

STONESFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

SPC Responses to OCC Regulation 16 comments

PROPERTY

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) owns the land containing the Stonesfield Primary School buildings, its associated playing field to the rear and car parking and grassed area to the front of the school.

OCC Property notes that Stonesfield Parish Council proposes a number of designations that will affect the OCC land. Accordingly, OCC Property wishes to make clear that they strongly object to these designations and are disappointed that the Parish Council has failed to not only publish our previous comments, but also to take them into account. Procedural Matters Section 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (hereby referred to as the “Regulations”) makes clear that a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) submission for examination should be accompanied by a Consultation Statement which:

- a) contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;
- b) explains how they were consulted;
- c) summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
- d) describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan

OCC Property has reviewed the Consultation Statement that was submitted with this NP and considers that it does not meet criteria b), c) and d), as it does not contain the objection of the OCC Property to the designation of the school playing field as a Local Green Space (LGS).

The Examiner will find attached with this representation email correspondence between our agents acting on our behalf and the Parish Council Clerk, including the Parish Council’s response which demonstrates that OCC Property objected from the early stages of the NP to the proposed LGS designation. These can be seen at Appendix A, B and C.

It is also noted that the consultation period has been extended due to a failure from either the Parish Council or West Oxfordshire District Council to submit key documents showing the public comments received and responses to their feedback.

Unfortunately, the discussions between OCC Property and the Parish Council were not published. This omission casts further significant doubt on whether the Parish Council has submitted an adequate Consultation Statement that meets requirements of Section 15 of the Regulations, as it is unclear as to what other type of information has been omitted from the Consultation Statement.

Consequently, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner does not proceed with the examination of this NP until the Consultation Statement has been updated to include all of the comments and feedback that was received during the publication of the NP and demonstrate each of these were considered to ensure that the NP meets Section 15(1)b of the Regulations.

Response:

The Parish Council made every attempt to publish all correspondence with Landowners on Local Green Spaces that it was aware of and which was published in full, entitled Appendix VII – Local Green Spaces reduced size. Upon review, the Council has noticed a letter had been overlooked from the above file and has rectified this omission.

Policy SEL2 – Protecting important views OCC Property supports the objective of this policy to control development proposals in order to ensure that the local character of the NP area is maintained and enhanced, when possible.

Nonetheless, in the second column of the policy text it is highlighted that: “Key inward and outward views are shown in Figs 9.2 and 9.3.” Figure 9.3 currently shows an arrow crossing over the OCC land in a south eastern direction without providing either a reference or an explanation as to the reasoning behind this proposed designation.

The eleven points outlined in the supporting text on page 85 also do not cover this proposed important view. OCC Property considers that there is nothing special that could justify protecting this view, as it overlooks a school playing field with its play equipment together with school buildings. In addition, no robust assessment has been undertaken to justify this designation and demonstrate its significance to the local community.

Following a review of Appendix D Character Assessment, it appears that this particular view had previously been highlighted due to its location within the conservation area. Notwithstanding this, the Character Assessment makes clear on page 76 that the primary views that contribute positively to the setting of the conservation area comprise views “over open rural, agricultural and valley areas.” Neither of these are applicable to the OCC land, as it comprises a school building and its playing field in an urban setting within the heart of the settlement. Drawing from this, it is the understanding of OCC Property that the Parish Council agrees with this position and that is why it is not mentioned in the supporting text.

It also appears that Figure 9.3 was never amended to reflect the current position and an earlier version was inserted in the NP document instead.

Accordingly, OCC Property recommends the following minor modification to ensure that the NP is in compliance with the Basic Conditions and particularly accords with national policy seeking to facilitate the expansion of education facilities and promotes sustainable development.

Remove black arrow as shown on Figure 9.3, page 85 and circled in red below.

Response:

The Parish Council recognises that there is a disjoint between the text and Fig 9.3 in the Plan and with the Character Assessment Fig 59 and text on p.77 and wishes to correct this.

