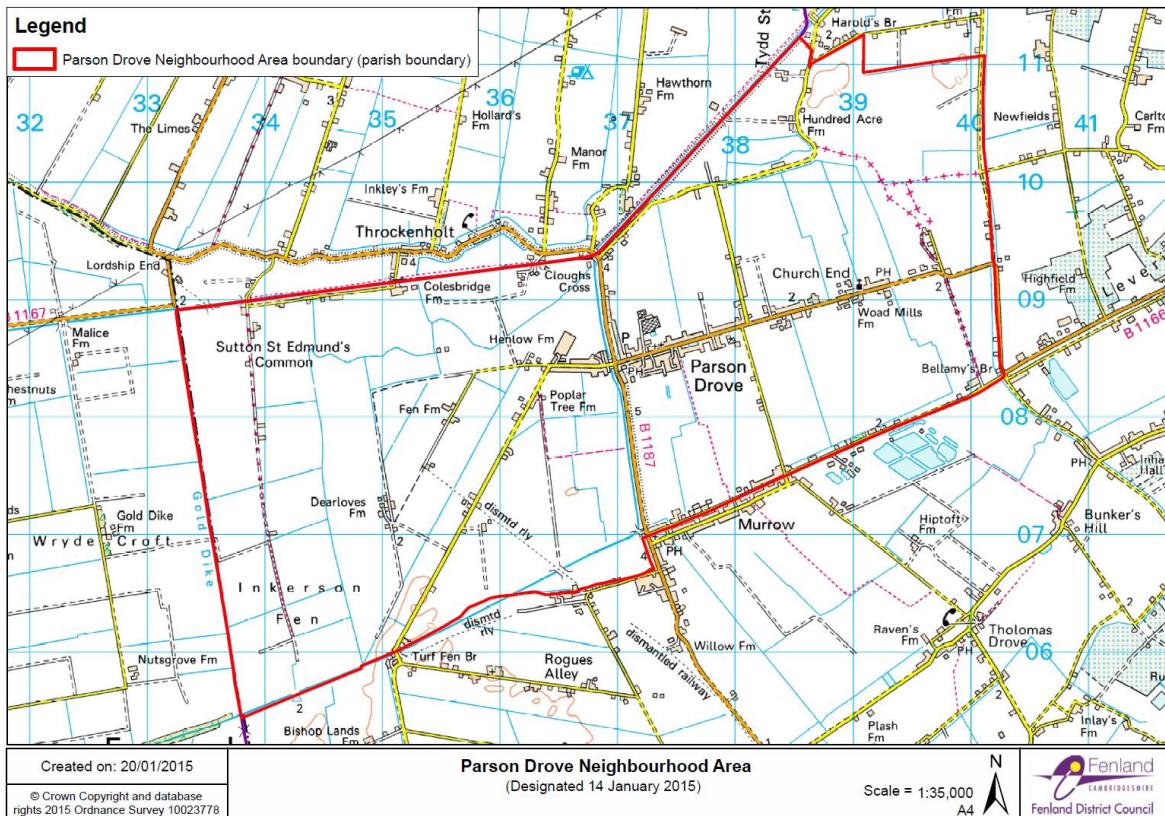
*Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government thinks that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live. The Act introduces a new right for communities to draw up a neighbourhood plan.*

*Neighbourhood planning will allow communities, both residents, employees and business, to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like. These plans can be very simple and concise, or go into considerable detail where people want.*

1.2. Parson Drove and Church End are both popular settlements, proud of their cohesion as communities, retaining many families who have lived in the parish for generations while welcoming and absorbing a significant number of new residents over the years.

1.3. Parson Drove Parish Council applied to Fenland District Council to designate the whole of the parish of Parson Drove as a neighbourhood area. The application was determined by Planning Committee on 14 January 2015: the whole of the parish was designated as Parson Drove Neighbourhood Area.

