Stonesfield Parish Council

APPENDIX A

Housing Needs Assessment

April 2024

Report written by Philippa Lowe on behalf of **Stonesfield Parish Council**

SECTION 1 – OVERVIEW, METHODOLOGY & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 OVERVIEW

The objective of the Housing Needs Assessment is to evidence future housing needs for the parish of Stonesfield to support the Neighbourhood Plan and constituent Policies.

The Assessment covers consideration of a number of material factors impacting Stonesfield. This includes policy considerations, particularly, the existing West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) Local Plan 2031, the National Planning Policy Framework, and Cotswold Landscape Management Plan. The policy framework was tested through an appeal against planning refusal for a major development in Stonesfield in 2019 (the "Cala Appeal") and the principles established by the Planning Inspector in upholding the refusal, are also considered here. The Assessment also uses a number of data sources, particularly the Neighbourhood Plan Survey conducted in 2023, which had c60% response rate, the Census, ONS projections and school rolls. These various sources are considered to assess housing need in Stonesfield and draw conclusions necessary to support the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Assessment is structured as follows:

Section 1 – Overview, Methodology & Executive Summary

Section 2 - The Policy Context

Section 3 – Demographic Profile

Section 4 – Housing Stock

Section 5 – Future Demand

Section 6 – Conclusions & Recommendations

Appendix 1 – West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 Strategy for Burford – Charlbury Sub-Area

Appendix 2 - Appeal Against Refusal of Planning Permission – Cala Homes 2019

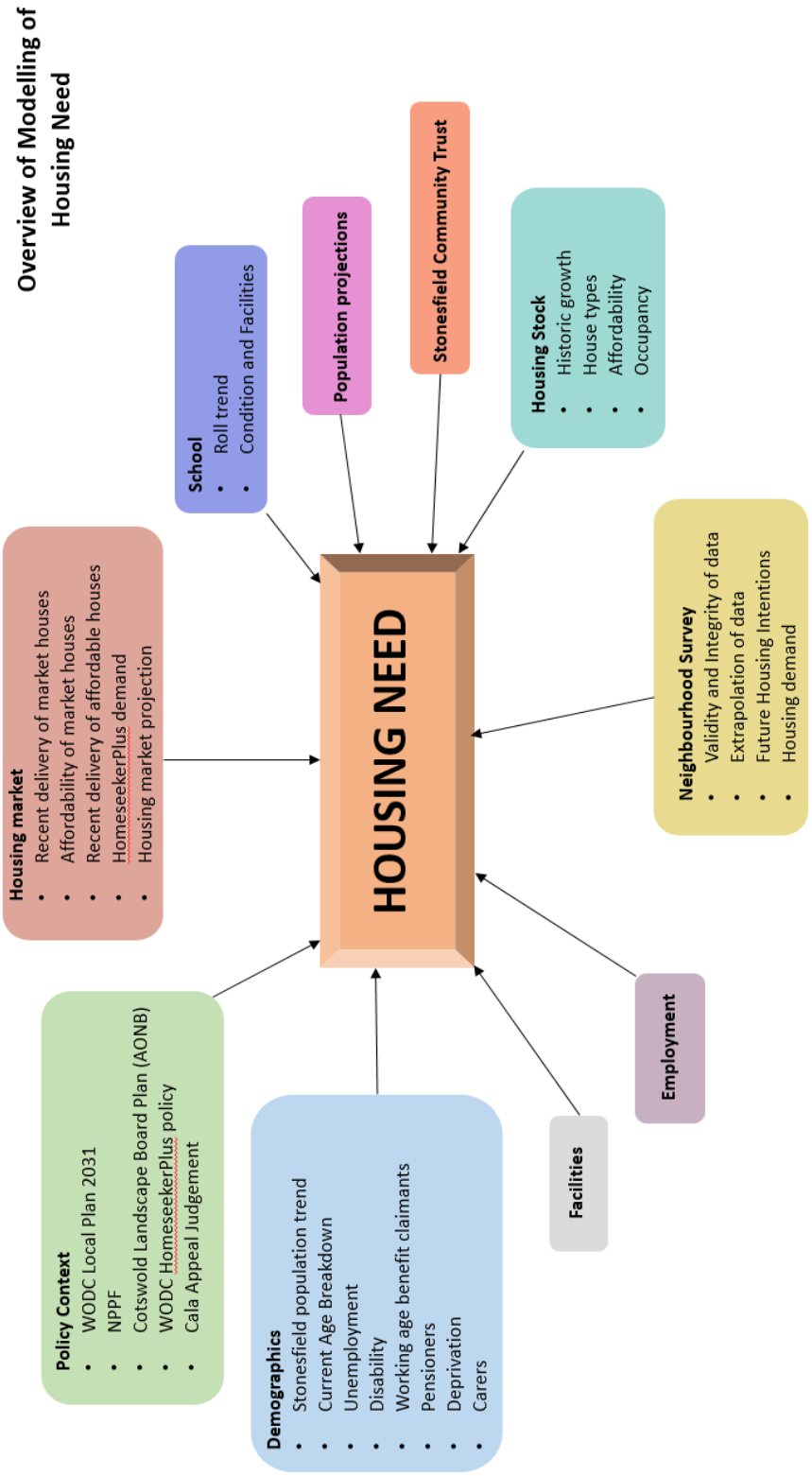
Appendix 3 – Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025 Development principles

Appendix 4 – HomeSeeker Plus Policy Criteria

Consultation to gather feedback on the draft report was undertaken between January and March 2024. The report was discussed at the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on 29 January 2024, with members of the Parish Council and Community Trust in attendance. The draft report was circulated to Parish Council members during February and March. Feedback enabled this final version to be produced.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

An overview of the modelling process is shown in the diagram below:



1.3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The policy context for housing development in Stonesfield is restrictive and applies some onerous criteria.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (revised Dec 2023) states that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, such as that in which Stonesfield sits, have the highest level of protection in order to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty. Permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan, extant to 2031, places Stonesfield in the Charlbury – Burford Sub-Area and recognises that a restrictive approach applies in this Sub-area per the NPPF. A Sub-area housing target of 774 homes is based on past completions and existing commitments only with no allowance for 'windfall' development. Whilst this does not mean that no further housing development will be permitted in this sub-area, proposals will be considered on a case by case basis and need to convincingly demonstrate that a scheme would give rise to benefits to the specific settlement or the sub-area (e.g. meeting identified local housing needs) and which would clearly outweigh any likely harms. The Inspector in the Cala appeal confirmed that, when it was contended that such local housing needs justified the grant of permission for such development, those needs, in the case of Stonesfield, would have to be needs specific to the settlement.

The Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan to 2025, covering the AONB, confirms that windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining, or outside of the built-up area should only be supported where there is robust evidence of a specific local housing need, such as, needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or, affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement. Moreover, it expands the specificity of the restrictions for development, stating that, 'exceptional need' does not necessarily equate to 'exceptional circumstances'; no permission should be given for major development save to the extent the development was needed in the public interest, met a need that could not be addressed elsewhere or in some other way and met that need in a way that moderated detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities; local authorities should refuse an application unless they meet the exceptional circumstances and public interest criteria.

The Management Plan also states that housing delivery in the Cotswolds National Landscape should be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity such as social rented housing. As such, Local Plans should give consideration to setting policies for affordable housing provision in the CNL that require:

• at least 50% affordable housing in market housing developments;

• 100% affordable housing on Rural Exception Sites, with a lower percentage only being permitted in exceptional circumstances and the absolute minimum being 75%;

• on-site affordable housing provision for housing developments of five units or fewer.

It adds that great care should be taken in using data from choice based letting systems, ensuring it is verified and there is a clear local connection to the settlement.

The demographic profile of Stonesfield is much more heavily weighted to an older, more affluent population and this trend is forecast to continue.

Employment and facilities in Stonesfield are very limited.

The number of houses in Stonesfield has grown from 241 in 1961 to over 700 in 2023. The housing stock is much more heavily geared to detached, owner occupied dwellings than the national average.

There is a bigger affordability gap for property in Stonesfield than the national average and the average sale price in the year to January 2024 was c£626k and £759k for a detached house.

Along with publicly held data, reliance has been placed on the Neighbourhood Plan household survey undertaken in 2023, which had a 62% response rate, broadly in line with the village demographic. The Survey focussed heavily on housing needs. No exceptional need was identified for the next five years.

It is projected that the housing market will satisfy local need for anyone in the settlement seeking to move in the next five years, with significant excess capacity to cater for anyone who might wish to move but had identified that they didn't know their future intentions at the date of the survey. There is no demonstrable requirement for additional market housing.

