

**STONESFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**  
**SPC Responses to WODC Regulation 16 comments**

**WODC REG 16 Comments**

**Policy SH1** – Meeting the Housing Need In our Regulation 14 comments, we noted that this policy is more restrictive than the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, and this still appears to be the case. Stonesfield is classified as a Village in the adopted Local Plan 2031, where new housing is permitted in the following circumstances:

- On sites that have been allocated;
- On previously developed land within or adjoining the built-up area (provided there is no conflict with other plan policies);
- On undeveloped land within the built-up area; and
- On undeveloped land adjoining the built-up area where convincing evidence is presented to demonstrate that it is necessary to meet identified housing needs (as identified in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031).

While we welcome the reference to the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, the policy remains more restrictive than the adopted Local Plan, particularly in requiring proposals to meet the Housing Needs Assessment prepared to support the neighbourhood plan which identifies no additional need for open-market housing, contrary to the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. As such, it is likely to be challenged by the Inspector.

**Response:**

The Parish Council responded at Reg 14 to this comment. In particular, the previous drew attention to the appeal made by Cala against planning and defended by WODC in conjunction with the Parish Council. The PC noted that,

*In the context of Stonesfield, the Inspector in the Cala appeal judgement set out that “district-wide there may be a need for the delivery of more affordable homes” but he said “the exceptional circumstances test to justify development within the AONB” required “convincing evidence of a specific local housing need specific to a particular settlement” i.e. in the instant case a need specific to Stonesfield. He found that there was no such evidence. The HNA was produced in this context in order to assess exceptional need, which differs from an assessment of all need or a wish for.*

As the tests set out in the NPPF have not changed, the NP Policy SH1, as drafted, has built in the case findings, which were helpful.

We are not aware that LP2031 has identified additional need for market housing in Stonesfield, except the significant amount that has been built out through the Plan period.

We previously noted that the policy does not appear to address undeveloped land within the built-up area, and this remains the case. 1 The final paragraph also goes beyond the requirements of the Local Plan by referring to the “exceptional circumstances” test, which applies to major development only.

**Response:**

The Parish Council was unable to identify undeveloped land within the built-up area, other than playing fields, graveyards and allotments, hence its absence from the Policy. Any small areas of land are, therefore, covered by the Policies for Infill and Garden Development.

**Policy SH2 – Size and Type of Homes** We previously advised that the proposed mix of homes should be evidence-based and I note that further information has been provided in this regard. The data appears to show a 13-year trend that 39% of the houses developed are 4+beds and there is merit in trying to address this. I would suggest that the wording of the 10% 4 beds could include scope for a smaller element of 5 beds.

**Response:**

The Parish Council is mindful that the recent trend has included a significant number of 5-bedroom houses, hence the inclusion of the wording “Homes with five or more bedrooms will not be supported unless a specific local need can be demonstrated and there is no prospect of the market in Stonesfield delivering to meet that need”; we are comfortable that this sentence provides sufficient caveat so as not to exclude completely 5-bedroom properties.

**Policies SH3 & SH4 – Affordable Housing Mix** As part of our Regulation 14 response, we suggested consolidating these into one overarching affordable housing policy and this recommendation remains relevant.

**Response:**

The Parish Council has adopted a similar protocol to Charlbury in keeping these as separate policies rather than one longer policy; the PC is comfortable with how this reads and will be used in practice.

**Policy SH5 – Needs of Older People and Disabled Residents** Duplication with Policy SH3 was noted in our Regulation 14 comments and this is still relevant. We welcome the addition of a clause ensuring that proposals comply with other plan policies.

**Response:**

The Parish Council has adopted a similar protocol to Charlbury in keeping these as separate policies rather than one longer policy; the PC is comfortable with how this reads and will be used in practice. The NP has set out policies so that those closely related are adjacent to each other. The aims of the various policies are also clearly stated.

**Policy SH8** (SH6 in Regulation 14 version) – Infill Development The following recommendations were made as a part of our Regulation 14 comments. We note that these suggestions have not been included and so our comments remain applicable:

- Recommend repositioning this within the Plan for logical flow as dealing with locational policies first. Other locational policies should follow.
- Section f) make mention to garden development. Reword to make reference to harms resulting in the loss of private amenity space instead. There is a potential overlap with Section i)
- Section g) provides for at least one small home with two or fewer bedrooms for every proposed new large dwelling with four or more bedrooms. This is considered to be too prescriptive. Policy should be more flexible in approach but state that as per housing mix policy, smaller houses will be preferred.
- Section k). Change wording to refer to the need for safe and convenient access. Rear access may not always be the most appropriate in all cases. This Section may not be necessary as it duplicates Section j) to some degree. We note that the other suggestions made regarding this policy have now been incorporated which is welcomed.

Section j) is considered to be a bit lengthy and could be made clearer and more concise.

**Response:**

After reviewing all the Reg 14 comments, the Parish Council is comfortable with the revised flow of this chapter. Locating Infill, Garden Development and Sub-division seems a sensible grouping.

- Section f) Making use of the phrase, '*harms resulting in the loss of private amenity space*' would be helpful. We note the point about overlap, but are content with the wording as the context for reference to gardens is different.
- Section g) The suggested wording to be more flexible is likely to defeat the aim which is to drive a move to smaller properties; a more flexible wording would likely mean it is worthless;
- Section k) could be amended to start '*where appropriate,*'
- Section j) noted, but the Parish Council thinks the requirements are clear.

**Policy SH9** (previously SH7) – Sub-division We welcome the additions to this policy, however it could be further strengthened by including reference to internal space standards and the provision of external garden space.

**Response:**

Agreed, this would be helpful.

**Policy SH10** (previously Policy SH8) – Residential Gardens We note, as suggested in our Regulation 14 comments, that reference to biodiversity net gain (BNG) has been included,

which is welcomed. This could be strengthened by making reference to the statutory minimum of 10% BNG.

**Response:**

Agreed, this would be helpful. We note that OCC have recommended the NP adopts a standard of 20% BNG, which the Parish Council would support and would be consistent with the strength of feeling captured in the Village Survey and the consultation events that have been held.

**Policy SH11** (previously SH9) – Residential Parking A previous suggestion to move this policy to the Transport section and merge it with Policy ST4 has not been incorporated, and this recommendation still stands. We welcome the additions made in response to earlier comments, including clarification on whether the policy relates to residential or public parking. The second paragraph should make clear that it only applies where a reduction in parking spaces would result in parking provision falling below the relevant parking standards. The final section of the policy does not relate to residential parking and should be removed from this policy to avoid confusion.