**Map 1: Parson Drove Neighbourhood Area**



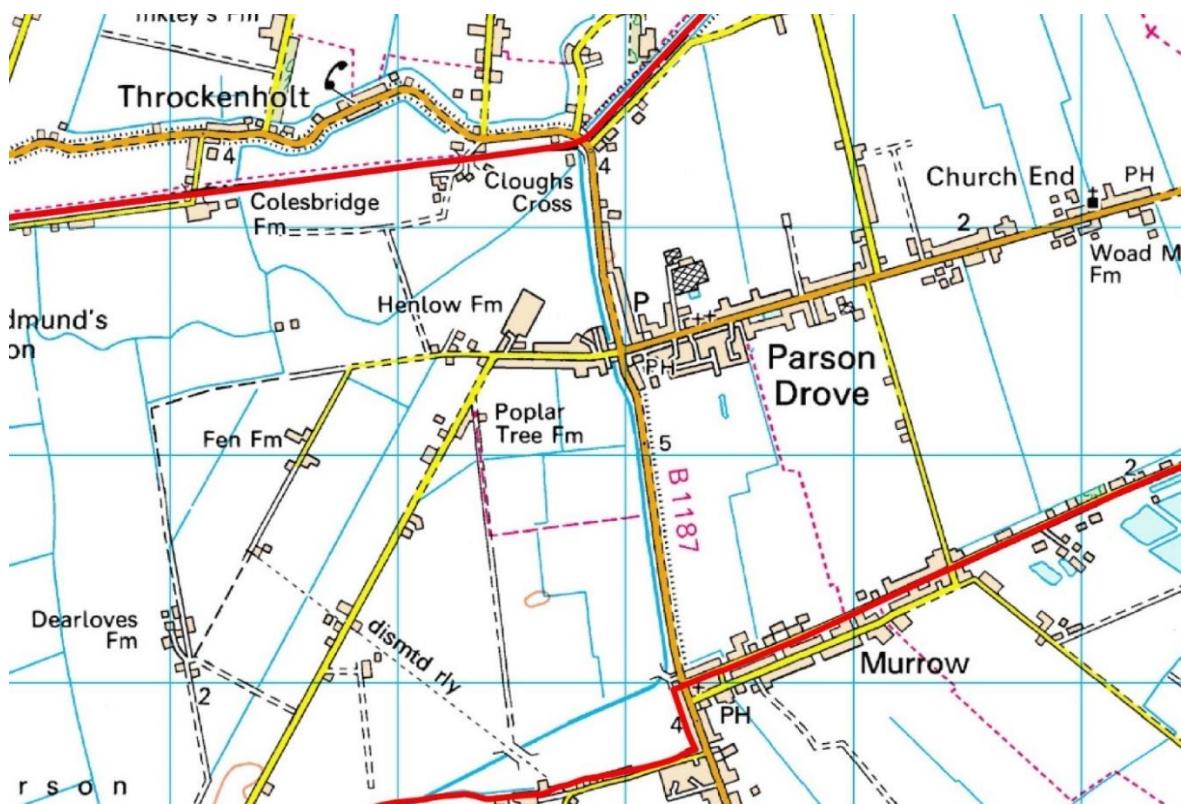
1.4. Because our cohesion and community spirit is a rare and important aspect of life in Parson Drove parish this Neighbourhood Development Plan aims to maintain growth that sustains our community but not to a degree that it is disproportionate to the current size of the parish.

1.5. Because we believe that the generation of housing must be led by demand, we have not been prescriptive about the suitability of specific sites or types of housing but rather we have set out principles in the policies that will guide developers or self-builders on how to successfully develop schemes in the parish of Parson Drove.

## 2 Place Setting

2.1 The parish of Parson Drove is situated approximately 5 miles west of Wisbech. The historic town of Wisbech, with its river port, is known as The Capital of the Fens and is in the district of Fenland under the umbrella of Fenland District Council, which in turn is in the county of Cambridgeshire. The parish contains two main settlements, Parson Drove and Church End, together with a number of small clusters of housing and several farms and a small part of the village of Murrow.

**Map 2: Parson Drove, Church End and Murrow**



2.2 Historic maps show that the original Parson Drove village was what is now called Church End while the centre of the village now known as Parson Drove was called Swan Gull as shown in Appendix B. The historic buildings in the parish are generally built of local brick with slate roofs although the Swan pub is partly constructed of stone.

2.3 Parson Drove village is close to Throckenholt to the north which lies in Lincolnshire and the Cambridgeshire village of Murrow to the south, and the whole parish is situated in flat fertile farmland which was created by major drainage projects which commenced in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The drainage channels provide excellent coarse fishing and are utilised by clubs from far and wide.