There may be a very small shortfall of social/affordable housing in the next five years, which a small rural exception site would satisfy, although a specific assessment would be needed to justify demand and size. Stonesfield Community Trust are well positioned to deliver this, given it is well established.

The only exceptional circumstance, which is not presently impacting the vitality of the village, is the projected continued trend to an increasingly older population with a corresponding decline in the proportion of the population comprising those of working age and children. Any unaffordability of owner-occupied housing, adds further weight to the conclusion that social/affordable housing might address this circumstance, which market housing would not. However, current projections for the settlement do not indicate much demand for social/affordable housing and this presents the Parish Council with a dilemma in needing to weigh the benefits of building social/affordable housing to attract a younger occupancy from outside the settlement, when there is little in the way of employment or facilities within the settlement. The Parish Council should review, in the future, the vitality of the village and whether there is benefit to such development as an exceptional circumstance. This is not a pressing problem and the projected population change as a proportion of the village population is unlikely to have much impact on the village's vitality in the next five years.

SECTION 2 – POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL (WODC) LOCAL PLAN OVERVIEW

Stonesfield is covered by WODC Local Plan 2031 (adopted 2018) and is part of the Burford-Charlbury Sub-Area within that Plan. This is the largest of the sub-areas covering an area of almost 22,000 hectares. It has a predominantly rural character and is relatively sparsely populated with just 13,000 residents. The area includes a network of small and medium sized towns and villages, none larger than 3,000 residents. The vast majority of the area is within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and many of the towns and villages have extensive conservation areas and numerous listed buildings.

There are two designated rural service centres within this sub-area; Burford and Charlbury. The existing housing stock in this sub-area is relatively evenly distributed with no single major large settlement.

Although it is environmentally sensitive, the service centres in this area have good transport links and a range of existing infrastructure which meets primarily local needs. The Local Plan states that it is

appropriate that some growth takes place here during the plan period. However, it must be recognised that opportunities for development are relatively limited and the planned scale of growth therefore needs to be appropriate. This is consistent with national policy which applies a more restrictive approach to development in designated areas such as the Cotswolds AONB.

There has been relatively little past housing delivery in the sub-area compared to other parts of the District, reflecting the environmentally sensitive nature of the area and poor connectivity of some parts. There are very limited opportunities for significant housing development in this area.

In recognition of the fact that the Burford - Charlbury sub-area is covered largely by the Cotswolds AONB, a more restrictive approach to new housing development is applied than in the other four sub-areas in the Local Plan. As set out in Policy H1, the amount of housing proposed for this sub-area in the plan period to 2031 (774 homes) is based on past completions and existing commitments only. No allowance is made for future speculative 'windfall' development (an allowance for which has been made in the other sub-areas).

This does not mean that no further housing development will be permitted within the Burford – Charlbury sub-area but proposals will be considered on a case by case basis. It will need to be convincingly demonstrated that a scheme would give rise to benefits to the specific settlement or the sub-area (eg meeting identified local housing needs) and which would clearly outweigh any likely harms (eg heritage, landscape, impact on local services). Housing proposals which constitute 'major development' will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest.

In accordance with the overall strategy, housing development is likely to be focused primarily at Burford and Charlbury as the designated rural service centres.

The anticipated housing delivery for this subarea is 774 homes in the period 2011 – 2031. For Stonesfield, the following are included:

• Charity Farm, Woodstock Road, Stonesfield (27)*

• Land east of Farley Corner, Farley Lane, Stonesfield (13)

*Note, the final scheme at Charity Farm was built out with 37 units.

WODC has shown it is in a strong position to deliver sufficient houses to meet its requirements over the five year period. 77 houses are anticipated in the Charlbury-Burford Sub-area, including the following in Stonesfield:

Units	Site
1	Brook House, Brook Lane
2	Springwell, The Ridings
1	Farm Buildings, Farley Lane
2	19 Combe Road
1	Building Referred To As Asgard South East Of Valhalla. Church Street
2	16 Combe Road
1	Skyfall, Church Street
10	Total

Source: WODC Housing Land Supply Position Statement 2023 – 2028 (October 2023)

Policy B1 – Strategy for the Burford – Charlbury Sub-Area in the WODC Local Plan 2031, is included at Appendix 1 of this report.

2.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

The NPPF is an “other material consideration” to which, when determining a planning application, the local planning authority is required by section 70 (2) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to have regard alongside the “provisions of the development plan so far as material to the application.”

Provisions of the NPPF are crucial to the regulation of development in Stonesfield and the latest version of the NPPF was announced on 19 December 2023. It retains the long-standing significance for Stonesfield of the village’s situation in the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly Cotswolds AONB). Paragraph 182 says: –

"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues."

Paragraph 183 says: –

“When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest." (underlining added).

Annex 2 of the NPPF defines “major development” when applied to housing as comprising development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more.

The application of these provisions in practice, i.e. when there is an application for planning permission to build a housing estate, was tested through the Cala appeal. The appeal in 2019 against refusal to grant planning permission for 68 homes to Cala Homes, a big national housebuilding company, was heard before a planning inspector. The proposed development 68 houses including 34 affordable homes, on an open field next to the Woodstock Road just outside its entrance into Stonesfield. Sustainable Stonesfield, a community group, in alliance with the Parish Council, opposed Cala at the planning inquiry. The planning inspector upheld the refusal of permission. He based his decision principally on the following factors:

- granting permission would have resulted in a “major development;”
- the estate, if built, would have caused “significant harm to the character and appearance of the AONB;”
- there was no convincing evidence sufficient to persuade him that housing need amounted to “exceptional circumstances…. in the public interest” which might have justified a grant of permission;
- in coming to this decision, he accepted 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.

More detail on the Appeal judgement are to be found in Appendix 2.

2.3 COTSWOLD NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2025 (Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

The Cotswold National Landscape Board have produced a useful document, *Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025*, covering development and need within the Cotswold National Landscape (CNL, formerly AONB.

The relevant policies are included at Appendix 3, but the key points are highlighted below.

Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and should explicitly identify the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan as a material consideration.

Planning legislation and policy affords the highest level of protection to AONBs – the same level of protection as for National Parks. Although some development may be required to meet local housing needs and to ensure that the vitality of National Landscape settlements is maintained and enhanced, development should not be at such scale that either individually or cumulatively, it erodes the special qualities of the National Landscape

Permission should be refused for major development within the CNL, other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest

- 'exceptional need' does not necessarily equate to 'exceptional circumstances';
- no permission should be given for major development save to the extent the development was needed in the public interest, met a need that could not be addressed elsewhere or in some other way and met that need in a way that to the extent possible, moderated detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities;

When making decisions on major development proposals, local authorities (and/or other relevant decision makers) should not simply weigh all material considerations in the balance, but should refuse an application unless they meet the exceptional circumstances and public interest criteria.

Housing delivery in the Cotswolds National Landscape i.e. the AONB should be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity such as social rented housing.

Local Plans should give consideration to setting policies for affordable housing provision in the CNL that require:

- at least 50% affordable housing in market housing developments
- 100% affordable housing on Rural Exception Sites, with a lower percentage only being permitted in exceptional circumstances and the absolute minimum being 75%
- on-site affordable housing provision for housing developments of five units or fewer

Priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing local community amenities and services and improving access to these amenities and services. Priority should also be given to supporting local employment opportunities.

It should be recognised that:

a) The housing need figure derived from the Government's 'standard method' for calculating housing need is an unconstrained assessment of housing need and does not present a target for housing provision.

b) The decision on how many homes should be planned for (i.e., the 'housing requirement' figure in Local Plans) should only be made after consideration of the constraints that the local authority faces, including the AONB designation, and consideration of the land that is actually available for development. When these constraints are factored in, the 'housing requirement' could potentially be smaller than the standard method's 'housing need' figure.
c) The application of national planning policies relating to AONBs may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs (OAN) in full in local authority areas that overlap with the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL)
d) The CNL is unlikely to be a suitable area for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining, non-designated areas. In the context of the CNL, this includes unmet needs relating to adjacent urban areas and unmet needs arising in local authority areas that do not overlap with the CNL.
e) Meeting housing need is never a reason to cause unacceptable harm to the CNL.
f) The scale and extent of development in the CNL should be limited.

When the allocation of sites is being considered in the Local Plan process, regard should be given to the evidence of need specific to: (i) the settlement/parish where the allocation is being proposed; and (ii) the CNL 'sub-area' within which the allocation is being proposed.

Within the CNL, windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining, or outside of, built up area boundaries (or equivalent) should only be supported where there is robust evidence of a specific local housing need such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement.