**Response:**

The Parish Council made some changes to distinguish more clearly between the two separate issues of residential parking and public parking. The suggested change of wording in paragraph 2, could be incorporated. The final section of the policy would cover the situation, for example, of a dedicated residential parking barn or residential parking area. We feel that issues relating to provision of residential parking need to be considered in conjunction with the other aspects of housing development.

**Policy SH6 (previously Policy SH10) –**

Lower-cost Homes As suggested in our regulation 14 comments, this policy is likely to overlap with Policy SH4 and we recommend consolidation of the two.

**Response:**

As noted above, the Parish Council has adopted a similar protocol to Charlbury in keeping these as separate policies rather than one longer policy; the PC is comfortable with how this reads and how it will be used in practice.

**Policy SH7** (previously Policy SH11) – Location of Affordable Homes (RES) I have concerns regarding reference to the Housing Needs Assessment prepared to support the Plan. This should instead refer to the Council's identified needs and I note that reservations are raised from the Strategic Housing Officer (see Page 9 of this report). We previously recommended merging into a single affordable housing policy and this advice remains applicable.

**Response:**

The Housing Needs Assessment was commissioned by the Parish Council to identify need and has been adopted as such. The Council's identified needs are set out in the Housing

Needs Assessment, commissioned by and accepted by the PC. [should also say:] Our reasons for maintaining SH4, SH6 and SH7 as separate policies are given above.

## Section 6: Economy and Amenities Policy

**SEA1** – Retail, Employment and Services We welcome that the majority of the previous comments have been incorporated. That said, parts of the policy could be made more concise and less ambiguous to improve clarity.

### Response:

Agreed: [deletions marked and changes in red]

Development will be supported where it is shown to enhance Stonesfield's economy while protecting and enhancing the AONB and Conservation Area. ~~Enhancing Stonesfield's economy means one or more of the following:~~

### This means:

- increasing the quantity and quality of employment opportunities ~~within Stonesfield~~, including fostering ~~the growth of technology-based businesses and of small and medium-sized enterprises~~
- actively maintaining and enhancing services ~~of local importance~~ including shops, pubs, educational establishments (including early years), healthcare services and facilities for sport and recreation.

New non-residential development for ~~the purposes of~~ retail, employment and services will be supported, provided that it meets the appropriate provisions of the WODC Local Plan 2031 and the Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-25.

Where land is already being used for employment ~~purposes and it is possible for such use~~ **which is likely** to continue, ~~the any~~ loss of space through development will be resisted and will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that the site ~~is capable of being~~ **can be** redeveloped for employment ~~use~~, or where the site is unsuitable for employment on environmental and amenity grounds, or where substantial community benefits can be demonstrated. For example, if a

business created an undue level of noise or pollution which affected established housing, this may warrant its relocation.

Proposals will be supported if they retain the use of premises for Class E (commercial, business and services) uses, F1 (learning and non-residential) uses and F2 (local community) uses, unless there are clear reasons for refusal on amenity grounds.

Proposals for changes of use of premises currently occupied by Class E, F1 and F2 uses to other uses, including for residential uses, will not be supported unless there is firm evidence that the premises are no longer commercially viable for Class E, F1 and F2 uses, or that alternative appropriate and suitable facilities are available elsewhere in the neighbourhood ~~area~~ in accessible and convenient locations.

Where a proposed change of use meets the above criteria, all the wider policy principles in this Plan shall apply.

Development proposals for commercial properties that result in a loss of independently accessed residential accommodation on the premises, e.g. flats above retail or commercial uses, or residential units to the rear of the property, will not be supported.

The White Horse Public House is designated as a Community Asset, is owned by the registered Community Benefit Society which is Stonesfield Community Pub Ltd, and the law relating to community assets applies to it. Any development proposals on this site must demonstrate the clear support of Stonesfield Community Pub Ltd shareholders.

Given the growth in home working and lack of employment opportunities within the Parish, development proposals should demonstrate how they will support home working. In particular, wherever reasonably possible, development proposals for both residential and business premises should provide for access to superfast broadband.

The re-use of non-residential buildings for employment, tourism and community uses to support the local economy will be supported in accordance with West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 policy E3, subject to the fulfilment of the criteria set out in that policy.

**Policy SEA2** Protecting community facilities The second part of this policy which refers to unviable facilities could be strengthened to make reference to the need for a robust marketing assessment to demonstrate that they are unviable, unable to be made viable or adapted to provide a viable service.

**Response:**

Agreed

**Section 7: Transport, road use and footpaths**

**Policy ST1** – Sustainable Transport We support the general intention of this policy; however, we question the value of including requirements relating to EV charging and cycle storage, as these are already addressed through separate policies and regulations. It may be helpful to clarify that the pavement improvements referenced in the policy may not be applicable within the ‘narrow streets zone’.

**Response:**

Agree both points.

**Policy ST2** – Road Safety and Access This policy could benefit from a map indicating the ‘narrow street’ zone included within the supporting text. Separate advice from the Highways Authority at the County Council is recommended.

**Response:**

Agreed – we propose to add the following map:



**Policy ST3 – Walking and Cycling** As part of our Regulation 14 comments, we suggested incorporating Policy SEL7 – Protecting Footpaths into this policy, and we continue to recommend this approach. It also remains unclear whether the Highway Authority at the County Council has been consulted regarding the construction of cycling routes and pedestrian connections. We would strongly recommend liaising with them on this policy to help identify where key routes and connections would be most beneficial.

**Response:**

The Parish Council sees this as an important standalone policy, because there are many public rights of way in and around Stonesfield, including a number of national trails. Walking and cycling were also identified as a key issue in by residents in the Village Survey; as such it is seen as an important policy and we have added a cross-reference to Policy SEL7.

The Parish Council agrees that liaison with OCC is essential in order to deliver improvements as part of implementing the NP; although the intentions are consistent with WODC and OCC ambitions.

**Policy ST4 – Parking** I would suggest that the first paragraph should be reworded, as it currently suggests that proposals which alter the demand or use of non-residential premises will be supported where sufficient parking is provided, when such proposals may not be acceptable for other policy reasons. In terms of the parking standards included, these appear to exceed standards set out by the County Council which is a concern. The final part of the first paragraph should clarify that there should be no net reduction in parking provision

where this would result in an insufficient number of spaces. The final section of the policy could also be clarified to make explicit that it relates to limiting additional parking provision, if that is the intended approach.

**Response:**

The proposals for the first paragraph are noted.

The variation in standards has been justified within the Plan and the Parish Council is keen to maintain this until such time as public transport provision or safe alternative routes enable the County standards to be adopted.

The final paragraph is worded to enable existing issues to be addressed.