2.4. Parson Drove parish has a population of approximately 1,200 and has many facilities including a surgery, primary school, village hall, playing field, village green, Post Office, butchers shop, three churches and three public houses centred on Parson Drove village. The village hosts a number of clubs and voluntary groups including the Women's Institute, Over 60's Club, Football Club, Bowls Club, Mothers and Toddlers and Playgroup. It also hosts a Classic and Custom Car, Bike and Trike show every year that raises a significant amount of money for charity. Our parish has a strong community spirit and a low crime rate.



2.5. Parson Drove parish has a long history being mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The historic fabric of Parson Drove village is preserved and celebrated in the Conservation Area where there are ten Grade II Listed Buildings as well as a number of notable trees. Samuel Pepys stayed at the Swan Inn in 1663 and local benefactor John Peck built the Cage in 1829 as a village lock-up. The last working woad mill in Britain was in Church End - it closed as recently as 1910.



2.6 Church End is graced by the medieval church of St John the Baptist, the north aisle of which has a 13th-century doorway and 14th-century windows. The noble nave arcades and the west tower, with its superb stone-panelled arch and vaulted ceiling, are 15th-century.



2.7 Both main settlements have grown steadily since the war and the parish is changing from a farming community with residents generally working locally, to one which includes many professions with some residents commuting to work elsewhere. New development has tended to utilise plots with existing road frontages, although there are two significant estates on the south side of Main Road: Ingham Hall Gardens and John Bends Way both of which are in Parson Drove village.



2.8 The census results available are at ward level and combine results for Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary. The figures are however useful in giving an indication of the growth in population between 2001 and 2011. In 2011 there were 3087 residents of the Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary ward aged between 16 and 64, 2,253 (73.9%) of whom were economically active with 169 (7.5%) unemployed in line with the national average. This compares to figures from the 2001 census which shows 2,939 residents of the ward aged between 16 and 74 of whom 1,851 (63%) were economically active with 89 (4.8%) of those being unemployed.

2.9 Although these figures do not provide an exact match due to the age selection offered, if the ‘economically active’ figure is taken as the basis for comparison, then the population of the ward grew by 21.7% from the 2001 baseline up to 2011. It is reasonable to assume that Parson Drove parish grew at this rate during the same period, and will continue to grow.

### **3. Policy Context for the Plan**

3.1. The policy context within which the plan has been developed is established by:

- The National Planning Policy Framework, which was published in March 2018.
- The Planning Practice Guidance which was launched in 2014 and is regularly updated.”
- The Fenland Local Plan which was adopted on 8th May 2014.

3.2. The Parson Drove Neighbourhood Development Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Development Plan policies should be read alongside the Local Plan policies as complimentary parts of the Development Plan, providing the framework for local expectations of development.

3.3. Parson Drove village is classified as a Limited Growth Village in the Fenland Settlement Hierarchy Study 2013 and Local Plan while Church End is classified as an ‘Other Village’. Thus the two main settlements within the parish are separate settlements.



## **4 Plan Development**

4.1. Parson Drove Parish Council applied to Fenland District Council to designate the whole of the parish of Parson Drove as a neighbourhood area. The application was determined by Planning Committee on 14 January 2015: the whole of the parish was designated as Parson Drove Neighbourhood Area.

4.2. The Parson Drove Neighbourhood Development Plan has been produced by a working group of volunteers sponsored by the Parish Council. The evidence base was generated from public meetings, previous questionnaires relevant to the Parson Drove Village Plan, a formal questionnaire delivered to each dwelling in the parish and a summary of the results of the questionnaire that was also delivered to each dwelling. The results were also presented at an open meeting and this document has been available for comment from all residents.

4.3. The form of the questionnaire was scrutinised by a Fenland DC officer to ensure that all questions were open questions. All her recommendations were included in the final document which was distributed in October 2015.

4.4 There were 120 responses to the questionnaire representing a 22% return rate. Due to this satisfactory return rate and the very strong majority opinions that it revealed the Parish Council is assured that this Neighbourhood Development Plan reflects the wishes of the majority of the residents of Parson Drove parish who have chosen to involve themselves in creating this plan.