The Management Plan says that meeting housing need is never a reason to cause unacceptable harm to the Cotswolds National Landscape. Furthermore, it stipulates that the Cotswolds National Landscape is unlikely to be a suitable area for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining non-designated areas and that in the context of the Cotswolds National Landscape, this includes unmet needs relating to adjacent urban areas. Thus, it leans heavily against any justification for development in Stonesfield within the AONB in order to satisfy housing need for example, in Oxford which Oxford itself is unable to meet.

Where choice-based lettings systems, such as Homeseeker Plus, are used as part of the evidence base for affordable housing need:

• the 'local connection' component of the choice-based lettings system should be applied consistently; and

• data from the choice-based lettings systems should not be used explicitly as a measure of affordable housing need unless the data has been verified and there is a clear local connection to – and preference for – the settlement in question.

When local authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to setting policies that ensure that new market housing is used as a principal residence rather than as a second home or holiday home.

The lack of a specific housing need figure, or housing requirement figure, for the AONB 'sub-area' within which an allocation is being considered could potentially make the allocation (and the Plan) unsound. This was the case in West Oxfordshire, where the Local Plan inspector concluded that 'in the absence of a housing need figure for the Burford – Charlbury sub-area... the allocation in the plan

of housing sites, and the reliance on additional windfall housing development, in the Burford – Charlbury area, over and above existing completions and commitments, would not be sound'.

There is concern that second home ownership, retirement homes and buy to let (including Air BnB) have removed housing from the market that could otherwise be made available to first home owners. This results in increased demand within a reduced pool of housing stock, which inflates house prices and makes housing less affordable. The Board is particularly concerned that those who care for the landscape of the National Landscape and other key workers have an opportunity to live within it.

2.4 AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICIES – HOMESEEKER PLUS

Homeseeker Plus is a choice based letting scheme which allows anyone who qualifies for the WODC housing register to apply for social rented and low cost private rented properties anywhere in the District and/or the other Districts under the scheme. Applicants who qualify are then banded according to their individual needs, in line with the Homeseeker Plus Policy and can register an interest - known as 'bidding' - for the properties suited to their circumstances.

To decide who is in housing need, applications are assessed against the eligibility criteria contained in the Homeseeker Plus policy. Applicants are assessed within 4 bands, Emergency, Gold, Silver or Bronze. Criteria to determine banding include criteria covering Homelessness status, medical needs, welfare needs and 'general'.

Appendix 4 summarises the key criteria applying to each banding.

There is a section in the Policy relating to local connections. This states that, due to the exceptional demand for housing across the Homeseeker Plus area and the difficulty in solving local housing need, preference will normally be given to applicants with a local connection to the appropriate district.

This is defined by any of the following:

Those who are, or were in the past, normally resident in the local authority area, and that residence was of their own choice during six out of the past twelve months or during three out of the past five years or those who are employed in the local authority area or those who have immediate family connections in the local authority area for five years or Members of the armed forces or other special circumstances.

Note, under the Homeseekerplus policy adopted by WODC, local connection is normally applied at a District level. In terms of defining local need within the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly Cotswolds AONB), the Cala appeal judgement, outlined below, applies a much more restrictive definition which applies at settlement e.g. Stonesfield. There is some provision for this within the Homeseekerplus policy, covering rural settlements and local letting plans:

"*Additional local connection criteria will apply for properties in rural villages where there are particular shortages of housing sites with planning conditions (Section 106 agreements, Local Letting Plans, affordable housing and rural exception sites) attached to them. In these cases, priority will be given to Applicants who are unable to live in their community due to the lack of affordable housing, who have a local connection to the parish or surrounding parishes by means of living in the parish, working in the parish or having immediate family connections to the parish. Where this applies the details will be explained in the property advertisement."*

2.5 OTHER

The WODC housing allocation for Stonesfield and the wider Sub-Area is outlined in the section above and the principles relating to any further major development (10 or more houses) were established in the Cala appeal judgement and based on the NPPF, WODC Local Plan and Cotswold Management Board policies. The allocation for Stonesfield has been exceeded, mainly through a number of small developments, which, for example, in the case of Farley Lane, have covered a number of small phases of large detached dwellings, with little by way of s106 contribution; recent sales values of these properties have ranged from £1.35m to £1.95m. (Note, it is anticipated that WODC will close this 'loophole' currently allowing avoidance of s106 contributions, in the next iteration of the Local Plan). In addition, a redundant industrial unit has been converted in to 6 private one-bedroom flats, also on Farley Lane.

As acknowledged above by Cotswold National Landscape Board, there is a significant shortcoming in the usual method for assessment of affordable housing need. Historically, WODC's Choice based letting system has provided data as a proxy for local need. This is fine at District level, but fails to accurately reflect need at the level of Stonesfield, as applicants can make more than one choice of location and will seek to find where they might have success securing a property. Need in Stonesfield should be related directly to the settlement and be exceptional. The lack of employment opportunity in the village and limited public transport has not always provided an ideal location for anyone moving to Stonesfield on the housing register, a fact which is consistent with the Local Plan pointing development to rural service centres rather than the villages.

The Cala judgement reinforced the principle that local need should be the need of the settlement. This assessment, for the purposes of supporting the Neighbourhood Plan, has placed greater emphasis on the Neighbourhood Plan Survey as a source of local (as in Stonesfield) need for affordable housing, as the choice based letting system cannot be relied upon for reasons stated above. The Planning Inspector considered the "limitations in the use of the Affordable Housing Register", which he did not consider "to be a robust mechanism to constitute clear and convincing evidence of a need for 34 affordable homes in Stonesfield". He pointed out that "only 2 of the 52 names on the AHR said they wished to live in Stonesfield only."

SECTION 3 – DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

3.1 POPULATION TREND 1961 TO DATE

The population of Stonesfield from the 10 year national census is shown in the table below.

Census Year	Population	Growth
1961	752	
1971	1168	416
1981	1393	225
1991	1483	90
2001	1538	55
2011	1527	-9
2021	1700	163

Stonesfield saw significant growth in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, with major developments on Greenfield Road, Pumbro, Hunt's Close, Farley Lane and other 'infill' sites.

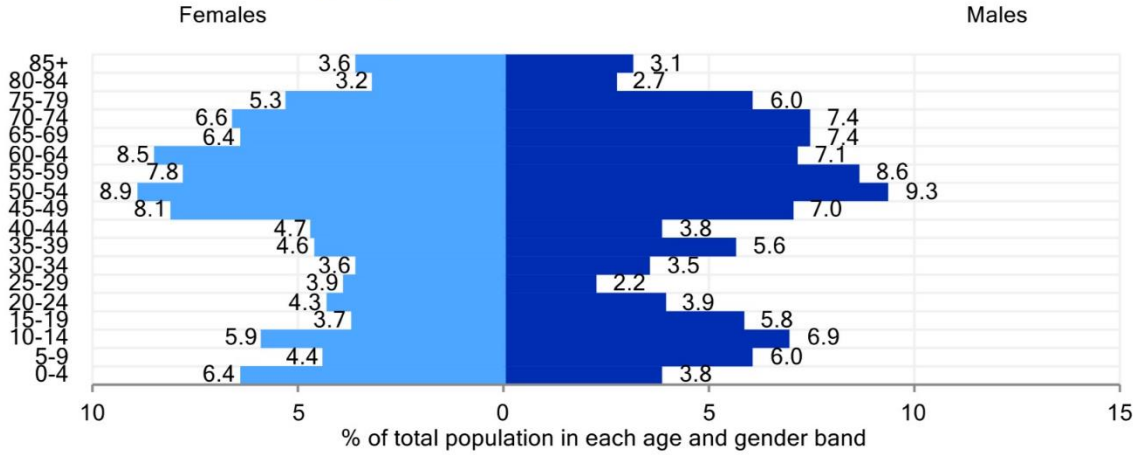
3.2 STONESFIELD AGE PROFILE

The age breakdown of the Village, as at 2019, is as follows:

	Stonesfield	% Stonesfield	% National
Age 0-15	282	17.4	19.2
Working Age	924	56.9	62.4
Aged 65+	419	25.8	18.4
Total	1625		

Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

Figure: Population estimates by 5-year age band
Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2019



The tables above show a weighting more heavily geared to an older population than the national average. The chart shows that, even for the working age population, it is more heavily geared to the older end of the age distribution.

As at the 2011 census, there were 175 pensioner households, 27.2% of the village compared to 20.7% nationally.

For the village to maintain future vitality, some consideration should be given to ensuring future housing is available and affordable for younger age groups. Affordability is considered later in this report.

3.3 VULNERABLE GROUPS

Unemployment

The proportion of people out of work in Stonesfield (Nov. 2020) was low 3.4% (31 people) compared with 6.5% nationally.