**Section 8: Community Health and Education** We previously noted the absence of policies to support this section and we welcome the addition of policies as suggested. Our comments regarding these policies are provided below:

**Policy SHW1 – Working towards better health and well-being** This policy refers to the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024–2030; however, it is not clear whether it goes beyond the ambitions set out in that Strategy. Consideration could be given to tailoring the policy so that it relates more directly to local initiatives that could help deliver tangible improvements to health and wellbeing. For example, this could include reference to local services and community activation, such as community activities hosted within the library or other local facilities.

**Response:**

We accept the point made, and propose an additional paragraph at the end of Policy SHW1:

Initiatives to preserve and enhance the varied facilities and services of the village, both formal and informally contributed by volunteers, as outlined above, are well-developed and implement the aims of the Oxfordshire Health and Well-being Strategy. They contribute substantially to the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages; both in terms of opportunities for relief of physical need (adequate housing, food, transport), physical activity (sports), social interaction (societies, events, pub activities), access to the environment (footpaths, local green spaces, allotments) and mental stimulation (societies, events, library activities).

We propose a further addition to Policy SHW1 to accommodate comments on SHW2:

Measures are appropriate to protect existing facilities from loss, in the case where pubs, shops and other commercially run services and facilities where the existing use is no longer viable and cannot be made viable or adapted to retain a viable service or facility, including as a community run enterprise. A robust marketing exercise will be required to demonstrate that the use or premises is unviable in accordance with separate guidance published by the Local Planning Authority.

In considering development proposals for the loss of local services and community facilities, the Local Planning Authority will have regard to whether a site or facility is registered as an Asset of Community Value.

**Policy SHW2** – Protecting and enhancing local sports facilities Some amendments are required to ensure this policy is compatible with the Local Plan, including Policy EH5 of the WOLP 2031. I also note that the policy extends beyond local sports facilities to include uses such as pubs, which would be better addressed outside this policy. Where the policy refers to the need for equivalent replacement provision, this should be framed as an alternative (i.e. “or”) rather than an additional requirement alongside the other criteria. It may also be helpful to strengthen this element by requiring replacement provision to be of at least equivalent suitability or accessibility. The policy could also be strengthened by referring to improved access by cycle, including the provision of appropriate cycle parking at sports venues.

**Response:**

Paragraph 3 of Policy SHW2 is identical with Policy EH5 of the WODC Local Plan 2031. In order to ensure compatibility of Paragraph 4 of SHW2, the following amendments are proposed:

Development proposals that would result in the loss of ~~community facilities~~ **open space, sports and recreational buildings and land** will only be supported where it can be clearly shown that appropriate alternative provision of at least equivalent suitability and accessibility, particularly by foot, will remain. **Adequate and preferably improved accessibility to these facilities by bicycle, together with appropriate cycle parking at sports venues, would be advantageous.**

[remainder of paragraph 3 and paragraph 4 to be moved to the end of Policy SHW1.]

## **Section 9: Countryside and Natural Environment**

**Policy SEL1** – Protecting the Cotswold AONB As previously advised, the affordable housing need identified in the NP needs to comply with the District approach and therefore reference to the ‘village need’ as identified in the NP needs to be removed.

**Response:**

As noted under the response to SH1, the Parish Council has applied the findings of the appeal judgement in the case defended by WODC as appealed by Cala; this offered clarity of interpretation of the NPPF in relation to the Cotswold National Landscape.

**Policy SEL2** – Protecting Important Views We note that, following our Regulation 14 comments, parts of the policy have been reworded to adopt a more positive approach, which is welcomed. 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.” We note 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. Finally, the policy remains relatively wordy, which makes it difficult to follow in parts. We recommend condensing and simplifying the wording to make it clearer and more concise. Some of the LLCA description could also be moved to the supporting text to improve the overall clarity of the policy.

**Response:**

The comment that ‘Policies should ensure that development respects the character of the village and surrounding countryside.’ reflects what this policy is designed to achieve. It is not intended to ‘be used as a tool to prevent future growth’ although where appropriate it may be a by-product of it.

The query as to whether “identifying all land surrounding the village risks diluting the importance of particularly sensitive views or areas.” Is not recognised. The Policy does not identify all land surrounding the village and the Parish Council was conscious throughout preparation of the NP that it should not take this approach. Designation was driven by the Village Survey and Character Assessment and Landscape Assessment. Stonesfield is in an area of outstanding natural beauty and the entrance to Cotswold National Landscape. It was not deemed appropriate to delist a sensitive or important view on the basis it was slightly less important than another.

**Policy SEL3** – Protecting the Evenlode Valley Firstly, we welcome the re-wording of the first bullet point to state that the development respects and where possible, enhances the landscape. As noted in our Regulation 14 comments, we sought clarification on the identified building line and how this is defined. We recommended that this approach should be avoided as it’s open is misinterpretation and challenge. As also noted in our comments, ‘the second bullet is reasonable for major development as the site falls within the Cotswold NL but not for minor’. There is still not distinguishment between major and minor development and so this comment still stands. Finally, we also advised that ‘the third bullet is highly unlikely to be supported by an Inspector as it appears to require a sequential approach whereby other sites need to be considered first and these are not limited to the neighbourhood plan area.’ This has not been amended and so our concerns still stand.

**Response:**

Building line – We note the concern over this phrase and “Village Settlement Boundary” would be a more appropriate phrase.

Major development – The Parish Council has looked at the issue of ‘Major’ and ‘Minor’ development in the CNL in some detail and can respond as follows:

The NPPF applies highly restrictive policies in relation to major development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Paragraph 190 of the NPPF requires refusal of applications for permission to major development other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

The NPPF also requires, by paragraph 189, great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It also makes clear that an AONB has “the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.”

Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF defines “major development” as including “for housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided or the site has an area of 0.5 ha or more.” This definition is subject to a footnote which says: “Other than for the specific purposes of paragraph 190 and 191 in this Framework.”

A footnote to paragraph 190 says: “For the purposes of paragraphs 190 and 191, whether a proposal is “major development” is a matter for the decision-maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.”

It would be contradictory of the restriction on major development by paragraph 190 and contradictory of the prescription in paragraph 189 to give great weight to interpret these footnotes as permitting a decision-maker to conclude that housing development of 10 or more homes in the AONB may not constitute “a major development.” To conclude thus would weaken the restriction on major development in the AONB and would militate against the giving of great weight to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.

The only interpretation of the footnotes which is consistent with the duty to afford “the highest status of protection” to an AONB is that they are intended to afford a decision-maker the discretion to conclude, having regard to the highest status of protection afforded to the AONB, that a proposed development of less than 10 homes or on a site of less than 0.5 ha should be treated as a major development, taking into account its nature, scale and setting and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the AONB has been designated.