4.5. Our plan has been developed in the light of those responses, but only covers areas where we wish to add to the provisions of the Fenland Local Plan. The preservation of our high-grade agricultural land for farming, for example, is already strongly supported by LP12 Part A(i) and we have not included any additional controls in our policies.

## 5. Overall vision for the Development of Parson Drove Parish

**Parson Drove parish will maintain its vibrant community through proportionate growth which delivers a range of housing, retains or enhances employment opportunities within the parish, whilst protecting the rural setting of the settlements within it. Local people will have opportunities to live and work in the place they grew up in and will be well-served by local services which will remain important and thriving assets within the community.**

5.1. This vision is supported by feedback from the local community which strongly supports protection of our parish's rural setting, with high grade farming land retained for farming, and open fields remaining between Parson Drove village and Church End.

5.2. While a majority of villagers who responded to consultation would prefer no further growth in the parish, this is generally driven by a fear of large-scale developments being approved on farm land which would be disproportionate to the size of existing settlements. The Parish Council is confident that our vision for proportionate growth driven by small-scale development as covered by our policies will reassure parishioners and gain their support for continued but sustainable growth.

5.3. The results of our consultation also demonstrated that parishioners value local amenities, and continued steady growth will also help maintain our school, post office, surgery and pubs through increased demand for their services.



## **6. The Intent of Our Policies**

6.1. We want our parish to welcome everyone irrespective of ethnicity, age, gender, physical ability or economic status.

6.2. We wish to improve footpaths throughout the parish to assist residents with limited mobility including those in wheelchairs to gain full access to village facilities. There has already been a significant improvement to the footpaths along Main Road due to works carried out by developers as they construct new dwellings. We want this approach to be extended to cover roads with very poor pedestrian facilities such as Back Road Murrow where any proposed new development will be required to contribute to improvements where these are practicable.

6.3. We wish to create positive engagement with parishioners and the Parish Council to ensure that there is an appropriate level of consultation on decisions that impact on our local built environment.

6.4 We wish to maintain a living community within the parish by encouraging new residents to join us at a sustainable level. This has benefits in a variety of ways: in particular to maintain our population with additional residents who will be welcomed within our existing community. There is evidence that this balance is being maintained when a growing population continues to access local amenities. For example The Charity Commission's 2004 report on village halls recognises that

*"ageing rural populations, lack of interest among younger people or among new residents in commuter villages have been identified as problems for some rural village halls and community centres"*

6.5 Our response to this challenge is to attract enough new residents to grow our current population but at a sustainable level that also counters the potential for a growing lack of interest in community life and community assets where a population grows too fast to be absorbed into our community.

6.6 Fear of crime is also a significant consideration affected by population growth according to the website 'Community-Safety.Info':

*"Fear of crime can also deter people from using public facilities (parks and open spaces) and public transport; and some groups are particularly affected. Black and minority ethnic people's fear of crime is higher than that of white people, some women will not travel after dark, and parents restrict their children's usage of public transport."*

The Home Office archived toolkit gives the following definition of a "Low crime, low fear environment"

*"Those areas where fear of crime and crime is low are the ideal which all other areas need to work towards. Awareness of crime issues is healthy as it ensures that people continue to take common sense precautions and do not become complacent."*

*An example of this type of area could be a remote rural area where the community is small and has a very high social capital.*

It also offers the following advice:

*Individuals should be encouraged to increase their social capital and reduce their fear of crime. We need to encourage people to become more involved in their communities because it is a key way for them to know what is happening and then re-engage accurate perceptions about crime and disorder. Increased social capital will give individuals a greater sense of self-empowerment, which will increase their feelings of security.”*

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6.7 If you put all of this together it is clear that maintaining moderate growth which sustains our social capital will in turn help maintain community cohesion and a low fear of crime especially amongst those who feel vulnerable due to age, gender or for other reasons.

6.8. The local consultation underpinning our Plan demonstrates a strong desire within our parish to maintain a sustainable community through continued local employment opportunities, particularly through the continued use of high-grade land for farming and food production and by directly encouraging the continued existence of shops and other village amenities, which can only happen if we maintain steady growth in the population.

6.9 We believe that the growth in our population within the reasonable controls proposed by our Development Plan will ensure that the character of the village and its social capital can be sustained whilst remaining a welcoming environment for new residents.