Disability

Reflecting the relatively older age of the population, 12.9% (54) of people in Stonesfield (May 2020) claimed attendance allowance against 12.5% nationally.

Only 3.7% (34) of people in Stonesfield (Oct. 2020) claimed Personal Independence Payments against 6.1% nationally.

Working Age benefits including housing benefit

The table below shows working age benefit claimants, highlighting those age 16-64 needing additional financial support due to low income, worklessness, poor health, caring responsibilities, bereavement or disability.

	Stonesfield	Stonesfield %	National %
Working Age DWP (Nov 2016)	32	3.6	10.7
Housing Benefit (Aug 2020)	32	4.8	11.2
Universal Credit (Nov 2020)	89	9.6	14.6

Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

Children in low income families

The table below shows the number of children in low-income families.

	Stonesfield	Stonesfield %	National %
Children in relative low-income families (2018)	44	12.5	18.2
Children in absolute low-income families (2018)	32	8.8	15.2
Children in relative low-income lone parent families (2018)	16	36.4*	40.8*
Children in relative low-income out of work families (2018)	7	15.9*	30.7*
*% of relative low-income families England			

Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

Pensioners

The 2011 Census showed 96 one pensioner households. At May 2020, 417 people were claiming state pension and there were 23 pension credit claimants. According to Age UK, the 2011 Census shows a higher probability of loneliness in Stonesfield than nationally.

Deprivation

The 2011 Census showed data on deprivation against 4 domains, employment, education, health and housing. Against the national average, Stonesfield had 52.6% not deprived in any of the 4 dimensions against 42.5% nationally.

Carers

The 2011 Census showed 196 people (12.8%) providing unpaid care against a national average of 10.2%.

3.4 EMPLOYMENT

As at 2023, there is little direct employment on offer in Stonesfield. The NP Survey showed the following pattern of employment.

		Responses
In Stonesfield, from home	30.21%	200
Elsewhere in Oxfordshire*	15.26%	101
Oxford	10.73%	71
In Stonesfield, not from home	10.27%	68
Out of Oxfordshire*	8.91%	59
Witney*	6.04%	40
Woodstock	5.59%	37
Kidlington*	3.63%	24
Chipping Norton*	2.72%	18
Long Hanborough*	2.27%	15
Bicester*	2.27%	15
Charlbury	2.11%	14

*Denotes locations hard to reach by public transport

In addition, 239 responded that they were retired and 23 were students (full or part time). Whilst 30% were able to work from home and 10% in Stonesfield but not from home, the remaining 60% travelled elsewhere to work.

It can be concluded that, housing is not required to support employment, which, as is expected, is in the main service centres. These can be seen on the map on page 18.

Since 1974, c250 houses have been built in Stonesfield, including the recent Charity Farm, Farley Lane and numerous infill sites.

There is no evidence to support WODC's Sustainability Report that increased housing will result in an increase in economic activity and facilities when applied to Stonesfield.

The following table compares the 2024 facilities with those that existed in 1974.

1974 Facilities	2024 Facilities
General Store	General Store & Post Office
Hairdresser	Closed
Garage (servicing/petrol)	Garage (no petrol)
White Horse pub	White Horse pub (recently reopened when bought by the village as a community pub)
Black Head pub	Closed now private house
Boot Inn	Closed now private house
Mr Lindsey's Butchers Shop	Closed now private house
Gordon's Butchers Shop	Closed now part of general store house
Marion's post office and general store	Closed now incorporated in to private house
Central Hardware Store	Closed now private house
Doctor's surgery in the Village Hall	Closed
Solid State Logic (world class electronics company, winner of Queens Award for Export. Building subsequently taken over by Torex	Closed now private apartments. Warehouse now 6 one-bedroom flats.
Glove Factory	Closed now pre-school and affordable homes
4 Farms in the Parish (Evans, Bishop, Laughton, Hunt)	Now part of 2 Farms run from outside of the Parish (Stoboe and Green) with parcels of land used for housing
Ransley Engineering	Closed

Primary School	Primary School
Library (in Village Hall)	Library (now largely run by volunteers)
News and Things	Closed now private house
Other Facilities since 1974	
NCCBR Stonesfield Farley Lane	Body Shop Inc. 2001
Laughton Body Shop	Closed
Callows Farm Shop	Closed

The inevitable result of this decline in services and facilities is that most people rely on private cars (evidenced by the NP Survey). More housing in Stonesfield will exacerbate problems of congestion on narrow lanes and not meet WODC's Policy CO4, which states that residential development should be sited to *reduce the need to travel [by private car]* to school, to work, to doctors,. Policy C11 states plans should *maximise the opportunity to walk, cycle and use public transport* to the same services and employment centres. However, there has been an increase in home working since the Covid pandemic, but it is too early to determine at what level this will settle.

Whilst some of these village business closures are part of a national trend eg large supermarket chains displacing local shops and public houses closing, the table above shows that building houses does not reverse the trend. Indeed, the NP Survey demonstrated the rise of internet shopping rather than more local facilities.

3.5 OCC POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Oxfordshire County Council have projected the increase in population by District. The following table shows the forecast percentage change in population for West Oxfordshire, year on year.

Growth TOTAL	Growth age 0-17	Growth age 18-64	Growth age 65+	Year
				2021
1.6%	1.0%	1.5%	2.4%	2022
1.3%	0.8%	1.1%	2.5%	2023
1.0%	0.7%	0.6%	2.3%	2024
0.9%	0.3%	0.5%	2.4%	2025
1.4%	0.7%	1.0%	2.8%	2026
1.6%	0.9%	1.2%	3.0%	2027
1.4%	0.5%	1.1%	3.0%	2028
1.7%	0.8%	1.3%	3.3%	2029
1.6%	0.7%	1.3%	2.8%	2030
1.1%	0.2%	0.8%	2.5%	2031

Source: OCC – Oxfordshire Insight

Growth is further analysed by settlements and varies significantly. Data specifically for Stonesfield is not available. However, as a proxy, looking at the growth profiles for Charlbury and Wychwoods, being representative of Cotswold settlements in the AONB (albeit Charlbury is a service centre), growth was much lower at 4% between 2020 and 2030. As can be seen, anticipated growth is small and is reflected predominantly in the Age 65+ range, whereas growth in other age ranges for most years is negative.

Wychwoods	age 0-17	age 18-64	age 65+
2020			
2021	2.3%	1.1%	2.3%
2022	-0.2%	-0.2%	2.7%
2023	0.6%	0.5%	1.5%
2024	-0.8%	-0.1%	1.8%
2025	-2.1%	0.1%	1.5%
2026	-0.9%	-0.4%	2.8%
2027	-1.5%	-0.9%	2.9%
2028	-0.4%	-1.4%	2.1%
2029	-2.2%	-0.8%	2.3%
2030	-1.0%	-0.8%	1.7%

Charlbury	age 0-17	age 18-64	age 65+
2020			
2021	2.9%	2.8%	2.4%
2022	-0.3%	-1.1%	3.3%
2023	-0.1%	0.0%	3.0%
2024	-1.4%	0.4%	4.5%
2025	-1.8%	-0.8%	2.0%
2026	-2.5%	-0.1%	2.3%
2027	-2.9%	-0.2%	2.1%
2028	-1.2%	-1.7%	2.3%
2029	-2.1%	-1.2%	2.1%
2030	-1.5%	-1.6%	1.8%

Source Oxfordshire County Council 2020 to 2030 housing-led forecasts for districts and MSOAs February 2022

Applying the Wychwood Data to Stonesfield 2019 population would mean the following population change:

Change	2021-23	2024-30	Total
Age 0-15	8	-25	-17
Working Age	13	-40	-27
Age 65+	28	72	100
Total	48	7	56

An increase in population of 56 is anticipated using the methodology above, however, most of that will already have occurred in the period 2021-23, leaving an insignificant net forecast increase for the period 2024-2030. However, there is an anticipated significant shift towards an aging population with the growth of age 65+ at the expense of younger ages.

