Neighbourhood Priorities Statement for Burlescombe Parish

Introduction

This Neighbourhood Priorities Statement (NPS) sets out a long-term vision for Burlescombe Parish to 2050. It reflects the views of local residents and businesses and has been informed by community engagement, evidence from previous resident surveys, as well as a dedicated Housing and Development Survey undertaken in September and October 2026.

The purpose of the NPS is to identify the priorities that matter most to local people and to help ensure that future planning decisions take account of the needs, aspirations and concerns of the parish.

The evidence demonstrates strong support for protecting the parish's rural character, countryside, biodiversity and heritage. Residents also place significant importance on infrastructure, with a clear expectation that any future development should be accompanied by improvements to roads, drainage, healthcare, broadband and transport services.

The community is not calling for significant housing growth. However, there is support for carefully managed development that addresses local housing needs, particularly affordable homes for local people, smaller homes for younger households and homes suitable for older residents wishing to remain in the parish.

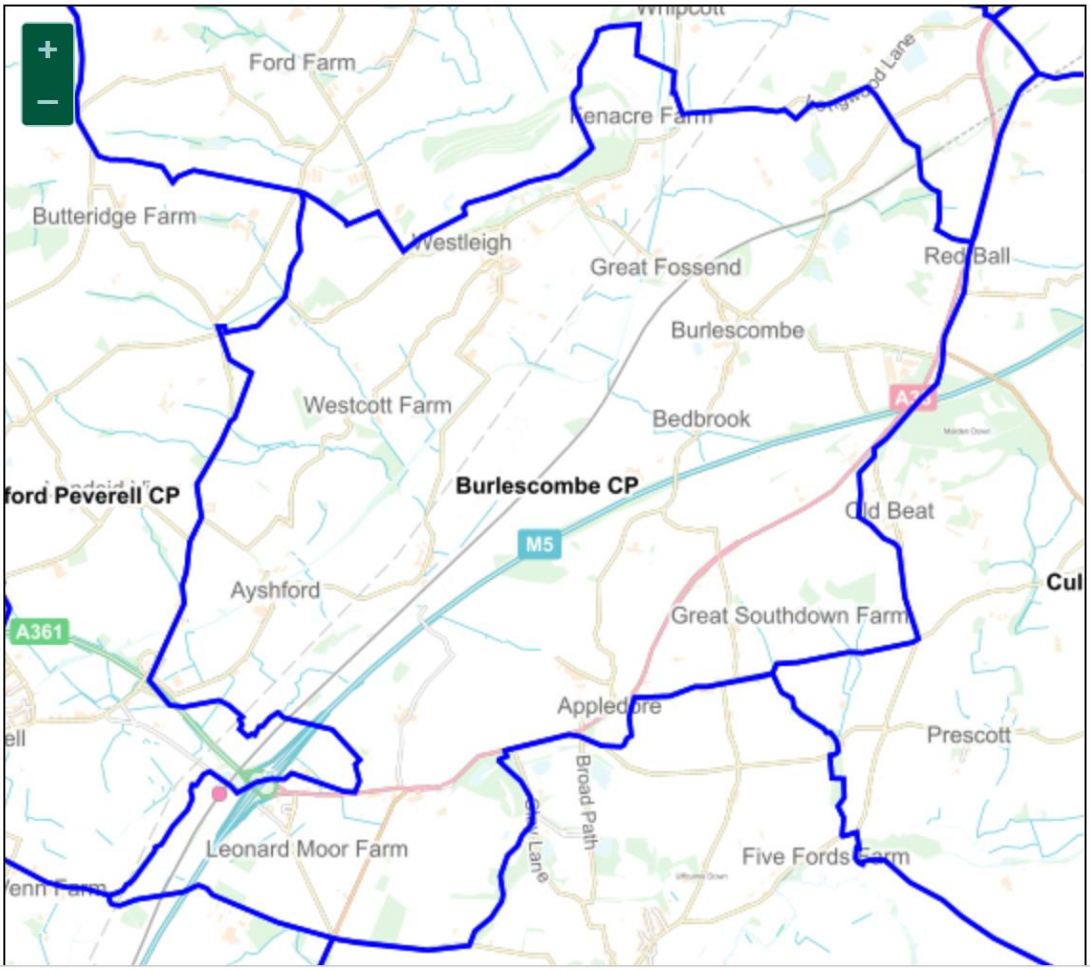
Burlescombe today

Burlescombe Parish covers across a wide area in Eastern Mid Devon, near the border with Somerset. The area encompasses two villages (Burlescombe and Westleigh), several hamlets, numerous farms and more isolated properties, as well as a large working limestone quarry owned by Holcim, a large Swiss corporation. It is home to around 1,000 people – a mixture of older people, families, younger couples/individuals, as well as working farms and other businesses. It is a closeknit rural community where people often rely on and support each other.

The Grand Western Canal Country Park forms an important part of the parish landscape and the area benefits from proximity to Junction 27 of the M5 and Tiverton Parkway railway station. However, despite these strategic transport connections, local residents remain heavily dependent on private vehicles due to limited public transport options and the absence of local services within the villages themselves.

The Parish Council’s survey showed that 96% of respondents primarily travel by private vehicle and that residents consider parking, transport accessibility and road infrastructure to be essential considerations for future development.

There is limited housing availability, meaning people often have to move out of the parish to find a home that suits their needs – older people to have easier access to essential facilities and younger people to find a home that suits their budget and needs. Many of the homes are old and inefficient, often relying on deliveries of oil, gas canisters and/or logs for heating.