However, the Council is still of the opinion that views from Peaks Lane across the open playing field are important. This was also recognised in the village survey when over 85% of residents strongly agreed that the playing field should be designated as a Local Green Space. The Primary School playing field is the last open space left in the centre of the old village. Prior to the 1970s there were numerous farms in the centre of the village with open views across paddocks and yards. These have all been infilled with housing developments.

During school playtime and sports activities there is a joyous hive of activity enjoyed by anybody walking on Peaks Lane. At other times, especially at weekends and out of school term times (which constitutes the majority of time) it provides a tranquil space with grass and trees – the school children have planted many new trees – rather than the built environment of the narrow lanes.

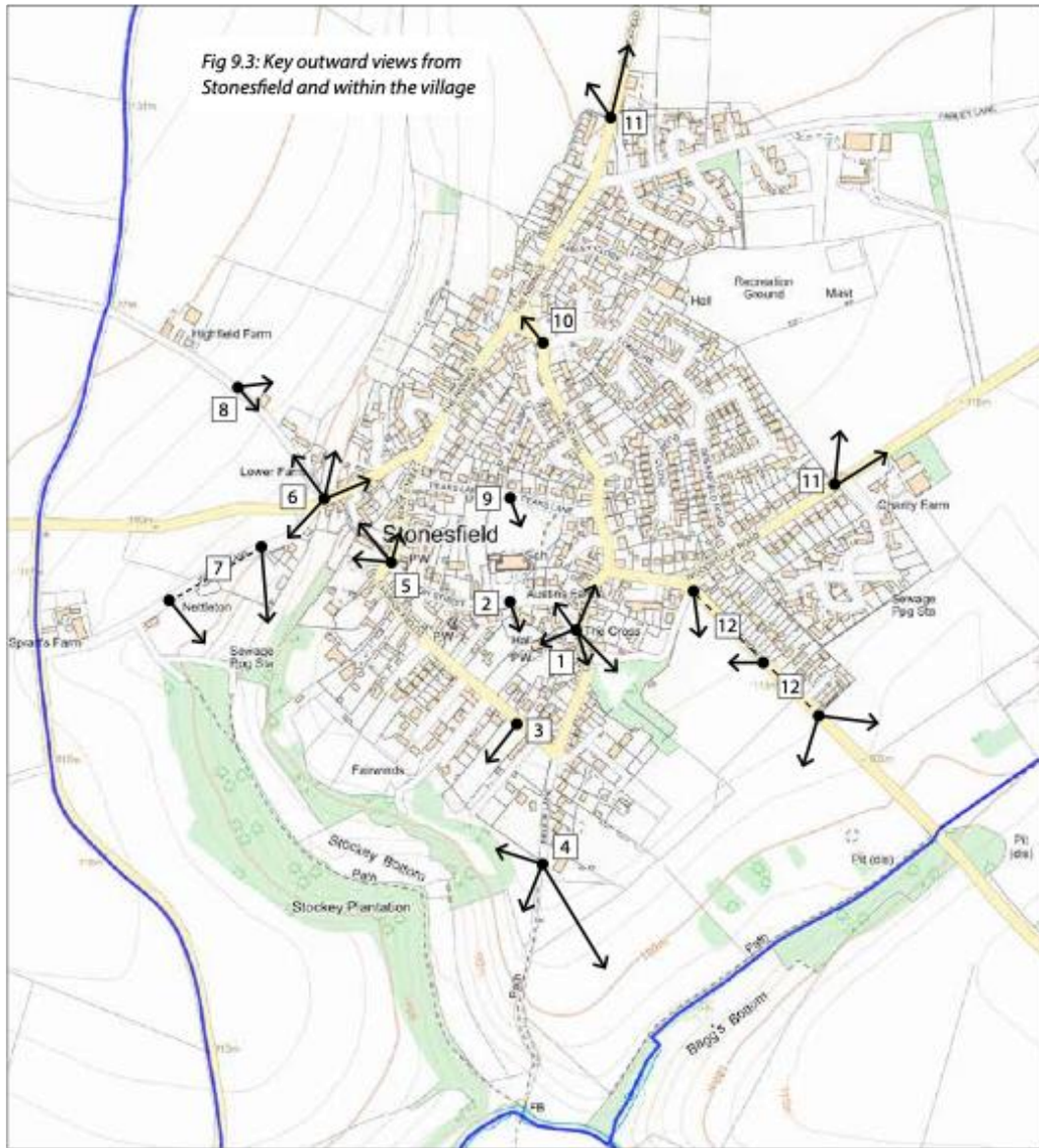
The views from Peaks Lane provide spacious views over the school's playing field. An important echo of the historic nature of the once less developed village centre.