This is consistent with para 8.4 of WOLP 31, explaining the restrictive nature of policy EH1 which includes the requirement to give great weight to conserving and enhancing the area’s natural beauty, landscape and countryside and which precludes major development other than in exceptional circumstances “as required by national policy and guidance.” 8.4 specifically stipulates that “there is no singular definition of major development and the council will consider each case on its merits having regard to relevant factors” i.e. “In some instances, even relatively small scale developments will be classed as major development and therefore only permitted in exceptional circumstances and where they can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.”

Nowhere in policy EH1 or the explanatory text does it suggest that in the AONB “major development” might not be applied to sites with more houses or larger area than would generally constitute the lower limit of “major development.” Had that possibility been envisaged it would certainly have been clarified within the supporting text in a way similar to that in which there was an explanation that developments smaller than those included within the general NPPF definition of major development might be classed as major development.

The ‘third bullet’ does not require ‘a sequential approach whereby other sites need to be considered first and these are not limited to the neighbourhood plan area.’ It simply requires persuasive evidence that the benefit of the development proposed by the applicant is a benefit particular to the Neighbourhood Plan area, e.g. satisfaction of a need in Stonesfield and particular to Stonesfield for social/affordable housing.

**Policy SEL4 – Local Green Spaces** Strong concerns about this policy were raised at the Regulation 14 stage. At that time, we advised that the inclusion of large agricultural areas

subject to rigid restrictions should be reconsidered, with the focus instead placed on the designation of smaller spaces that demonstrably hold community value. Although some amendments have been made to the Local Green Space proposals, our previous comments remain applicable to this policy.

**Response:**

The Parish Council does not agree that the potential LGS sites represent 'large agricultural areas'.

All the proposed sites were assessed using the toolkit recommended by WODC, the result of which is evidenced in the LGS Appendix. The Parish Council made significant changes to its proposed designations following Regulation 14 consultation.

With the exception of LGS sites 14 and 15 (the village playing field and land north of the Woodstock Road, the former proposed Cala Homes development site), all the potential LGS sites are less than 2.6ha, ten of the 16 are less than 1ha. There is no formal definition of what constitutes an 'extensive tract of land', but in a rural situation the sites being proposed by any definition would not be described as 'extensive', in the context of the large arable fields in the rest of the parish.

Of the 16 proposed LGS sites, only site 15 could be described as functioning commercial agricultural land. Site 1 has been in long term set-aside, although could be brought into commercial agriculture. The next largest site by area is the village playing field, therefore not agricultural.

The evidence from the village survey demonstrably shows that all the proposed LGS sites hold community value. In the survey 573 out of 584 respondents (more than 98%) said that protecting green spaces was very important or important.

**Policy SEL5 – Blue/Green Corridors** Please see notes from Ecology Officer regarding Biodiversity Net Gain on Page 9. 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 note that changes have not been made to this section and so our Regulation 14 comments still stand. In addition, there remains some overlap with Policy SEL3 remains.

**Response:**

The third paragraph is purposefully 'stringent' in stating that development proposals in the blue/green corridors will not be supported. The purpose of these blue/green areas is to ensure that there is an uninterrupted corridor for wildlife of all types to move from one area to another. The very nature of development, building of any kind, infrastructure and mono-agriculture causes a barrier stopping the movement which is so important to biodiversity. Significant parts of the blue/green corridors have SSSI status, or a scheduled ancient monument and all are Wild Oxfordshire Conservation Target Areas.

The 'stringent' requirement of SEL5 is specific to the blue/green corridors, not the whole parish. The map on page 90, Fig.9.7 clearly shows that the blue/green corridors are not extensive in width. The Baggs Bottom corridor, C to D on the map is circa 250–350m wide, and the corridor from Stockey Woods to Ruddywell and beyond, A to B, is circa 150–600m wide.

As recommended by OCC, we will accept a proposal to add to paragraph 1, a reference to the first and second principles of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy which require management of areas important for biodiversity so that wildlife does not decline further, and to focus local efforts and resources on the creation of a strategic network of habitats that prioritise connectivity – achieving a wide range of biodiversity-rich habitat types, joined by corridors. We also propose to include in the Justification and supporting information for SEL5, reference to the LNRS Local Habitat Map, which shows recommended actions for maintenance of each habitat type.

In addition, we propose to refer to the Natural England map of Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI IRZs). According to that map, potential developers are required to consult Natural England in relation to proposed developments within the risk zones – and in this context that would be in the areas specified in the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan as part of blue/green corridors. This is because the Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest indicate that at the location selected, there is potential for a proposed development to have a harmful effect on terrestrial SSSIs and those Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites that they underpin.

It is also proposed to add to the Justification and supporting information, reference to the LNRS Statement of Biodiversity Priorities, and its identification of recommended actions for conservation of the range of habitat types and their connecting corridors.

The suggested changes, referring to the LNRS, are all covered in the draft Stonesfield Biodiversity Policy, and link with the new requirements for the Basic Conditions. All development proposals should result in a net biodiversity gain of at least 20%, in line with OCC recommendations (except where exempt or out of scope).

The overlap with SEL3 referred to is explained by the fact that SEL3 concerns proposed building development outside the housing settlement boundary of the village, whereas SEL5 is specifically concerned with the blue/green corridors.

Second bullet point: Whilst development adjacent to a CTA might not specifically require 'exceptional circumstances' in the wider context of West Oxfordshire, the CTA areas of the Stonesfield blue/green corridors are outside the housing settlement boundary of the village and are in the CNL area of outstanding natural beauty. Development in such sensitive areas including or adjacent to SSSI sites in the CNL would require exceptional circumstances.

Finally, it is proposed to move paragraph 2 to justification and supporting evidence.

## **Policy SEL6 – Biodiversity and Trees Please see notes from Ecology Officer on Page 9.**

### **Response:**

The suggested changes referring to the LNRS are all covered in the draft Stonesfield Biodiversity Policy, and link with the new requirements for the Basic Conditions. All development proposals should result in a net biodiversity gain of at least 20%\*\*, in line with

OCC recommendations. (except where exempt or out of scope), and a BNG of 20% is encouraged wherever possible,

We propose to add to the Justification and supporting evidence, reference to the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and its measures to focus attention on ensuring retention of wildlife habitats important to biodiversity and their connecting networks.

The special habitats in question are those identified by the Local Habitats Map of the Oxfordshire LNRS, and in which supporting and recovery actions are recommended (in brackets, PM) by the Oxfordshire LNRS Biodiversity Principles. These are principally the wych elm woodland of Stockey Bottom and Bagg's Bottom (PM23, 24, 33-35), and the small woodland patches, scattered trees, scrub, and unimproved limestone grassland of Stonesfield Common (PM05, 10, 13) and Bagg's Bottom (PM16, 17, 23), the river (PM41-43) and its floodplain (PM09, 14) and the new community orchard (PM31).