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## **7 Policies**

This Development Plan contains 5 policies:

### **7.1. Policy 1 Housing Growth**

7.1.1. There are two main settlements within the parish – Parson Drove and Church End. Policy LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 allows for dwelling growth in Parson Drove village of 33 dwellings and 7 dwellings in Church End (10% growth of each village) without the need for demonstration of community support. In Church End this figure has been substantially surpassed with 20 dwellings having been built or granted permission and in Parson Drove village 23 dwellings have been built or granted permission with a remaining allowance of 10 dwellings under the Local Plan policy.

7.1.2 This neighbourhood plan seeks to raise the growth threshold proposed within the Fenland Local Plan for Parson Drove parish by increasing the baseline growth for Parson Drove village to 66 dwellings (20% growth in built stock since April 2011). For Church End no further development should be permitted unless strong local support can be demonstrated in line with Local Plan policy LP12.

7.1.3 Because Parson Drove parish only contains a small proportion of Murrow village's housing stock this plan does not include proposals for Murrow village as a whole. It does however apply to Back Road Murrow and land to the north included in Parson Drove parish.

7.1.4 As discussed in section 5 above, this increase in the growth threshold contained within the Fenland Local Plan would appear to go against the results of consultation where a majority of respondents would prefer no further growth. The Parish Council is however confident that it can gain majority support for steady growth provided there are controls on the size of each scheme and a requirement for demonstrable local support for larger schemes.

7.1.5 This confidence is based on an assessment that the parishioners are generally afraid of the consequences of large-scale schemes within our small community rather than of continued modest growth. The responses during consultation reflected concerns about an application lodged with Fenland for a large number of new homes to be built on farmland within Parson Drove village. This concern has since receded.

#### **Policy 1: Housing Growth**

##### **Parson Drove village**

Parson Drove village will be allowed to grow by 20% in number of dwellings from the April 2011 baseline of 327 dwellings (66 dwellings between 2011 and 2031).

If a proposal within or on the edge of Parson Drove village would, in combination with other development built and granted permission since April 2011, exceed this growth threshold then the proposal should have demonstrable evidence of clear local community support for the scheme, generated via a thorough and proportionate pre-application community consultation exercise. If, despite this consultation exercise, demonstrable evidence of support or objection cannot be determined, then there will be a requirement for support from the Parish Council.

##### **Church End**

As outlined above, Church End has already exceeded a 20% increase in number of dwellings built or granted permission from the 2011 baseline. Therefore, any proposals for new dwellings in Church End must have demonstrable evidence of clear

local community support for the scheme, generated via a thorough and proportionate pre-application community consultation exercise. If, despite this consultation exercise, demonstrable evidence of support or objection cannot be determined, then there will be a requirement for support from the Parish Council.

## 7.2. Policy 2: Scale of Housing Development

7.2.1. The purpose of Policy 2 is to establish a threshold related to the number of homes in any proposed development beyond which community/Parish Council support is needed. This will encourage smaller developments while leaving open the possibility that a larger development could be approved providing there is local support for the scheme. Larger schemes above this threshold that do not demonstrate this local approval and support from the Parish Council would be rejected.

### **Policy 2: Scale of Housing Development**

**Proposals involving the creation of new dwellings will be supported providing that these will be of an appropriate scale for the parish, typically fewer than 5 dwellings. Exceptionally, sites proposing 5 or more dwellings may be considered appropriate where:**

- the proposal is accompanied by clear demonstrable evidence of positive community support for the scheme generated via a thorough and proportionate pre-application community consultation exercise; and
- it is supported by the Parish Council.

## 7.3. Policy 3: Affordable Housing

7.3.1. The purpose of policy 3 is to permit the development of affordable homes on exception sites where development would otherwise not be permitted provided that the affordable housing is allocated to prioritise applicants with local connections.

7.3.2. An example of such a scheme is in the Church End settlement where an exception site has provided 12 affordable homes in John Peck Close.