The Parish Council proposes the following revised text to be used in both the Character Assessment (pages 75-77) and page 85 of the Plan. The map has been revised deleting unnumbered arrows and rationalising the order of the numbering. A revised map is attached showing views over the playing field as number 9.

The following were identified as key outward views, see Fig 9.3:

1. From The Cross, a panoramic village centre view takes in traditional buildings, the focal building of the church with the village lockup, distinctive stone wall boundaries and a variety of outward framed views along the streets leading away
2. From High Street over the former school to St James' church, clearly visible over the 19th century school building
3. From Churchfields, over the allotments and also glimpsed between buildings along Churchfields: an open green view where the rural edge of the village is clearly appreciable
4. Brook Lane over the Evenlode: a wide vista and an exceptionally well-walked and much appreciated local view from the village edge
5. Kinetic views along the narrow winding route of Boot Street and High Street; topography and narrow width renders this experience intimate, varied and positive, with glimpses towards Highfield Farm and over Well Lane to the surrounding countryside, and the focal building of the Methodist Chapel with traditional materials and buildings
6. Views in all directions at the bottom of Laughton Hill, along the valley (the Dene), Witney Lane, Oxfordshire Way - a highly attractive entry point to the village
7. Village edge kinetic views from Witney Lane down the dry valley of Stockey Bottom
8. View from the Oxfordshire Way when approaching Stonesfield by Highfield Farm: a striking view of the village wrapped along the valley edge, where buildings set on the hill present a varied, interesting and characteristic roofscape (see photo above)
9. Peaks Lane. Open spacious views over the school's playing field. An important echo of the historic nature of the once less developed village centre.
10. Pond Hill towards the White Horse: a pleasant view towards the Green and the public house, accentuated by the topography
11. Strongly linear outward views from The Ridings and the Woodstock Road, leading from the village over the flat plain to the north and north east, accentuated by straight routes and wide skies.
12. Kinetic views from the Combe Road looking out over Stonesfield Manor paddock towards Bagg's Bottom, and back towards the Grade II listed Manor House with glimpses of the Church tower beyond.

Fig 9.3: Key outward views from Stonesfield and within the village



Policy SEL4 – Protecting Stonesfield’s Local Green Spaces –

13. Primary School playing field OCC Property urges the Examiner to look at our previous comments that are attached to this representation. For the sake of avoiding unnecessary duplication, these will not be repeated. OCC Property has reviewed the Local Green Space

Assessment (Appendix C) that was undertaken to support the designation of the OCC land and has concluded that it is flawed as it contains inaccurate and misleading statements.

The assessment of the OCC land can be found at Appendix C, page 26. The reasons given for the proposed designation are reiterated below in italics: “affords a tranquil resort to pass for the many villagers, especially the elderly unable to venture further afield, who take a short walk for exercise within the village including within their route Peaks Lane and High Street, which both pass alongside it;”

First, the OCC land proposed for designation comprises a grassed area to the front of the school and its playing field to the rear. OCC Property would like to make clear that this is private land and not accessible by the public, as it could endanger the safety of the pupils attending the school. In addition, OCC Property questions how a school playing field could be described as a “tranquil resort” when there would be children playing and screaming most of the time during the day. “is central to the Conservation Area and is therefore subject to the restrictions applying to conservation areas (see 2b above);”

Response:

The Parish Council has never asserted that there is any public right of access to the playing field. In the Appendix C: Local Green Spaces document at item 4 it clearly states that ‘there are no public rights of way across the land’. The children play on the field for limited periods in breaks and during sports – a sight which is positively enjoyed by residents of Peaks Lane and passers-by; the majority of the time the field is empty and tranquil.