**Policy SEL7 – Protecting footpaths** We previously suggested in our Regulation 14 comments that this policy would be better placed in the Transport Section and the footpath diversions should be allowed where quality/convenience maintained. Changes to this policy have not been made and so our original comments still apply.

**Response:**

The Parish Council is comfortable with the positioning of this Policy. The focus has been on footpaths in the wider Parish, of which there are many, rather than the urban area, where there are few.

Please see response to comment on Policy ST3, above.

**Policy SEL8 – Water, SUDs and Flood Risk** We welcome the additions and amendments to this policy. As previously advised, SuDS will not necessarily be required for all forms of development, particularly where proposals are very minor in scale. It may also be beneficial for the policy to reference opportunities to secure biodiversity enhancements alongside flood mitigation measures, where appropriate.

**Response:**

We propose to add the following at the end of paragraph 3: It would also be advisable, if possible at this stage, to secure appropriate biodiversity enhancement measures at the same time as implementing measures to mitigate against flooding.

It is worth noting in relation to this policy that the PC is concerned about significant sewerage and drainage issues which have caused residents major problems on Brook Lane, Churchfields, Combe Road and Laughton Hill. The PC wanted to reassure residents it would assess applications to ensure the developer had fulfilled its responsibilities to avoid worsening this situation and will be looking at it as part of its NP flowchart.

There are two locations in the village, Combe Road and Laughton Hill, where even 'minor' changes could have a disproportionate impact in increasing the flood water blocking the road.

Thames Water's proposed policy change in relation to Building Regulations is probably more relevant to WODC rather than NP. However, the proposed policy wording proposed by them: *"New development must not exceed the maximum water use targets using the 'Fittings Approach' in Table 2.2 of Part G of Building Regulations. Planning conditions will be applied to new residential development to ensure that the water efficiency standards are met."* is relevant given that the water system is highly stressed generally in the TW area and specifically in Stonesfield, as outlined above.

### **Policy SEL9 – Tranquillity and Dark Skies**

Please see notes from Ecology Officer on Page 9. We welcome the addition of the fourth paragraph: 'Artificial lighting should be avoided where possible and should not be excessive nor detrimental to the wider countryside'

#### **Response:**

We propose to add to paragraph 4 of Policy SEL9, following

Artificial lighting should be avoided where possible and should not be excessive nor detrimental to the wider countryside.:

In particular, light spillage onto important habitats and habitat corridors used by nocturnal wildlife should be minimised.,

### **Section 10: Historic Environment Policy SHE1**

Heritage and archaeology Please refer to separate detailed comments from the Senior Conservation Officer on Page 11 of this report. 6

#### **Response:**

In Policy SHE1, we propose combining the first and second paras and talk about significance rather than values as follows:

The significance of heritage assets to the village and wider parish should be carefully considered when planning any development. The setting of heritage assets should be considered in any application and proportionate assessment provided to show that any proposal sustains and preserves any setting of an asset that contributes positively to heritage significance.

The Parish Council is content that assessment requirements are repeated in the policy, signifying the importance of these requirement (HIA, HS, desk-based assessments and field evaluations).

In the third arrow under Aims we will change undesignated to non-designated for consistency.

## Section 11: Design Guidelines

**Policy SBD1 – Locally Appropriate Design** Our Regulation 14 comments advised for the removal of non-design matters (biodiversity, flood risk, etc.) We note that these are still a part of the policy and so our suggestion still stands. This creates repetition with other policies including Policy SBD3 I also suggest the following:

- The policy should reference the West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016.
- The second paragraph should remove reference to views.
- The NP states that development which threatens access to the countryside or wildlife-rich sites will not be permitted. Suggest amending to something along the lines that development which threatens access to the countryside will be resisted. Is access to wildlife-rich sites desirable as this could threaten them?
- The last paragraph of this policy states that development in the open countryside, beyond the current settlement area, should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, which doesn't comply with the approach included in Policy OS2 of the Local Plan 2031.

### Response:

We propose a change to the end of para 3 to comply with first bullet point as follows: ...as outline in the Building Design Guidelines of this Neighbourhood Plan (Section 11.5) and be compliant with West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016.

Second bullet point, agreed to delete: ... ~~or views within the village or across the surrounding landscape~~ ...

Third bullet point: we can delete from para six as follows: ...~~or wildlife-rich sites~~ ...

We wish to retain the final para. OS2 states that '*the villages are suitable for limited development*' SBD1 refers to development in **open countryside**, that is **outside the village** or current built environment and therefore OS2 doesn't apply. Development of a Rural Exception Site outside the current Housing Settlement Boundary would be permitted in exceptional circumstances providing there is a need local to the village. The provision of exceptional circumstances is accepted in the policy.

## Policy SBD2 - Locally Appropriate Design

Listed buildings, non- designated heritage assets and existing buildings Please refer to separate detailed comments from the Senior Conservation Officer on Page 11 of this report.

### Response:

See response below to Senior Conservation Officer

## Policy SBD3 – Locally Appropriate Design:

Natural Environment Please refer to our comments on Policy SBD1 regarding references to views, access to the countryside and wildlife sites, and development in the countryside.

**Policy SBD4** (previously SBD2) – Environmental Design Standards Our Regulation 14 comments recommended relocating reference to dry stone walling to Policy SBD1. We also suggested revising the wording to state that loss should be avoided but, where this is not possible, it should be made good, with improvements to existing dry stone walls or the construction of new walling in appropriate locations strongly encouraged. Our comments on this section therefore remain unchanged. We also note that there is some repetition in the policy wording, with the phrase “or that result in the permanent loss of dry-stone walls in the conservation area” appearing twice which should be removed. Finally, mandatory standards such as those relating to water efficiency are already addressed through other legislation and therefore may not add value in this policy. It is also unclear whether these requirements relate directly to design standards.

**Response:**

We propose adding the following to Policy SBD1 after para 4:

Within the village conservation area dry stone walls are the main means of defining garden boundaries. Loss of dry stone walls should be avoided but, where this is not possible, it should be made good, with improvements to existing dry stone walls or the construction of new walling in appropriate locations strongly encouraged. New developments will be encouraged to build new dry stone walls including hedgehog holes.

As a result of this change, we propose deleting from para 11.7.3 the final sentence from ‘New developments ...’

**Policy SBD5** - Environmental Design Standards – Listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and existing buildings Please refer to separate detailed comments from the Senior Conservation Officer on Page 11 of this report.

**Response:**

See response below to Senior Conservation Officer as follows:

Accepted, we can include a reference to LPA guidance on any alterations to energy efficiency measures to Listed Buildings as follows: ...proposals for alterations and extension to listed buildings (subject to prior advice from the LPA) ...