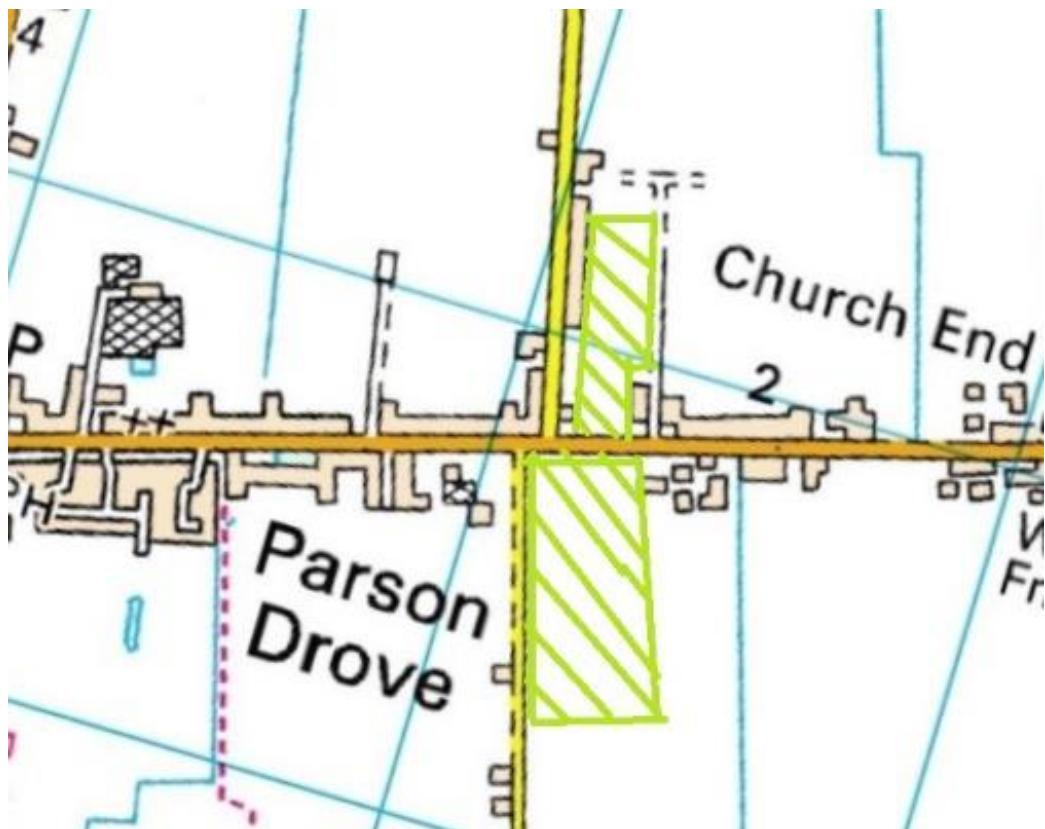
### **Policy 3: Affordable Housing**

**Permission may be granted for development of exception sites located in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of Parson Drove or infill sites within Church End, where the sole purpose of that development is to provide affordable homes. All affordable dwellings proposed on a rural exception site shall be allocated in accordance with a cascade which prioritises future occupants with a local connection**

#### **7.4. Policy 4: Maintaining Separation between Parson Drove and Church End**

7.4.1. Parson Drove village and Church End are separate communities within the parish and in keeping with the results of our consultation with parishioners this separation must be maintained. This means that new buildings will not be permitted to be constructed between Silvers Lane and Sealeys Lane, both of which are in Parson Drove village, up to the existing dwellings at the west end of Church End. This is further explained in Appendix B.

**Map 3: Area of Separation**



#### **Policy 4: Maintaining Separation between Parson Drove and Church End**

**No new dwellings or non-residential buildings other than permitted development will be approved in the Area of Separation (as illustrated by Map 3) between Parson Drove village and Church End from the east side of Sealeys Lane and Silvers Lane up to the existing dwellings at the west end of Church End in order to preserve the separation between the two settlements and to retain views over the countryside.**

**The “exception” terms of Policy 3 do not apply to any land within the Area of Separation.**

## **7.5 Policy 5: Road and Pedestrian Safety**

7.5.1 Improvements to footpaths along their frontage has been an important feature of several recent developments within the parish especially in Main Road Parson Drove. This has not however been the case across the parish and development along Back Road Murrow for example has not been supported by adequate footpaths and road improvements (see Appendix C). Policy 5 aims to prevent this issue in future developments within the parish.