OCC Property considers that this statement clearly demonstrates that the OCC land benefits from additional planning controls due to its location within the conservation area. Therefore, and as per paragraph 011 reference ID: 37-011-20140306, the land should only be designated if there would result in additional local benefits. No such case has been made in this NP and it is also significant to highlight, once again, that OCC is the owner of the land.

“has for decades been the main facility for recreation for the pupils of the school;” This statement acknowledges that the land has no public recreational value, as it is only used by the pupils and staff of the school.

It is significant to highlight that should the Examiner accept this designation; it will be much more difficult for OCC to discharge its educational duty and meet the expanding needs of the school. Therefore, the LGS designation poses a significant risk to the longevity of the school and its playing field which this NP has failed to take into consideration.

Response:

Should the school need to build new classrooms because the pupil intake has expanded to such an extent, the fact the land has been designated an LGS would not prevent this exceptional development of the already existing structure. It would prevent OCC from selling

parcels of land to a developer, reducing the size of the excellent playing field and reducing pupils' ability to enjoy the sports facilities, playground and forest school.

“incorporates the Forest School, tree planting and nature-friendly garden areas and a playground as well as sports facilities;” OCC Property considers that none of the aforementioned features are demonstrably special that could justify the designation of the OCC land. “is regularly used for village-wide events, e.g. fetes;” OCC Property considers that the frequency the site is used for public events is not a material consideration when assessing the suitability of a site for LGS designation. Especially when these events could take place yearly. “has a recreational value, tranquillity when not in use by schoolchildren!) and wildlife value of undeniable local significance;” As highlighted earlier above, this is privately owned land solely for use by pupils and staff of the school. It therefore has no recreational value to the public.

Response:

The school playing field is clearly of recreational value to the pupils, who are by definition the children of Stonesfield. It has no recreational value to the public, but according to the NPPF, designation of a local green space depends inter alia on it being demonstrably special to a local community and holding a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife... The school playing field meets all of these conditions except that of recreational value to the (adult) public.

No evidence has also been submitted to prove that its wildlife value is demonstrably special to the local community. “achieved 91.4% support for designation in the Village Survey” OCC Property wishes to highlight that a LGS designation should be underpinned by a robust assessment and not be based on a popularity contest. OCC Property is concerned that the respondents of the Village Survey may have been misled, as they were never explained the implications of designating the school playing field as a LGS given that it clearly contradicts the aims and objectives of this draft policy and NP as a whole.

Response:

Wildlife: The larger part of the school playing field is grassed, with a large number of various broad-leaved trees at the edges (many planted by school-leaving pupils themselves), and populated by birds, insects and invertebrates. Stonesfield is one of only three Forest School Association providers in Oxfordshire. The Forest School area, with its pond, water-plants, amphibians and insects, and trees, is a haven in which pupils thrive through frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment where they develop knowledge about, and respect for, themselves and the natural world. The front grassed area (toward the High Street) has been sown as a wildflower meadow and cared for by the children and on occasion, village volunteers using scythes, demonstrating traditional good practice in grassland habitat management.

Respondents being misled: In the village survey, the criteria as stated in the NPPF for the designation of a Local Green Space were explained immediately before the survey questions. It

is therefore incorrect for OCC to state that residents may have been misled or misinformed as to the criteria that must be met for LGS designation.