**Affordable Housing:** It is positive that the draft acknowledges households having to leave Stonesfield due to limited housing options (5.3.3) but I think a stronger link to the policies (eg. SH1, SH3, SH4, SH6) could be beneficial in the same way that links to concerns over ageing population are specifically addressed. The supporting text suggests (eg.5.3.4) that affordable housing need could be addressed with a small exception site. I’ve commented previously on the methodology for this and its seems at odds with other information, such as that relating to people leaving the village, that indicates greater demand.

**Response:**

The Parish Council sent the following letter to Chris Hargreaves at WODC on 2 April 2026

Sent to Chris Hargreaves on 2 April 2026 from Stonesfield Parish Council

## Neighbourhood Plan – Housing Needs

The Parish Council notes that the District has made several comments on the Stonesfield Draft Neighbourhood Plan at Regulation 16 stage. The Parish Council has been invited to respond to these, and other comments by the Examiner. However, in advance of responses to the comments being completed, the Parish Council wishes to respond to a concern on a comment made on housing needs as this will be a material matter for your revised Local Plan and any recommendations on forthcoming planning applications.

The District commented as follows,

*The supporting text suggests (eg.5.3.4) that affordable housing need could be addressed with a small exception site. I've commented previously on the methodology for this and its seems at odds with other information, such as that relating to people leaving the village, that indicates greater demand.*

The Parish Council takes a different view to this.

The Housing Needs Assessment was prepared in the context of the NPPF and other Planning regulation, with particular regard to the constraints applying to Stonesfield being within the Cotswold National Landscape. Housing need should be assessed as meeting the tests of exceptional circumstances and public interest as they apply to the settlement.

The HNA took account a wide source of indicators in reaching its conclusions. Whilst we note the District's observation that the survey data showed a higher number of people leaving the village in the past, this, as an indicator of future demand, this is only useful in the absence of a more robust measure. It was, however, one of a number of factors used in validating the conclusions.

The survey was written to elicit residents future intentions re housing. The survey response matched the village demographic and achieved a 62% response rate, which is a solid base from which to forecast demand. The HNA made an allowance for the non-responders and for those who answered 'don't know'.

The conclusion of the HNA was to identify a need for 4-5 additional affordable houses in the next five years. It was also clear the turnover of existing market housing market would more than cover future demand, without the need for further development. It was clear that the typical model of building market housing with a 50% affordable housing component was not a solution to the identified housing need and nor would it comply with the restrictive development regulations applying to the National Landscape.

Stonesfield has little in the way of employment or education beyond primary level, hence most leavers from the village identified these two factors as reasons for leaving. The lack of employment is an indicator that there is unlikely to be an exceptional need for people to want to move to the village.

It is important to mention that the Survey results need some interpretation. Further analysis shows lower indicators when the data is looked at with more granularity, hence, of those who left,

- 9 people (from 7 households) left the village in the 5 years before the survey due to a lack of affordable housing to rent;

- 13 a lack of affordable housing to buy (from 10 households but this included 7 of those who ticked affordable housing to rent); and,
- 12 a lack of suitable housing from 9 households).

Also, these are gross indicators and do not show that the individuals met criteria for affordable housing for example, if they weren't already adequately housed or were able to afford a property. It would be dangerous to use these numbers as an indicator of demand.

Since the Survey, the Parish Council is aware that a number of properties at the lower end of the market have been for sale in the village for a significant time. Stonesfield Community Trust has recently let one of its social rent properties to someone from a neighbouring village. The Parish Council has also recently received the latest data from the Homeseecker Plus database. This would seem to show it has changed little from when it was reviewed for the HNA, it does not indicate an exceptional need from the settlement.

The Parish Council is actively following up the recommendation from the HNA and is working closely with Oxfordshire First to identify sites that could be used to meet the identified need and is engaging with parties locally to take this forward.

The Parish Council hopes this clarification is helpful.

**Ecology:** With regard to policy SEL5 blue-green corridors, I welcome the protection of the natural environment and the requirement to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity. Although this accords with the local plan 2032 (policy EH3), it has now been superseded somewhat by statutory BNG requirement for minimum of 10% net gain for all developments (except where exempt or out of scope). The neighbourhood plan goes against statutory BNG as it requires 10% net gain for all development without mention of the exemptions. This would therefore not be acceptable as it is not in accordance with the legislation. It could result in issues with planning decisions in the area in future. Ideally, the plan would focus more on the quality of BNG to be provided for developments that occur in the area, rather than the quantitative aspect alone. I would therefore encourage an amendment to look at how BNG should be delivered in the area, focussing on what habitats should be created/enhanced to reflect local landscape and biodiversity needs. A data search from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) would be a useful way forward, as they can provide Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) details and help with identifying habitat and species priorities with the area that would aid nature recovery. BNG should be linked with the opportunities identified in the LNRS for habitat creation and enhancement – the Oxfordshire LNRS was published in November 2025 and is available to view here, including the local habitat map:  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy-lnrs>

Here is a screenshot of the local habitat map around Stonesfield – each different coloured polygon is essentially a different opportunity for habitat creation, restoration or enhancement in the area. If further advice is needed about this, we would be happy to discuss with the steering group or the local environment group. It is very interesting to see how the blue-green corridors in the neighbourhood plan tie in with the nature recovery network shown in the image below.

**Response:**

This has been answered earlier, in relation to NP Policies SEL5 and SEL6. As stated there, these policies will be amended in relation to the points raised by the Ecology Officer. The Stonesfield Biodiversity Plan is the appropriate place for these details.

The same comments relating to BNG are applicable to policy **SEL6 biodiversity**. A reliance on the 10% objective is not needed in local policy, as this is now statutory requirement through planning, but comes with a set of exemptions that must be adhered to – we would not be able to use the neighbourhood plan policy to secure BNG on all developments in the area if they were technically exempt under the legislation. I therefore recommend that the policy takes a qualitative approach in terms of requiring BNG delivery in the area to focus on protecting existing “areas of particular importance for biodiversity” (as mapped in the LNRS) and other important habitats or ecological features and providing specific enhancements – a list of habitats that should be focussed on as part of BNG proposals within development sites.

I welcome the inclusion of specific opportunities for wildlife improvements to be provided in and around developments, including bird and bat boxes, hedgehog highways and green infrastructure features (including green roofs and living walls?)

The “health” of the river Evenlode might need to be explained in the supporting text to the policy, as this terminology is not usually used, normally I would expect to see “significant ecological value” – so that the ecological value is not damaged or lost without adequate mitigation or compensation.

#### **Response:**

Amendments to Policy SEL6 have been proposed above. Policy SEL6 seeks to encourage opportunities to incorporate wildlife improvements in and around developments, to help secure measurable overall gains for wildlife. In relation to the ecological value of the River Evenlode, this could recommend use of the recommendations of the Oxfordshire LNRS Biodiversity Principles PM41 and PM42.