SECTION 4 – HOUSING STOCK

4.1 NUMBER OF HOUSES, POPULATION AND TENURE (Census)

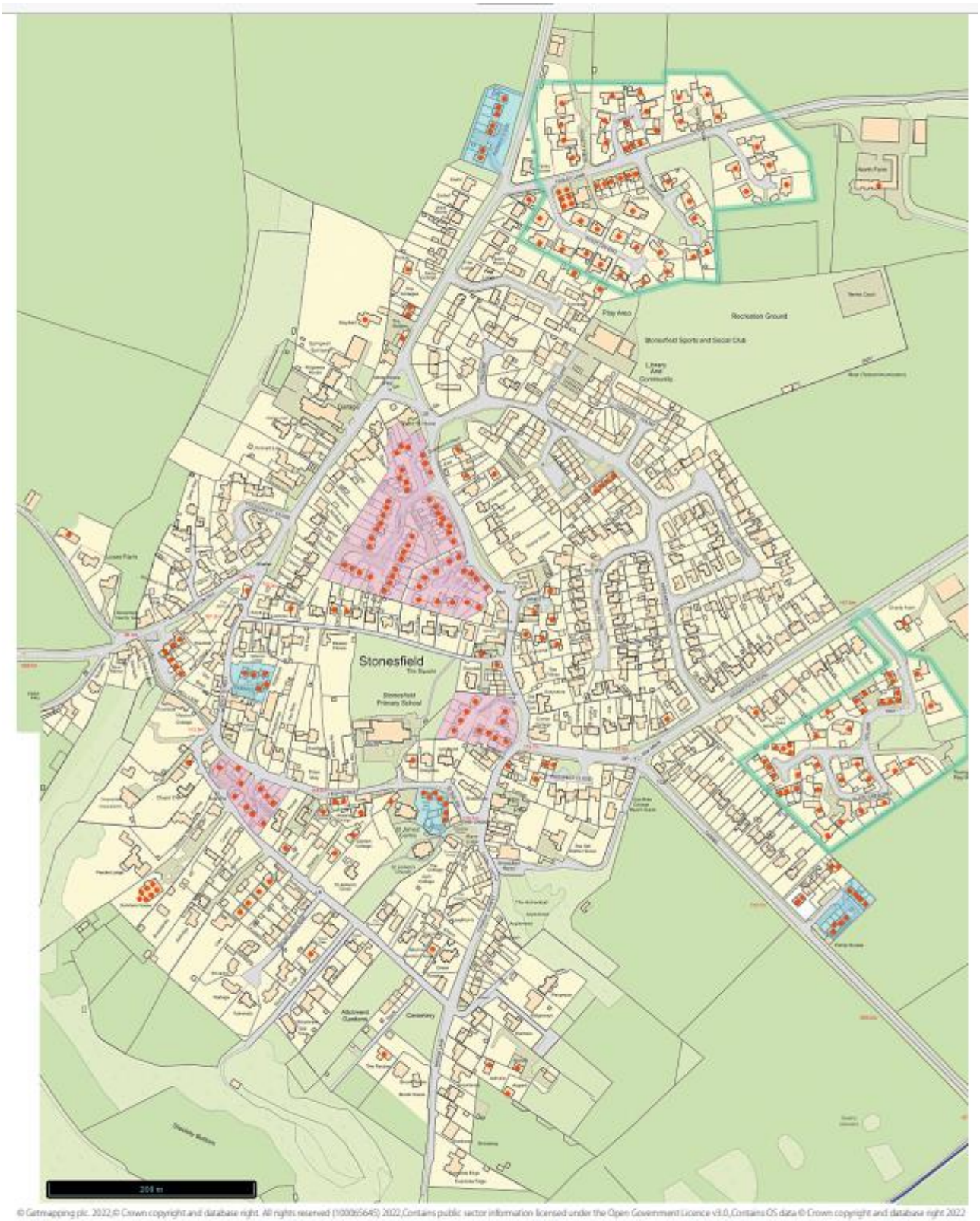
The following table shows the age of properties in Stonesfield based on Valuation Office Agency data,

	No. Properties
Built before 1900	207
Built between 1900 and 1939	40
Built between 1945 and 1999	391
Built between 2000 and 2020	110

The Census shows the number of houses and population number as follows,

Census Year	No. of Houses	Population	Population increase
1961	241	752	
1971	400	1168	416
1981	527	1393	225
1991		1483	90
2001		1538	55
2011	644	1527	-11
2021		1700	173

The map below shows the location of houses in the Village and those constructed since 1975.



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251 new homes built in Stonesfield since 1975

Each red dot represents a new house being built or an existing non-domestic building, such as a barn, being converted to a home. In the period from 1975 (when the Pumbro estate was being built) until 2024 251 new homes have been built in Stonesfield.

Key

- = one new home (either house or apartment)
- = active farmyards converted to housing
- = Rural Exception Site/Community Trust homes
- = greenfield development

In 2011, house types were as follows

	Stonesfield	Stonesfield %	National %
Detached	339	50.6	22.3
Semi-detached	196	29.3	30.7
Terraced	90	13.4	24.5
Purpose built flat	33	4.9	16.7
Flat in converted house	9	1.3	4.3
Flat in commercial property	3	0.4	1.1
Second homes	3	0.5	0.6

Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

As can be seen above, there is a much higher weighting in Stonesfield of detached properties. Developments since 2011 will not have significantly changed this picture. There are no communal residential facilities in Stonesfield e.g care homes.

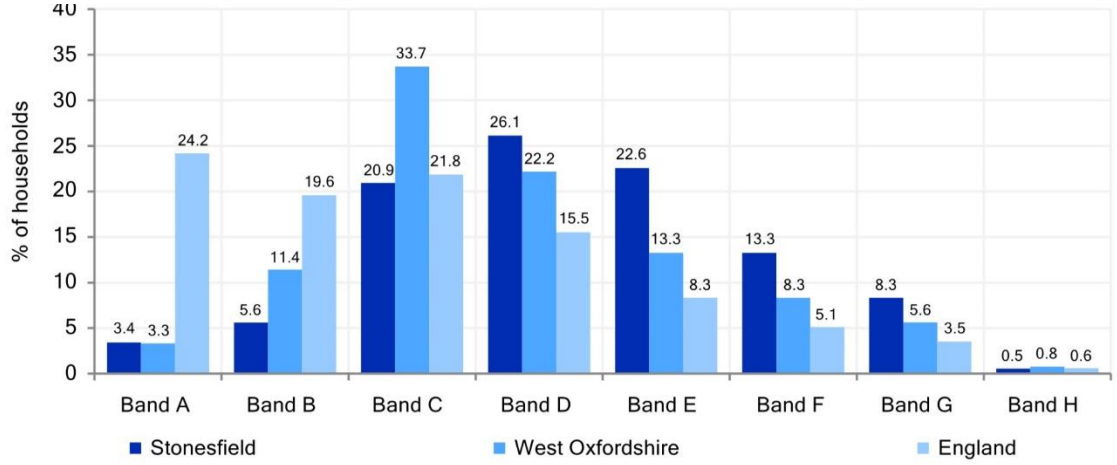
As detailed below, in 2011, there was a significantly higher proportion of people in owner occupied houses than the national average of which significantly more were owned outright. The proportion of people in rented homes, either social or private, was much lower than the national average. Development since 2011, will not have changed this disparity significantly.

	Stonesfield	Stonesfield %	National %
Owner occupied	497	77.2	64.1
Owner occupied – owned outright	288	44.7	30.6
Owner occupied – mortgage/loan	206	32.0	32.8
Owner occupied – shared ownership	3	0.5	0.8
Social rented homes	83	12.9	17.7
Rented from Council	6	0.9	9.4
Rented from Housing Assoc or Social Landlord	77	12.0	8.3
Rented from private landlord	50	7.8	15.4
Other rented dwellings	14	2.2	2.8

Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

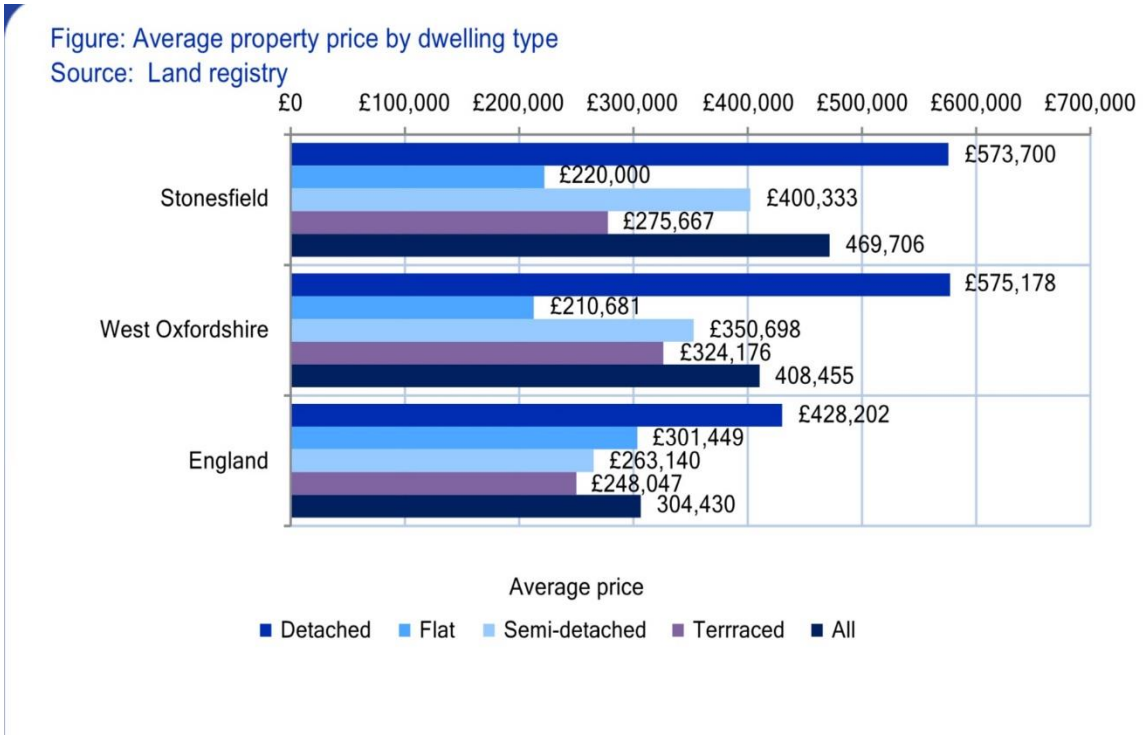
4.2 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The chart below shows the relative affordability of property in Stonesfield through comparison of Council Tax bandings based on Valuation Office Agency data at 2020.



Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

The chart shows a significant weighting towards higher Council Tax bands compared to West Oxfordshire and even more than the rest of England. This indicates a very low affordability level for Stonesfield properties. Comparing house prices in Stonesfield between Sept 2019 and August 2020 from Land Registry data, the average in Stonesfield was £469,706 vs £304,430 in England as a whole, almost 55% higher. The chart below shows relative affordability by house type:



Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

Land registry data also shows that prices for terraced properties increased by more than 48% between 2007 and 2017, over 3 times the rate of any other house type; these properties being more affordable, it is suggested that the price rise is an indicator of higher demand pushing up prices.

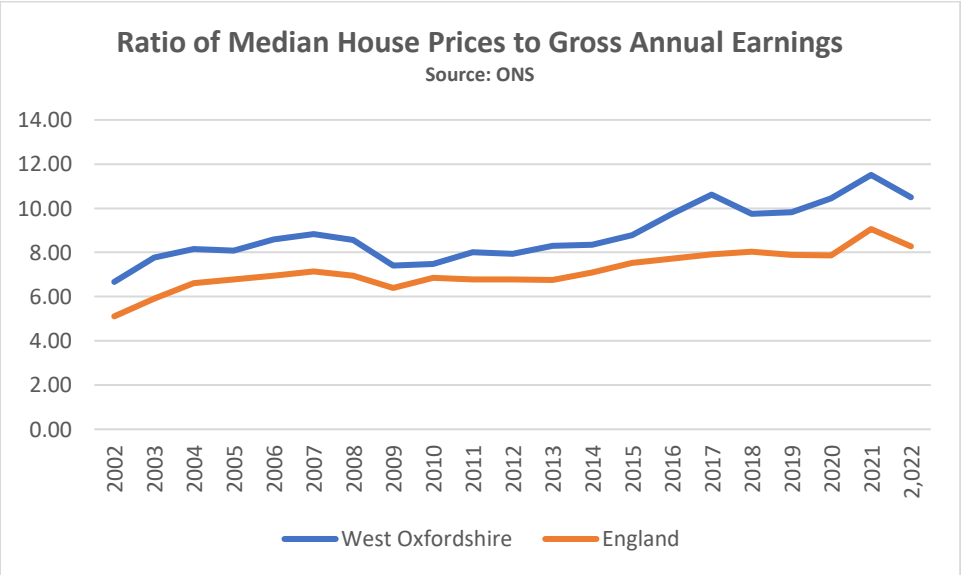
In 2016/17, affordability of housing was published in the OCSI Local Insight report, showing a significant gap above the national average when measuring earnings and savings to house prices.

	Stonesfield	England
Lower Quartile House price ('affordable housing') affordability gap	£86,516	£39,328
Savings ratio (months of earnings for a deposit)	12.16	6.54
Total Ratio (years of earnings for a house)	6.11	3.57
Average house price – affordability gap	£167,239	£42,272
Savings ratio (months of earnings for a deposit)	15.6	10.41
Total Ratio (years of earnings for a house)	7.61	5.5

Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

The table above demonstrates the issue of affordability of housing in Stonesfield is much greater than England as a whole. The continued rise in house prices since 2016/17 and the recent rise in the cost of borrowing have made this even more of an issue and is an important factor impacting housing needs.

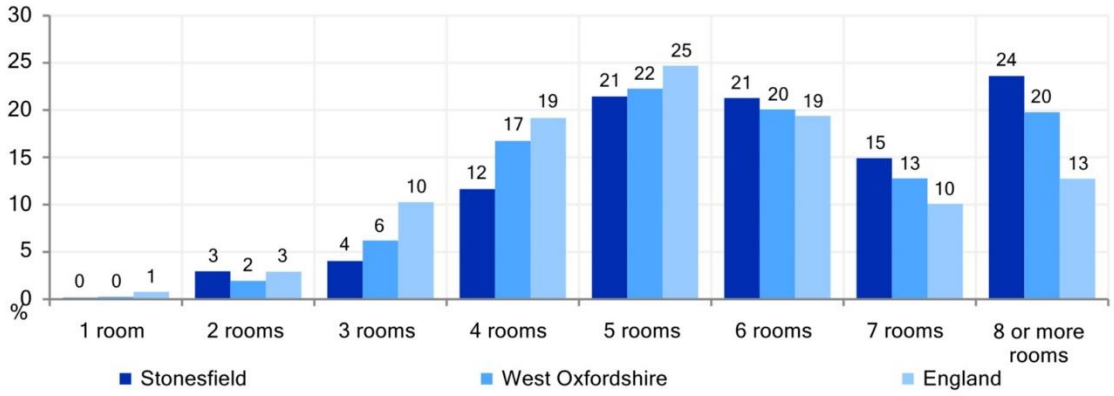
The ONS publish data on House prices versus annual earnings. Over recent years, the data shows that the gap has grown larger, as shown in the graph below:



4.3 OCC ESTIMATES FOR HOUSE OCCUPANCY

Compared to England, there is no significant pressure arising from over crowding in Stonesfield, based on the 2011 Census, which showed 32 houses with an issue (5%) compared with 8.7% nationally.

The 2011 Census published data on the number of rooms (excluding bathrooms) per property, which shows a heavy weighting to larger properties. Development since 2011 will not have significantly changed this profile.



Source: OCSI – Parish Profile Report

4.4 STONESFIELD COMMUNITY TRUST

A Community Land Trust is a democratic body owned by and operating for a community. CLTs have a certain amount of flexibility to deal quickly and appropriately to local changes. CLTs are able to prioritise the everyday practice of improving lives for a community. The very first CLT in the UK was established in Stonesfield on 31 October 1983, a Charity set up as a trust. It is governed by a declaration of trust originally dated 1983, and amended in April 2007.

The Charity's objects as per its governing document are the relief of poverty, the advancement of education and the provision of charitable recreational facilities with the object of improving the conditions of life of the inhabitants of Stonesfield, Oxfordshire. To achieve these objectives, the charity has aimed to continue to provide affordable housing to local residents in the properties that it currently holds. It has also aimed to continue to identify worthy local causes for financial support

The land and buildings owned by the charity are:

Freehold properties:

1 to 4a Friends Close,

1 to 5 Rose & Crown,

Hillcrest,

1,2,3 and 4, Glovers Yard

According to WODC's Community Land Trust Scoping Report June 2020, Stonesfield Community Trust was "*Founded with the donation of a pub car park, and with a local business owner paying £3,000 towards the cost of registering the trust as a Company Limited by Guarantee, SCT have since developed three discrete sites in the village. Stonesfield now have a sustainable annual income and have gone on to invest time and money in the establishment of Oxfordshire CLT, a county-wide umbrella-CLT, in 2006. Surpluses from the trust have been used to fund a local youth service for the education and physical welfare of disadvantaged children and support of sporting facilities. Two properties have since been bequeathed to the trust and current trustees are exploring opportunities for a fourth new-build development.*"

The Trust has not developed any new rental properties for some time, but provides a good option for future housing to meet the needs of the community eg a small site, conversion or rural exception site.