Key data

Parish Overview	
Area	***To be completed ahead of publication***
Number of homes	
Settlements of [>50 homes]	
New homes built since 2010	
How many of those homes were affordable? (%)	
Commitments (homes with consent not yet built)	
Households on Homechoice with Local Connection	
Population	
Over 65s	
Working Age (18-65)	
Under 18	
Is there an existing Neighbourhood Plan?	

Our priorities

The lists below set out the priorities that have been identified by residents. They are separated into planning priorities, that can influence planning policies, and community priorities, other projects that are important to the parish that can be addressed in other ways.

Planning priorities

1. **Protect important landscapes, green spaces and heritage**

The parish wishes to protect:

- The Grand Western Canal corridor.
- The Old Railway Line.
- The Canonsleigh Abbey area.
- Burlescombe and Westleigh recreation spaces and play areas.
- Important agricultural land and green spaces that contribute to the rural setting and separation of settlements.
- Important wildlife habitats, trees, hedgerows and biodiversity assets.

2. **Infrastructure first**

The community is vehement that infrastructure must come before development, as it is already insufficient. Any future development that takes place should be preceded by improvements to:

- Water supply and drainage.
- Sewage infrastructure.
- Healthcare provision.
- Education capacity.
- Broadband and digital connectivity.
- Road infrastructure.
- Public transport services.
- Walking and cycling routes, particularly to nearby towns and villages.

3. **Housing and location strategy**

Residents do not support significant housing expansion. Any new housing should:

- Meet identified local needs.
- Prioritise affordable homes for local people, including smaller homes suitable for younger people and accessible homes suitable for older residents.
- Be delivered through infill, brownfield redevelopment or carefully considered edge-of-settlement opportunities where appropriate.
- Include sufficient parking (including not reducing existing provision for other homes).
- Incorporate energy-efficient design and sustainability features.
- Reflect local building styles and materials.
- Include adequate garden/outdoor space.
- Be predominantly two storeys or lower.
- Protect or enhance biodiversity.

4. **Local economy**

The parish supports sustainable local business growth and rural enterprise, while protecting residents and the environment from negative impacts.

Priorities include:

- Reliable broadband and digital infrastructure.
- Support for existing local businesses.
- Opportunities for home working and small business growth.
- Retention and enhancement of community facilities.
- Encouraging investment that strengthens local services, employment opportunities and quality of life for residents.
- Ensuring the impact of local businesses is monitored and managed, particularly in relation to water quality, air quality and road safety.

Community priorities

Community engagement and research has highlighted priorities for the community that are connected to planning, and should be considered alongside the above priorities.

1. **Roads and Safety**
   - Address potholes and road condition issues.
   - Explore opportunities for traffic calming.
   - Improve road safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
   - Consider lower or advisory speed limits where appropriate.

2. **Retain and enhance community facilities.**
   - Ensure the few facilities in the parish (e.g. play parks and villages halls) are protected.
   - Improve facilities, particularly for young people and teenagers.

3. **Responsible stewardship of nature and heritage**
   - Look after the assets that enhance the character and quality of life in our community. Including the canal, Canonsleigh Abbey and the Old Railway Line.
   - Protect water quality.
   - Support biodiversity projects including tree planting and habitat creation.
   - Improve footpaths and recreational access.

4. **Digital connectivity**
   - Improve broadband reliability and mobile coverage.
   - Support infrastructure that enables remote working and local enterprise.

The vision

What the people of Burlescombe Parish value most

The Parish of Burlescombe has a strong sense of community, a rich heritage to protect, and a deep connection to the natural environment.

Residents cherish:

- Community spirit: A warm and friendly environment, supported by parishioners helping each other out and volunteering to fill the gaps where local services are insufficient or not available.
- The open countryside: wildlife habitats and agricultural landscape, and separation between settlements that give the parish its distinctive identity.
- Green spaces and heritage sites: The parish treasures its natural and historic assets, including the Grand Western Canal, the Old Railway Line, Canonsleigh Abbey and the extensive network of public footpaths.
- Preservation: Conserving wildlife and biodiversity to ensure the natural environment retains its inherent value.

Vision for the future

Looking ahead to 2050, Burlescombe Parish envisions a future that balances progress with preservation, ensuring the area remains a welcoming and sustainable place for all generations.

Future development is supported by appropriate infrastructure improvements and will contribute positively to the long-term sustainability of the community. Roads, drainage, broadband, healthcare provision and transport connectivity will be improved to meet the needs of both existing and future residents.

Greens spaces and heritage assets are protected and enhanced through careful land management and community projects. Water quality, air quality and road safety are well managed, for the health and safety of all residents.

The parish welcomes proportionate opportunities for younger people and families to remain within their community through the provision of appropriate affordable housing, while enabling older residents to downsize and remain independent within the parish.

The parish fosters greater interaction with young people and the development of appropriate local leisure facilities that enhance their lives.

This vision reflects a commitment to nurturing the parish's unique identity while embracing thoughtful, community-led improvements that benefit all residents.

Community engagement

Activity	When?	Notes
Residents survey 1	Nov-Dec 2024	105 responses. Provided insight into residents' priorities, what people like about living here and improvements they would like to see. Results were used to inform the draft NPS.
Residents survey 2	Oct-Nov 2025	71 responses. Provided additional data in relation to parishioners' views and preferences in relation to Council activities and priorities. Results were used to inform the draft NPS.
Planning survey	Sept-Oct 2026	50 responses. This survey was designed specifically to support and supplement the insight we already have into parishioners' views on planning and related matters from: • The previous resident surveys. • Public participation at Council meetings. • Resident comments on planning applications. • Other councillor engagement with residents at events, meetings and in daily life.
Draft NPS shared for feedback with community via website, email newsletter, local Facebook group and parish magazine	From 21/11/26-02/02/27	-
NPS approved and published	On agenda for Council meeting 04/01/26	-