With regard to policy **SEL9** – tranquillity and dark skies – reference should be added to minimising light spillage onto important habitats and habitat corridors used by nocturnal wildlife, particularly foraging/commuting and roosting bats. This would be particularly important if there are any known bat roosts or flight paths in the area where lighting would be detrimental to the continue use of these.

I also need to comment on **section 11.7** – design guidelines for biodiversity on page 117. Section 11.7.2 refers to bird boxes for swifts and house sparrows, and new developments and alterations to existing buildings being “bat friendly”. This is welcomed, but more detail might be appropriate to ensure that these are installed appropriately. Swift bricks should be installed in groups (unless they have more than 1 hole) as the species is a colonial breeder, and at least 4 metres from the ground. Ideally, installation would be carried out in accordance with Swift Conservation advice <https://www.swift-conservation.org/Nestboxes&Attraction.htm>

#### **Response:**

We accept that swift bricks can be used by other bird species. The bird species most notably in decline in Stonesfield is the swift, hence the focus on swifts. More detail is contained in the Stonesfield Biodiversity Plan. The text – 11.7.2 Wherever practicable and appropriate, new developments and alterations to existing buildings should include swift bricks and/or house sparrow bricks, and be bat-friendly – is clear for the purpose of the Plan.

**Swift bricks** can actually be suitable for house sparrows and starlings and are considered to be almost a universal bird box option, as they can cater for additional species in comparison to house sparrow boxes/terraces which would only be used by house sparrows and starlings, and not swifts. They are therefore helping two priority species for conservation as well as swifts (which rely solely on buildings for nesting, hence the prominent focus on swift bricks).

If by “bat-friendly”, they mean the installation of features for bats as an enhancement, then this should be stipulated. Bat friendly to me means using appropriate breathable membranes that have passed the anti-snagging test in conversions or re-roofing projects to retain potential for roosting bats to use roof spaces and the gaps between tiles/slates and the roofing felt, and ensuring that roosting opportunities are maintained or provided as enhancements. See more details here <https://www.bats.org.uk/advice/im-working-on-a-building-with-bats/things-to-consider-when-planning-works/roofing-membranes> Just as integrated swift bricks can be installed within the fabric of buildings, so too can bat boxes, e.g. bat tubes, bricks or access panels. You can also use ridge-tiles with gaps in for bats, modified roofing tiles, slates and vents. Integrated boxes within buildings provide a permanent, robust and maintenance-free option as compared to externally mounted boxes that may fall off and need replacing.

**Response:**

Noted: the Parish Biodiversity Plan will have full details following the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines.

**Section 11.7.4** refers to garden hedges and Wild privet should be added to the species list. As a species that retains its leaves during the winter, it can be an attractive part of a hedgerow, especially for screening as well as wildlife habitat. I would also recommend adding Field maple (and potentially, Blackthorn).

**Response:**

This is a level of detail that is inappropriate for the Plan, but will be contained within the Stonesfield Biodiversity Plan.

In **Section 11.7.5** it refers to hedgehog gaps in fences, but my understanding from Hedgehog Street guidance is that these should be a minimum of 150mm or 15cm, and the text refers to 10cm. This should be updated.

**Response:**

Noted, the text will be changed to 15 x 15cm.

### **Conservation: General:**

There is a lot of reference in the text to our current policies – almost written verbatim. I wonder if this could be condensed. There is no need to repeat policies – perhaps a couple of concise paragraphs that capture the essence of the Local Plan policies. Especially in light of the upcoming LP review. In para 10.1.4 its refer to: .... However, the source of this specific type of limestone was limited, and mining drew to a close in the early years of the 20th century. A fact check:...is it because the limestone was limited or did mining draw to a close because of new incoming materials such as Welsh slate / bricks etc.? This can be answered by knowing whether there are still extant stone seams in the area that could still be worked.

### **Response:**

On the first point – it is not clear which texts are recommended to be condensed.

On the second point: We suggest the following amendments to section 10.1.4:

Many had other occupations alongside farming, especially in the 18th-19th centuries: mining for the oolitic limestone that could be split **by frost** into the Stonesfield ‘slates’ (not true slate, as in the metamorphic slates of Wales and Scotland). Slates from Stonesfield became famous as desirable roofing material that was eagerly taken up and used for many of the Oxford colleges, as well as for the cottages of the village. However, the source of this specific type of limestone was limited and mining drew to a close in the early years of the 20th century **due to the small dimensions of the elliptical limestone bed, and to a succession of mild winters and competition from Welsh slates**. A network of paths through the woods of Stockey Bottom, and paths along Bagg’s Bottom, pass the historic chipping banks, the tips of loose rock from the early open-cast and later horizontal mine shafts. Several vertical mine shafts leading to horizontal galleries remain within private properties in the village **but mining is no longer possible**.

The **Policy SHE1** Heritage and Archaeology: Para 1 refers to non-designated assets – but there is also a separate policy (SHE2) for NDHAs. Perhaps this term should be removed from here.

To make Paragraph 1 and 2 more concise they could combine para 1 with para 2: For example: ...designated and non-designated assets, and potential archaeological remains, including their setting...

In para 2 & 3: it would be better to mention significance instead of values. This is to keep it consistent with the NPPF e.g. para 3 could read...its surroundings and preserve or enhance heritage values significance of assets that may be affected.

There is a repeat of the requirement for assessments (and proportionate assessment) – which is okay, but all of the types of assessments mentioned (e.g. HIA, HS, desk-based assessments and field evaluations) could be made more concise with one paragraph stating the types of assessment required for heritage assets.

For consistency under Aims of this policy use non-designated instead of undesignated. Likewise there is reference to listed and non-designated historic assets in para 11.4.1 - there needs to be consistency - so the sentence should read: Groups of listed designated and non-designated heritage historic assets.

## Response:

Point 1: The purpose of Policy SHE1 is to define the whole framework of heritage considerations which need to be taken into account in relation to proposed developments: i.e. the archaeological remains, scheduled monuments, listed buildings and non-designated assets. Policy SHE2 then goes on to specify the less obvious considerations relating to developments in relation to non-designated assets.

Point 2: The first two paragraphs will be replaced by the following:

The heritage **significance** of the village and wider parish, the designated and non-designated assets and potential archaeological remains, **and their setting** should be carefully considered when planning any development, ~~The setting of heritage assets (designated and non-designated) should be considered in any application,~~ and proportionate assessment provided to show that any proposal sustains and preserves any setting of an asset that contributes positively to its heritage significance.