The Trust is not a registered provider of social housing (RP) and as such, does not operate under the rent regime that applies to RPs and can charge a 'social' rent for properties which will be lower than an 'affordable rent' normally charged by RPs. This will benefit anyone in need of social housing and not in receipt of housing benefit. By the same token, a tenant will not have the same security of tenure or guaranteed standard of quality of home (e.g. by the Decent Homes Standard applying to Housing Associations) under a Registered Provider such as Cottsway Housing Association or SOHA. For someone in housing need in Stonesfield, it is likely that they will register an interest with WODC for a Housing Association property and SCT in order to maximise their chance of getting a tenancy. They would need to assess which route is the best option for them depending on their circumstances.

The Trust maintains a waiting list for properties, but has no published need assessment, such as that operated by WODC. At the time of this report, the Trust states it has 12 people on its waiting list, only one less than number as registered on Homeseeker Plus with a Stonesfield connection (see Page 30).

4.5 HISTORIC DATA ON RECENT WINDFALL, DEVELOPMENT & HOUSE SALES

Affordable/Social Housing

Total new affordable/social houses built in Stonesfield since 1975 is 46. Most recently, this includes newly built affordable housing as part of the Charity Farm development, 16 houses out of 37 on the development, run by SOHA with nominations from the WODC housing register with a few shared ownership properties.

There are Rural Exception Sites with 8 units on Combe Road and 7 on The Ridings, all operated by Cottsway HA on Blenheim land.

In addition, Stonesfield Community Trust manage 15 dwellings (mix of apartments and houses/bungalows on four sites); these have been established for many years.

WODC's Council Housing Stock was transferred to Cottsway HA. In total, Cottsway HA manage 60 properties in Stonesfield including those they have taken on since the WODC stock transfer and net of any right to buy transactions.

Market Housing – Planning Approvals since 2011

There have been 92 new properties/property conversions approved and built, Charity Farm (37 houses, a mix of market and affordable houses) and various Farley Lane developments (30 houses/flats, all market housing) form the bulk of these, with the rest being individual or very small scale infill properties. (Source WODC Planning Portal).

4.6 HOUSE PRICES IN STONESFIELD

The average sale price in the year to January 2024 for a property in Stonesfield was c£626k and £759k for a detached house*

Semi-detached properties sold for an average of £363k.

Overall, sold prices in Stonesfield over the last year were 4% down on the previous year and 4% up on the 2018 peak of £602,000.

*Note, the sale of 3 Davis Close (one of the recent properties built off Farley Lane) on 22nd June 2023 for £1.95m has, pushed up the average price for the last year.

4.7 PROPERTIES SOLD IN STONESFIELD

Rightmove "Properties sold" data goes back to 1995. Since 1995, 404 properties sold in Stonesfield. In the last 7 years, since 16th November 2016 (earliest dated entry for "last 7 years"), 142 properties have sold in Stonesfield. The types of houses sold are shown below:

No.	Type
86	Detached
37	Semi-detached
15	Terraced
4	Flats
142	Total

SECTION 5 – FUTURE HOUSING DEMAND

5.1 STONESFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SURVEY - OVERVIEW

The Survey conducted in the Village was in two parts. One section to be completed by once for the household and the second section by each individual over the age of 16. The questions on recent and future housing needs were all within the Household section of the survey. There was a high response to this section, 451 out of a possible 727 households, a response rate of >62%, which gives a significant insight in to future housing needs of residents to the following list of relevant questions:

- If anyone has left your household in the last five years, why did they leave?
- Are you planning to move house in the next 5 years?
- Why do you want to move in Stonesfield?
- What type of house?
- What type of tenure would you most like to move to?
- How many bedrooms?
- What is preventing you from moving home within Stonesfield?

To get a good idea of the size of need, it would need an assessment of the needs of the 38% non-responders to the survey to be added to those who did respond. To that end, a range is provided against each question response, where

LOW = the 62% who responded

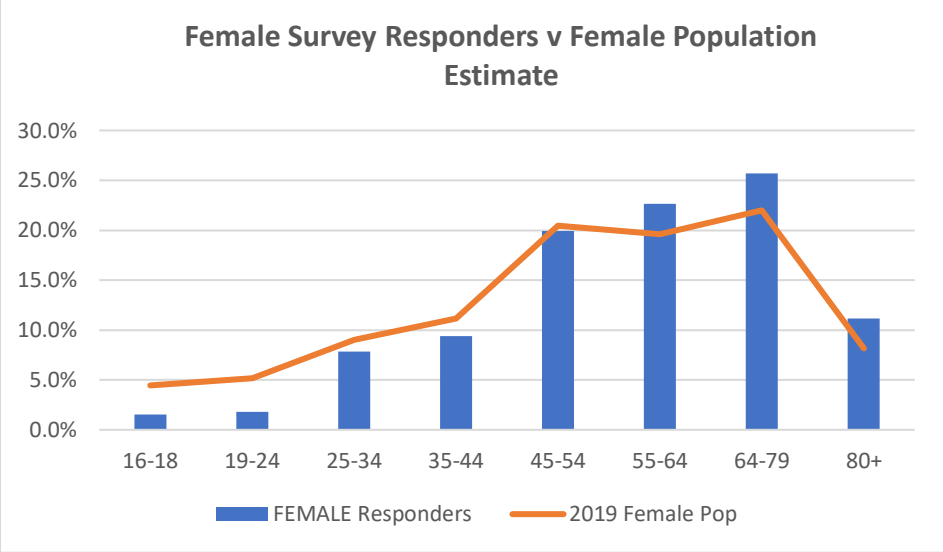
HIGH = a straight extrapolation of the 62% response to give 100%

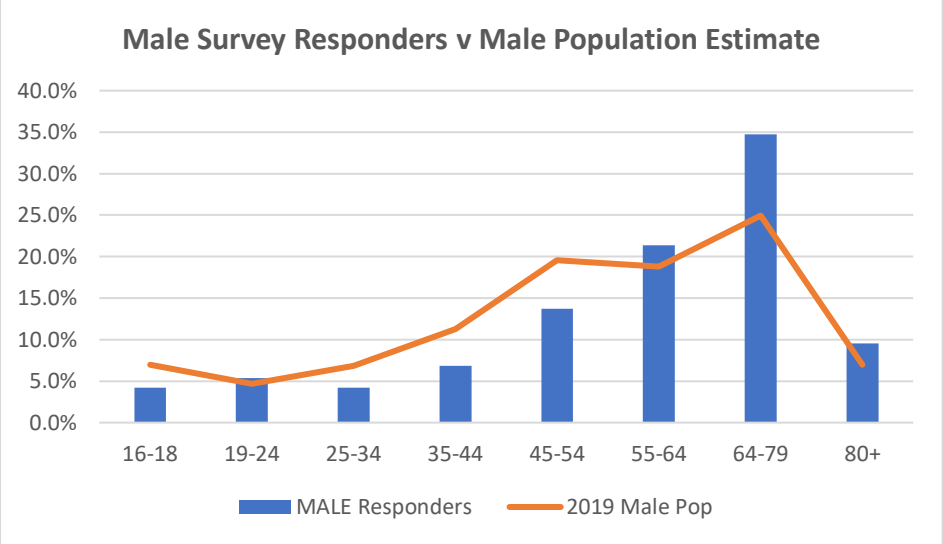
MID = a mid point between LOW and HIGH.

For the purposes of this analysis, the MID figures have generally been applied, unless stated.

Where questions allowed a free text response for OTHER, the answers have been included in the text, although none are of statistical significance.

The Survey response was broadly reflects the Stonesfield population as shown in the 2 charts below:





Population Estimate Source – Mid Year Estimates 2019 ONS

Given the high response rate and the Survey broadly reflecting the age ranges of the population of Stonesfield, it is reasonable to place a high degree of reliance on the output.

5.2 REASONS PEOPLE LEFT THE VILLAGE IN LAST 5 YEARS

If anyone has left your household in the last five years, why did they leave?	**EXTRAPOLATION RANGE**		
	Low	**Mid**	**High**
Employment	39	51	63
Further or higher education	35	46	56
Lack of affordable housing to rent	7	9	11
Lack of affordable housing to buy	10	13	16
Lack of suitable housing	9	12	15
Family reason	9	12	15
Nobody has left	311	406	501
Other (please specify)	18	24	29

Those who responded 'Other' are as follows: Care home (1), Children all left but longer than 5 years ago (1), Death (8), lack of local transport network (1), Moved closure to work (1), Moved to larger house (1), Only lived in the village for 3 months (1), Over crowded (1), To buy a house in Stonesfield (1), To move to own homes (1), Travel (1).