### **Policy 5: Road and Pedestrian Safety**

**Proposals for new dwellings and non-residential buildings will be supported provided adequate footways and road widths exist along the site frontage(s) or the developer makes provision for these, unless it can be demonstrated to be impractical due to physical design constraints or would be of detriment to the safety and convenience of all users of the highway.**

## **Appendix A**

### **The Working Group**

The working group was established by the Parish Council in late 2014 and although various volunteers were involved from time to time the core group comprised the following residents of Parson Drove:

Gavin Booth              Chair

Kate Rosier              Secretary

Anne Adams

Gerald Van Daalen

Colin Britt

Meetings were held generally every month in the Cage on the village green.

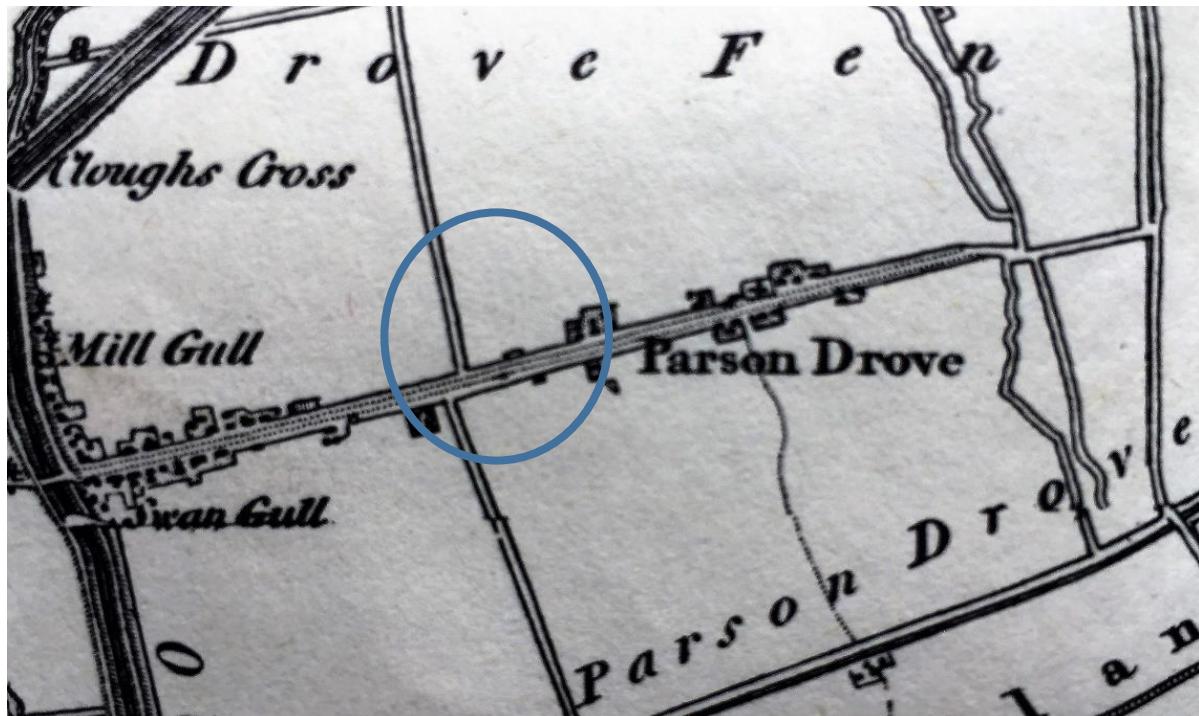
All of the work involved in consulting locally, preparing issuing and collecting the questionnaire, collating and assessing information as well as the drafting of the plan was carried out by the Working Group.

The group consulted with Cambridgeshire Acre and Emma Naylor from Fenland District Council and received extremely helpful input from them as the generation of the plan progressed. It is, however, worth emphasising that in the spirit of the Localism Act this development plan has been prepared entirely by local residents who have volunteered their time to ensure that Parson Drove continues to grow in a manner that retains the essential character and community spirit of their village.

## Appendix B

### Parson Drove and Church End

Church End and Parson Drove have always been separate communities as can be seen by historic maps. In the Victorian map below 'Parson Drove' is the modern Church End while 'Swan Gull' is the modern Parson Drove:



In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century this separation continued with the land between the settlements being largely dedicated to agriculture.