Point 3: Paragraph 3 (becoming paragraph 2) will be amended to:

Any application should be accompanied by appropriate evidence-based reports to set out how

proposals address the identified character of the village and its surroundings and preserve or enhance heritage the heritage **significance** of assets that may be affected.

Point 4: Paragraph 4 of Policy SHE1 onward will be amended to the following:

Development proposals with a potential impact on heritage asset will require the following types of assessment:

Proposals within the Conservation Area and affecting listed buildings nor non-designated assets:

- Heritage Impact Assessment / Heritage Statement

Proposals involving below-ground disturbance:

- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment
- Any application within the Plan Area as a whole should consider the potential for below-ground archaeological remains, including the potential evidence for the village's slate mining industry which is known to extend beyond the conservation area
- Consultation of the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record as a minimum stage to identify archaeological potential.

Proposals within the village but outside the Conservation Area:

- Account taken of the design guide and demonstration of how the character appraisal of the village has been considered and has informed the proposed designs,
- Proportionate statements within the application should set out how proposal designs address the character of the parish.

Proposals involving significant ground disturbance within the historic village centre: (particularly, but not exclusively, the areas described in the 2024 Character Assessment as the Historic Core and Churchfields and Laughton Hill)

- Proportionate field evaluation assessments.

Development proposals which include, or have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest

- Appropriate desk-based assessment of significance (or heritage statement)
- Field evaluation, where necessary.

Point 5: noted: non-designated will be used in place of undesignated, and in 11.4.1, Groups of listed and non-designated... will be amended to Groups of designated and non-designated...

## **Section 11: Building and Environmental design guidelines**

Para 11.2.3 - 11.2.5 are beneath the section on 'Settlement Type'. The paragraphs at this location is a little odd, they refer to vernacular character of cottages, buildings, and then to sustainability and climate change - they may need to move to buildings / architecture?. This para should focus on what they wish to achieve in terms of future development following the settlement pattern / historic landscape character or similar.

### **Response:**

Paragraph 11.2.3 clearly describes the vernacular architectural features of the old cottages in the village.

Paragraph 11.2.4 refers the reader to the Appendix D: Stonesfield Character Assessment for further details.

Paragraph 11.2.5 states that new developments should have regard for the existing built and landscape environment

No change is required.

### **Policy SBD2: Locally appropriate design:**

Not all development to a LB is supportable. So I would like to see a caveat with regard to LBs: something like... 'where development is supported by the LPA (aligned with legislation, guidance and policy)' alterations and extensions to designated heritage assets...etc...

### **Response:**

We suggest the following change to policy wording:

Design proposals should positively enhance the character and appearance of the immediate locality. Alterations and extensions to listed buildings, where development is supported by the LPA (aligned with legislation, guidance and policy), non-designated heritage assets and existing buildings, should maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the village and contribute to local distinctiveness and biodiversity. Proposals which detract from the character or the appearance of the neighbourhood or views within the village or across the surrounding rural landscape will not be supported.

The first para is a little mixed up - it refers to LBs / NDHAs then it refers to the overall character of the village (character and appearance), views and takes focus away from the assets - it should be more specific towards preserving and / or enhancing the heritage assets where appropriate.

**Response:**

The character of Stonesfield is a rich mix of listed buildings, non-designated heritage assets and recent developments – it's a living village. The character of the village is as a result of this mix of built environment and the landscape in which the village sits. It is this mix that this policy seeks to maintain and enhance. The first para of policy SBD2 isn't 'mixed up' but it does represent the 'mix' of the built village and the surrounding landscape.

It refers to application requirements for Heritage assessments again...repeating the SHE policies. This could be more concise.

**Response:**

This may in parts be a duplication of SHE policies, but the Parish Council believes it is very important and therefore worthy of some duplication.

The text following the policies: There is a lot of text repeating LP policies, HEs Conservation Principles - this could be more concise.

**Response:** See above

### **Policy SBD5: Environmental Design Standards**

I would like to see a caveat here that refers to seeking advice from the LPA for any alterations to energy efficiency measures to LBs.

**Response:**

Accepted, we can include a reference to LPA guidance on any alterations to energy efficiency measures to Listed Buildings as follows: ...proposals for alterations and extension to listed buildings (subject to prior advice from the LPA) ...

**Leisure:** Re Pg 26/27 noted that headings relate to 'Recreation' and 'Young People' but that content has no reference to sport. Wording notes 'Consider a skate park next to the tennis court to encourage outdoor fun and exercise, or other leisure space' - are they able to add in include 'sport' as in 'or other sport/leisure space'.

Re Pg 66 (Sct 6.4) Sports, recreation and community facilities. Noted that no reference is made to WODCs Playing Pitch Strategy. You could add in wording such as 'The Neighbourhood Plan draws upon the district's 2022 Playing Pitch Strategy (refreshed 2024) as part of the evidence base to assess current and future needs for outdoor sports provision

and in particular refers to football, cricket and tennis provision at Stonefield Playing Fields and the need to maintain pitches and improve ancillary facilities. The Local Football Facilities Plan 2025 also highlights refurbishing the changing pavilion as a Priority Project. The PPS provides useful analysis of pitch supply, demand, and quality, and its recommendations have been considered in shaping local policies for the protection and improvement of sports pitches and facilities.’

**Response:**

Point 1: The table on pp26-27 lists the key issues raised by Stonesfield residents in response to the Village Survey 2023. There were no specific calls for more or improved sports facilities; the only comment on sports was to call for provision of land for other uses than housing, like sport or burial plots.

Point 2: The WODC Playing Pitch Strategy is already mentioned in the context of Policy SHW2 (pp72,76 and 86). A correction is needed on p72: penultimate paragraph should refer to the Playing Pitch Strategy (2022).

We propose to introduce new section 6.4.4 as follows, and to renumber all subsequent sections as 6.4.5 etc.

The Neighbourhood Plan draws upon the WODC 2022 Playing Pitch Strategy (refreshed 2024)<sup>2</sup> as part of the evidence base to assess current and future needs for outdoor sports provision. The Strategy provides useful analysis of pitch supply, demand, and quality, and its recommendations have been considered in shaping local policies for the protection and improvement of sports pitches and facilities. It refers to football (Stonesfield has 14 teams), cricket and tennis provision at Stonesfield playing field and the need to maintain pitches and improve ancillary facilities, including a pledge to support future planning for sports lighting to increase tennis court capacity. In addition the Local Football Facilities Plan 2025<sup>3</sup> highlights refurbishing the Stonesfield changing pavilion as a priority project.

This additional paragraph generates two new endnotes for Section 6:

<sup>2</sup> West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy and action plan report 2022

<sup>3</sup> Premier League Football Foundation Local Football Facility Plan: West Oxfordshire 2025