

Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan – Basic Conditions Addendum

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) Planning Policy Review

Thank you for the opportunity for West Oxfordshire District Council to comment on the draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions Addendum.

Having reviewed the Addendum, we have the following comments to make:

SEL2 – Protecting Important Views

In our Regulation 14 response, we noted that *“no views are identified in this policy, rather character areas which surround the entire village. Strong justification will be needed to support this approach. Policies should not be used as a tool to prevent future growth, but rather to ensure that development respects the character of the village and surrounding countryside.”*

We also queried whether *“identifying all land surrounding the village risks diluting the importance of particularly sensitive views or areas.”*

In our Regulation 16 comment, we noted that *‘the proposed views continue to be defined as character areas and still extend around the entire village which doesn’t comply with the approach taken in national and local policy. It may therefore be more appropriate to identify a smaller number of key views that warrant particular protection, rather than seeking to protect views surrounding the entirety of the village.’*

The Basic Conditions Addendum for this policy states that *‘No – it does not prevent delivery of the housing requirements of the Local Plan.’*

WODC considers that the inclusion of the above policy as currently drafted could be considered to prevent the delivery of new housing and therefore would not meet the conditions of Section 99 of the LURA.

SEL4 – Protecting Stonesfield’s Local Green Spaces

Strong concerns were raised by WODC in the Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 reviews of the draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan in relation to the inclusion of large agricultural areas being included as proposed Local Green Spaces and these concerns still stand (see WODC Regulation 16 comments).

The Basic Conditions Addendum for this policy states that *‘The policy will not support housing development on Local Green Spaces except in very exceptional circumstances – but this should not prevent delivery of the housing requirements of the Local Plan’.*

WODC considers that the inclusion of the above policy as currently drafted, with such expansive areas of proposed Local Green Space, particularly those surrounding the edge of the village, could be considered to prevent the delivery of new housing and therefore would not meet the conditions of Section 99 of the LURA.

SEL5 – Blue/green corridors

In our Regulation 14 comments, we advised that:

- *The policy is too stringent in not allowing any development in this area but should require any development to take every opportunity to enhance the environment and in particular the CTA.*
- *The requirement for development adjacent to a CTA to demonstrate an exceptional need does not comply with the Local Plan 2031 and is unlikely to be supported.*

We noted in our Regulation 16 comments that this still stood.

The Basic Conditions Addendum for this policy states that *‘The policy will not support housing development in the three named blue/green corridors – but this should not prevent delivery of the housing requirements of the Local Plan.’*

WODC considers that the inclusion of the above policy as currently drafted could be considered to prevent the delivery of new housing and therefore would not meet the conditions of Section 99 of the LURA.

SEL6 – Biodiversity

We note that under the heading **‘Does the policy take account of any local nature recovery strategy* under the Environment Act 2021 that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood area?’**, the addendum reply states that:

Yes – it provides for net biodiversity gain of at least 20%. It has been taken into account by Stonesfield Parish Council’s Biodiversity Plan.

We presume that the 20% figure is a typing error, as the figure in the draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan states a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10%.

Planning Policy Team May 2026