Drawing from the above, OCC Property considers that the land with reference “13. Primary School playing field” should not be designated as a LGS as it is not demonstrably special to the local community and does not hold a particular local significance in respect of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife.

Response:

As explained in response to SEL2 it is most definitely significant to residents for the reasons given above. According to the NPPF, designation of a local green space depends inter alia on it being demonstrably special to a local community and holding a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife... The school playing field meets all of these conditions except that of recreational value to the (adult) public.

In addition, it has been demonstrated that the land already benefits from different types of designations that protect it from development and is also owned by a public body, OCC. Consequently, the following minor modification is recommended to ensure that the NP meets the Basic Conditions and specifically has regard to national policies, in particular paragraphs 106 to 108 of the NPPF, and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, such as paragraph 11 of the PPG, and contributes to the achievement of sustainable development by not restricting the school from expanding in the future to meet a certain identified need and OCC from carrying out its statutory duty. Delete “13. Primary School playing field” from policy text on page 87. Amend Figure 9.4 by removing LGS reference 13 on page 87.

Response:

The document may have been misread as there has never been an assertion that the land is accessible by members of the public. Even during school time, for the majority of the time it is a calm and tranquil place in the centre of the village.

The case made by OCC that the Playing Field should not be designated as an LGS was debated at length by the Parish Council. The vote was decided by the Chair’s casting vote on the basis that designation had wide public support and the case was very similar to the Village Playing Field. It was not anticipated to stymie future development on the site as that would be likely to be in the public interest.

Strategic Planning Comments Housing

The plan states that the housing delivery in Stonesfield anticipated in the WODC Local Plan 2031 (40 houses) has been built out. Stonesfield is not expected to contribute to West Oxfordshire’s housing numbers over the period of its emerging adopted plan to 2043. There are no housing allocations or traveller pitch allocations being proposed as part of this Neighbourhood Plan.

WODC emerging Local Plan 2043 References to West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041, are now out of date. At time of writing the plan period has been updated to run until 2043. It also has now completed its Regulation 18 consultation stage with submission before the end of 2026 being aimed for.

Given the progress made in the emerging local plan's preparation, it would be beneficial for the Neighbourhood Plan to make more reference to relevant policies. Local Green Spaces Oxfordshire County Council would like to reiterate their concern about the allocated Local Green Spaces that fall within Highway Land as it could fetter the Council's ability to carry out their duties as the Highway Authority.

Response:

The Steering Group has maintained regular contact with WODC over development of the new Local Plan and held various discussions with officers over timelines. It is difficult for the NP to make reference to relevant policies in LP43 when they are still being consulted on and not finalised, however, the Parish Council was cognisant of it and has been involved in the consultation exercises.

In relation to the concern about the allocated Local Green Spaces that fall within Highway Land, we cannot identify any.

Transport Strategy Comments

No objections / main modifications suggested. Policy ST3 – Walking and Cycling (Page 63) Clarification is needed as to whether the “negotiated dedicated cycling/walking path through Blenheim Park to Woodstock” has already been agreed or whether this is an aspiration for the future and will need discussions to take place with Blenheim Estate.

Response:

This is not yet agreed, but Blenheim have been open to discussion which has commenced.

Transport Development Management Comments

It is important that any associated policies within the neighbourhood plan are aligned with Oxfordshire County Council's adopted guidance and policy documents which form the County Council's current transport guidance for assessing new development proposals

For example, Policy SH11, which requires the provision of one vehicle parking space per bedroom, would result in parking levels that significantly exceed those set out within OCC's adopted standards for a village location. This approach risks over-provision of parking and is not consistent with OCC's policy position, which seeks to apply a flexible, context-led approach to parking provision that reflects settlement type, accessibility, and wider transport objectives.

To ensure policy soundness and consistency with the County Council's role as Local Highway Authority, it is essential that the plan is prepared in conjunction with OCC's transport policies and guidance documents, including the adopted parking standards. Aligning local policy with

OCC guidance will provide a robust and defensible framework for decision-making and will avoid placing officers in a position where it is difficult to object to proposals that comply with the County Council's own published standards and policies.

