

Dear Julie,

Thank you for sharing the addendum to the Basic Conditions Statement for the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan and for the opportunity to comment.

I have now reviewed the addendum in the context of the requirements introduced through Sections 98 and 99 of the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023, as commenced by the 2026 Regulations.

While the document clearly sets out how the Plan has been considered against the revised Basic Conditions, I would offer the following observations for consideration:

1. Climate change – requirement not yet meaningfully embedded

The updated legislation places a clear expectation that neighbourhood plans should *contribute to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change*. However, across a significant number of policies within the addendum, the assessment identifies them as “neutral” in relation to climate change.

This suggests that, while compliant in form, the Plan does not yet consistently demonstrate how it actively contributes to climate outcomes in practice. Given the strengthened statutory footing of this requirement, there may be merit in reviewing whether policies could more explicitly embed climate considerations, rather than defaulting to neutrality.

2. Nature recovery – positive direction, but could be more integrated

There are clear strengths within the Plan, particularly in relation to biodiversity, green spaces, and environmental protection. The alignment with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is evident in a number of policies.

However, this is not consistently applied across the Plan, and there may be an opportunity to take a more integrated approach so that nature recovery principles are reflected more systematically, rather than within selected policy areas.

3. Housing requirement – compliance demonstrated, but limited strategic narrative

The addendum appropriately addresses the new requirement that the Plan should not result in reduced housing delivery. While this is clearly demonstrated on a policy-by-policy basis, the assessment largely reads as a compliance exercise.

It may be beneficial to strengthen the narrative around how the Plan positively supports sustainable housing delivery, including through housing mix, affordability, and long-term community sustainability.

4. Community outcomes and inclusion – opportunity to strengthen

The Plan includes some positive references to accessibility, health, and wellbeing. However, in the context of the wider intent of the Levelling up and Regeneration Act particularly its emphasis on outcomes, communities, and place-making there is an opportunity to go further.

In particular, consideration could be strengthened in relation to:

- Individuals with long-term health conditions and disabilities

- Carers and family support networks
- Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families within the local community
- The integration of health and wellbeing within spatial planning and community infrastructure

In addition, while the emerging legal framework relating to the Armed Forces Covenant does not directly impose new duties on this Plan, it does place increasing emphasis on housing and the lived experience of the Armed Forces community. Given Stonesfield's relative proximity to key military bases within Oxfordshire and the wider region, it would be appropriate for the Plan to recognise and reflect these needs particularly in relation to housing access, community integration, and support for service families, veterans, and carers.

Ensuring these aspects are more explicitly reflected would support a more holistic and inclusive approach to development and align with wider national direction.

5. Transition to the new planning framework

Given that this Plan is being progressed during a period of transition between planning frameworks, it would be helpful for the addendum to more clearly articulate how it responds not only to the revised Basic Conditions, but also to the broader shift toward outcome led, evidence based planning under the 2023 Act.

Overall, the addendum provides a clear and structured response to the updated legal requirements. However, there is an opportunity to strengthen the Plan by moving beyond a position of technical compliance toward one that more clearly demonstrates delivery against the intent of the legislation particularly in relation to climate, integration of environmental considerations, and inclusive community outcomes.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Kind regards,