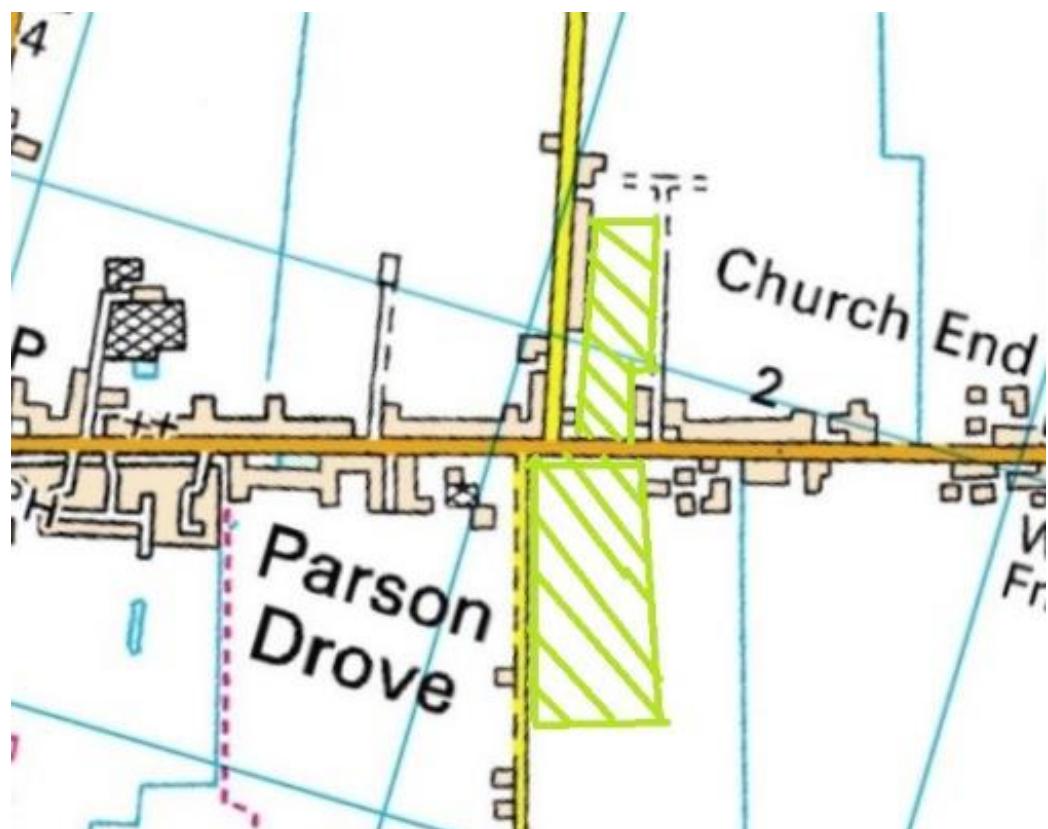
Parson Drove and Church End are listed as separate villages in Fenland's Settlement Hierarchy January 2013, however in the past 10 years, ribbon development along Main Road has steadily eroded the space. The first photograph below shows new development in Church End on the south side of Main Road viewed from Silvers Lane looking east; the second photograph shows new development in Parson Drove viewed from the same spot looking west.



The next photograph below shows the space between Meadow View and development in Church End on the north side of Main Road and to the east of Sealeys Lane.



This remaining space between the settlements comprises only a few hundred metres shown hatched in green on the plan below, and this separation must not be eroded any further.



There are strong reasons for stopping any further development of the land between Parson Drove and Church End:

- These two settlements are classified as separate villages with different places on the settlement hierarchy – Parson Drove is a Limited Growth Village while Church End is classified as an ‘Other Village’.
- Consultation within the two communities showed a very strong desire to retain this gap with 82% of respondents wishing to keep the open fields between Parson Drove and Church End.
- There are three listed buildings in Church End. The views of two of them, Yucca Farm (Grade II) and the Church of John the Baptist (Grade II\*), will be directly affected by any further development on the north side of Main Road.

## **Appendix C**

### **Back Road Murrow**

There has been a significant amount of development along Back Road Murrow even though the road itself is only wide enough for a single vehicle and there is no footpath. Vehicles passing one another use the verge with the resulting ruts and puddles as can be seen in the photograph below.



There is generally room to establish a footpath but developers do not provide even a section of footpath covering the frontage of the new homes they have built.