Response:

The Parish Council has explained the dilemma it faced over policy SH11. It is impractical for the OCC standards to apply to a village with several narrow streets, limited facilities and very limited access to public transport, hence the proposed NP standards to apply until public transport access, and cycle/walkways catch up. Therefore the policy seeks to apply a flexible, context-led approach to parking provision that reflects settlement type, accessibility, and wider transport objectives in accordance with the statement from OCC.

Transport Policy Comments

General comments

Several policies relating to parking standards and car access risk conflict with LTCP objectives to reduce car mileage, rebalance streets toward active travel, and manage parking supply strategically. This is addressed below.

Public Transport - is noted as a vital component to reduce car usage. The Plan could include supporting text and/or policy to directly address greater engagement with public transport operators (e.g. Rail and Bus) to ensure the needs of the community are served.

It is worth noting the area sits near a number of rail stations (Charlbury, Hanborough, Combe & Finstock) although the Plan make no reference to this and we would recommend that it notes the importance of active travel links to such locations. This would support the Oxfordshire County Council's recent adopted rail plan OxRail 2040: Plan for Rail and it is recommended a direct reference is made to this.

Movement and Place Plans (MAP Plan) - The plan would benefit from recognising the council is currently delivering upon its MAP plan programme. This area will come under the West Oxfordshire Uplands Plan although borders the West Oxfordshire Lowlands and Kidlington and South Cherwell.

Street Design Code – the Council is working towards delivering a street design code and the Plan would benefit from noting this once adopted.

Main modifications

References to active travel should consistently use the phrase “walking, wheeling, and cycling.” It was noted that ‘wheeling’ was excluded at times, for example, policy ST3 and we would recommend this is included as per the transport user hierarchy set out in LTCP policy 1. Main modification to consistently use “walking, wheeling, and cycling” in active travel policies proposed.

The summary notes – “the County Council aims to reduce car use by reducing parking provision”. We can't and do not support this phrase. The County Council are actively encouraging greater usage of walking, wheeling and cycling alongside public transport to align with the transport user hierarchy to reduce car use. We ask this is phrase is amended in the Plan.

Response:

The NP has applied local context in the development of these policies. The Parish Council is content to incorporate the phrase “walking, wheeling, and cycling.” The Parish Council fully supports the County Council’s ambition to actively encouraging greater usage of walking, wheeling and cycling alongside public transport to align with the transport user hierarchy to reduce car use.

However, without key services and infrastructure being in place, it would be exceptionally challenging for residents to live in the village without heavy reliance on car use. The Village Survey evidenced this. The current challenges are:

- Cycling – narrow roads into/out of the village presenting safety issues with no dedicated cycle routes
- Bus services which only operate regularly to and from Oxford/Woodstock/Charlbury and infrequently to Witney
- Rail Services:
 - Combe & Finstock, which are rail halts rather than stations, have only one train a day in each direction
 - Long Hanborough station is unreachable by public transport except via a circuitous route involving changing buses in Woodstock; and there is no dedicated path or cycle way
 - Taking a bus to Combe necessitates a 1-mile walk from the Akeman Street bus stop to Combe halt, with no pavement and a steep hill down – impractical, particularly on the return journey if carrying shopping or a briefcase, and dangerous in the winter months, when it is dark both in the morning and evening, on an unlit narrow lane
 - The bus to Charlbury does not align with the rail timetable and there is a 1-mile walk from the Sturt Close bus stop to the station, which adds to the difficulty of using this station without parking there or relying on a lift by car. Whilst there is a footpath to walk to Charlbury, it is hilly and often impassable in winter due to underfoot conditions.

Faced with the ‘chicken or egg’ dilemma, the Parish Council has put the immediate needs of its residents first whilst outlining its ambitions for improvement.

As the NP acknowledges, the Parish Council recognised the LTCP Plan of OCC and is not sure whether adding the MAP Plan programme component from the LTCP would add much value.

The Parish Council welcomes the development of a street design code and looks forward to this once adopted.

Policies ST2 & ST3 - promote active travel and safer streets reflecting the LTCP’s Vision Zero, Healthy Streets and Strategic Active Travel Network (SATN) approach. Within the supporting text, it has scope to include the County Council’s commitment to Vision Zero and adopted Vision Zero Strategy and Action Plan.

Response:

The Parish Council notes the LTCP's Vision Zero, Healthy Streets and Strategic Active Travel Network (SATN) approach and has acknowledged the importance of the LTCP. These can be referenced in the supporting text.

Policy ST3 – would benefit to link desired routes such as Woodstock, Long Hanborough, Charlbury and Witney to LCWIP and SATN proposed routes.

Response:

Noted.

Parking Standards (SH11 & ST4) – As currently word it is considered they don't align with OCC's parking standards. We would recommend this is amended to clear state any new development or extension/alteration to a development must conform to OCC parking standards unless otherwise agreed by the council.

Response:

This is covered above in relation to Transport Development Management Comments.

Freight & Deliveries No policy addresses HGV movements or last mile deliveries. Albeit it is recognised through the Plan that some of the roads are narrow and unsuitable for large vehicles. We would therefore recommend a revision is made to the plan to reflect this and the inclusion for parcel lockers is considered etc. This would align with the councils Freight and Logistics Strategy.

Response:

HGV movements are a minor issue in the village as it is not on a through route used by large freight lorries unless for occasional delivery to the village. The village shop via the Post Office offers a service for delivery and last mile collection, which includes delivery of medications from Woodstock Pharmacy. These were not considered or raised as issues of concern by residents.

Ecology Comments**General Comments**

It is noted that section 3.3 refers to the climate emergency declared by West Oxfordshire District Council in 2019. At the same time a Nature Emergency was also declared, the implications of which should be mentioned.

Response:

Include reference to a Nature Emergency and its implications.

Main Modifications

Aim 5 to conserve the environment is welcomed. It is suggested that that this plan has the opportunity to go further and enhance the biodiversity and environment of this parish in line with Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) | Oxfordshire County Council). The main modification request is that the LNRS is embedded throughout the neighbourhood plan in order to help deliver a nature led approach. As part of this, consideration should be given to how the LNRS interacts with Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) through a review of the LNRS documentation.

If reference to CTAs is retained, clarification should be given as to the weight of these. The acknowledgment of the SSSIs within the parish is appreciated.

Response:

It is proposed to add to Aim 5:

- To enhance the environment and biodiversity of Stonesfield's environs in line with Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025

And to add appropriate mentions of the LNRS in sections 9.1, Justification of Policy SEL1, 9.4, Justification of Policy SEL5, and 9.5, and check interaction between LNRS and CTAs.

It is suggested that further consideration is given to other designated sites such as Road Verge Nature Reserves, habitats of principal importance, legally protected and notable species and the priorities identified within Oxfordshire's LNRS.

Response:

Stonesfield has one road verge nature reserve, near King's Wood, on the outer edge of the Parish. We suggest adding reference to this at 9.6 on this with reference to Road Verge Nature Reserves in Oxfordshire 2025, and to extend the mentions of key species in section 9.5 (with reference to the LNRS). Further detail will be added to the Parish Council's Biodiversity Plan, which will be reviewed annually.

Further detail should be provided to explain the designation for environmentally sensitive areas as displayed on page 87 including why some areas have been excluded.

Response:

The map on page 87 clearly shows the extent of the SSSIs, the Conservation Area and the Environmentally Sensitive Area. The map does not show CTAs, but that is covered specifically in the map on page 89 with associated explanations of the SSSIs, CTAs and the Upper Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Areas, which are covered in main section 9.4 on the same page.

The proposed Local Green Spaces have been designated on the basis that they offer open space within the built-up area, views and in some cases space for recreation or sports. The only

unbuilt areas which have been excluded from designation are small pockets of woodland which are all in private ownership and not accessible to the public.

Reference to the ecological receptors is requested related to previous comments and SSSI Impact Risk Zones.

Response:

We propose to add a section to Policy SEL5 requiring consultation with Natural England in relation to proposed development in the Impact Risk Zones for SSSIs, and to add a last Aim for Policy SEL5 to:

- To ensure full interaction with Natural England on the observation of Impact Risk Zones for SSSIs.

Also to adapt the last paragraph of the Justification for SEL5 to explain the Impact Risk Zones.

In line with OCC's Biodiversity Action Framework 2025-2030, if appropriately justified a proposal of a minimum of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for developments would be supported under policy SEL6. Terms included under policy SEL6 such as 'sympathetic management' and 'health of the river Evenlode' should be refined to ensure they are interpreted as intended. The main modification requested would be to provide explanation of these terms.

Response:

We would propose that paragraph 2 of Policy SEL6 should be amended to: All development proposals should result in a net biodiversity gain of at least 20%***, in line with OCC recommendations.

***as measured by a recognised biodiversity accounting metric against a baseline ecological survey detailing wildlife habitats, trees and hedgerows, and their condition.

The definition of the terms mentioned should be tightened.

Public Health Comments

The Public Health team welcomes the opportunity to comment the proposals for Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan. Our comments focus on the health and wellbeing of residents, and how the Plan will work to maximise this.

It is acknowledged that Stonesfield is both a very rural settlement, and one with an increasingly ageing population. This poses challenges for a range of factors including sustainable transport, as well as access to healthcare and other amenities.

Response:

Noted

Another major consideration is the ability for Stonesfield's younger residents to access recreational amenities for the benefit of their social development and to promote physical activity. For this reason, we strongly support aim #4 of the NP, which is to enhance community facilities and their accessibility to all age groups.

Response:

Noted

It is also welcomed that the list of aims includes reference to tackling climate change at the local level. It is clear from snippets of the resident feedback that they share a concern that new housing should be appropriate and affordable for those looking to live in the area. We would support new residential developments going above and beyond existing minimum standards of affordable housing and to ensure that the housing mix includes smaller homes and apartments where applicable, so that first-time buyers and young families have a better chance of affording to live in Stonesfield. This is reflected in Policy SH2 and is strongly supported.

Response:

Noted

Resident feedback also noted the need for better recreational facilities for young people, suggesting that the provision of a skate park as an example of something that would be beneficial. This is reflective of wider studies showing the need for community facilities to better cater for older children and teenagers since many recreational spaces are targeted at younger children.

Response:

Noted

Policy SH5 is welcomed, and could go even further by ensuring that any new homes meet the standards of Lifetime Homes, which enable people to remain living in their properties throughout the life course.

Response:

This would be a sensible addition.

Policy SEA1 contains pertinent information about the rise in home working. This change in working styles could be further accommodated by utilising community spaces for hybrid working for situations where home working is difficult or impossible for residents.

Policy ST1 is strongly supported, and secure cycle storage should be located as conveniently as possible for residents, such as to the front of dwellings where appropriate. This further encourages sustainable modes of transport and helps to reduce the reliance on the car.

Response:

The Parish Council would support this and suggests making note in the supporting text.

See also response to Transport policy comments, above.

Policy ST3 could be strengthened by including the need for wayfinding to ensure that any walking or cycling paths are easy to navigate, linking users to the local centre or helping to access the countryside by linking with existing rights of way. Wayfinding would also be relevant to Policy SEL7 surrounding the importance of protecting and enhancing footpaths.

Response:

Noted. Wayfinding is fairly good on designated posts in the parish, and we understand that it is the responsibility of the Highway authority.

We welcome the inclusion of Policy SHW1 on health and wellbeing, with its reference to Oxfordshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Response:

Noted.