Looking at why people may have left the village in the last 5 years, the major reasons are for employment and education. However, for the purposes of determining housing needs, it is important to note that Lack of affordable housing to rent (9), Lack of affordable housing to buy (13), Lack of suitable housing (12) are relevant as it particularly suggests a need for more affordable housing that is specifically available to people of the village (i.e. not the wider WODC Housing Register).

Of course, this is only a snap shot and there will be whole households who have left the village in the last 5 years and we have no data for those households as to the reasons for leaving or numbers.

5.3 FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS

Looking at future housing needs, we asked if people were planning to move and if so, where, why, what type and size of house, and tenure.

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
Are you planning to move house in the next 5 years?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
Yes, in Stonefield	29	38	47
Yes, in West Oxfordshire	17	22	27
Yes, elsewhere	14	18	23
Not intending to move	304	397	490
Don't know	74	97	119

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
Why do you want to move in Stonesfield?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
To give or receive family support	8	10	13
Current mortgage affordability	9	12	15
Current rent affordability	2	3	3
Need smaller home / downsizing	11	14	18
Need a bigger home	17	22	27
Tenancy insecure	1	1	2
To accommodate health needs	6	8	10
Other	6	8	10

Those responding 'Other' were as follows: bigger garden (1), Neibour (sic)(1), Not moving (1), To be mortgage free (1), To buy first house (1), Want to buy instead of rent. Considering Stonesfield as an option to buy in. (1),

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
What type of house?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
Detached house	36	47	58
Semi-detached or terraced house	19	25	31
Detached bungalow	14	18	23
Semi-detached or terraced bungalow	8	10	13
Flat, Maisonette or bed sit	5	7	8

What type of tenure would you most like to move to?	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
Answer Choices	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
Buy own home	50	65	81
Rent from Council / Housing Association	6	8	10
Rent from a private landlord or letting agency	2	3	3
Rent from a relative or friend	0	0	0
Tied / linked to a job	0	0	0
Shared ownership / shared equity	0	0	0
House / flat share	0	0	0

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
How many bedrooms?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
One	2	3	3
Two	11	14	18
Three	18	24	29
Four	21	27	34
Five or more	4	5	6

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
What is preventing you from moving home within Stonesfield?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
Unable to afford to buy new home / Price of housing to buy is too high	23	30	37
Lack of suitable housing to meet my needs / Lack of suitable type or size of house to buy	27	35	44
Lack of land to self build	6	8	10
Lack of homes to rent from Housing Association	5	7	8
Lack of affordable private rented properties	3	4	5
Lack of homes to rent from private landlord	2	3	3
Lack of housing available for elderly or disabled people	5	7	8
Other (please specify)	6	8	10

Those responding 'Other' were as follows: As pensioners there is concern over the future of the bus service and we don't drive. (1), In the next 5 years would like a town location with better transport links, variety of shops within walking distance (1), Need to finish current house first (1), No age related properties (1), Not an immediate need (1).

Using the data, it is possible to break down the analysis of the 29 households who responded that they are looking to move within Stonesfield in the next five years, into the same questions of why, what type and size of house, and tenure they are looking for are analysed:

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
Are you planning to move house in the next 5 years?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
Yes, in Stonefield	29	38	47

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
Why do you want to move in Stonesfield?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
To give or receive family support	4	5	6
Current mortgage affordability	3	4	5
Current rent affordability	0	0	0
Need smaller home / downsizing	6	8	10
Need a bigger home	13	17	21
Tenancy insecure	0	0	0
To accommodate health needs	1	1	2
Other	4	5	6

Those responding 'Other' were as follows: Neibour (sic) (1), To be mortgage free (1), To buy our first house (1), Bigger garden (1).

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
What type of house?	Low	Mid	High
Detached house	21	27	34
Semi-detached or terraced house	11	14	18
Detached bungalow	9	12	15
Semi-detached or terraced bungalow	4	5	6
Flat, Maisonette or bed sit	3	4	5

What type of tenure would you most like to move to?	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
Answer Choices	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
Buy own home	26	34	42
Rent from Council / Housing Association	3	4	5

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
How many bedrooms?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
One	2	3	3
Two	1	1	2
Three	12	16	19
Four	13	17	21
Five or more	1	1	2

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
What is preventing you from moving home within Stonesfield?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
Unable to afford to buy new home / Price of housing to buy is too high	13	17	21
Lack of suitable housing to meet my needs / Lack of suitable type or size of house to buy	18	24	29
Lack of land to self build	3	4	5
Lack of homes to rent from Housing Association	0	0	0
Lack of affordable private rented properties	2	3	3
Lack of homes to rent from private landlord	2	3	3
Lack of housing available for elderly or disabled people	2	3	3
Other (please specify)	1	1	2

Other: Need to finish current house first.

The number of households looking to move within Stonesfield in the next 5 years is fairly small. The questions arising out of the survey results are:

- can the existing provision of affordable housing deliver the houses needed?
- what allowance should be made for those who answered that they didn't know if they would want to move within Stonesfield?
- can the housing market deliver the numbers of houses for those wishing to buy?

These questions are considered below.

Can the existing provision of affordable housing deliver the houses needed?

There is a reasonable provision of affordable housing in Stonesfield made available primarily by Cottsway Housing Association, South Oxfordshire Housing Association and Stonesfield Community Trust.

Nominations for the Housing Association properties are via the WODC Housing Register and allocated according to highest need (see Appendix 4), rather than having a Stonesfield connection, unless the property criteria specify otherwise. As such, it is possible, but improbable given the demand, that they would be allocated to someone with a Stonesfield connection.

The Survey asked about whether households were on a housing register, with the following output:

Is anyone in your home on the West Oxfordshire, and/or other, Housing Register?			
Answer Choices	Low	Mid	High
West Oxfordshire	22	29	35
Other Oxfordshire	0	0	0
Outside Oxfordshire	0	0	0
Don't know	19	25	31
No	408	533	658

The 22 people on the WODC housing register, extrapolated to 29, is a significant number for affordable rented tenure, given the level of current provision. When correlated with the question, Do you intend to move in the next 5 years, it gave a useful insight as to where people wanted to move:

On WODC Housing Register and Moving Intentions next 5 years

	Low	Mid	High
Don't know	1	1	2
No, not intending to move within the next 5 years	13	17	21
Yes, elsewhere	2	3	3
Yes, in Stonefield	3	4	5
Yes, in West Oxfordshire	1	1	2
No response	2	3	3
	22	29	35

Extrapolated to Mid, only 4 households are on the WODC Housing Register and are looking to move in Stonesfield in the next 5 years. This is a very small number. Further analysis could be undertaken to determine whether it could be met by provision in Stonesfield, which for the reasons given above, could only be via a Rural Exception Site or affordable housing with restrictions on lettings applied.

As of January 2024, there were 35 households expressing an interest in Stonesfield. Only 13 were identified as living in or having a connection to Stonesfield. None were in the Emergency or Gold categories i.e. with urgent housing needs and only 4 were in the Silver category. Source WODC Homeseeker Plus.

SCLT properties are for tenants with a Stonesfield connection. Demand for these properties is strong; housing, for example, elderly tenants in small bungalows and younger people small properties typical for single or dual occupancy.

There may be a shortfall in provision which a Rural Exception Site could satisfy, guaranteeing occupancy by those with a Stonesfield connection, as opposed to a typical s106 development on a conventional building plot where guaranteeing occupancy by those with a Stonesfield connection, which would be more difficult due to some of the reasons explored earlier in this report.

5.4 RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'DON'T KNOW

What allowance should be made for those who answered that they didn't know if they might want to move within Stonesfield?

74 households answered that they didn't know whether they were likely to move in the next 5 years, which can be extrapolated up to 97 households to cover those who didn't respond to the survey. It seems likely that some of these may have a future need to move in Stonesfield, but it would not be prudent to make an assumption about numbers for the purposes of housebuilding; any consequent development would be highly speculative.

5.5 CAN THE HOUSING MARKET DELIVER?

Can the housing market deliver the numbers of houses for those wishing to buy is a key question. 26 households identified a desire to move in the Village and to buy, this can be extrapolated to 34 to cover non-responders. A small allowance could also be added for those households that answered they didn't know if they were likely to move (74 households, 97 extrapolated)

Since December 2018, 100 properties have been sold in Stonesfield. Of these 100:

60 were detached properties

27 were semi-detached

11 were terraced

2 were flats

The projected demand is

	EXTRAPOLATION RANGE		
What type of house?	Low	Mid	High
Detached house	20	26	32
Semi-detached or terraced house	9	12	15
Detached bungalow	8	10	13
Semi-detached or terraced bungalow	3	4	5
Flat, Maisonette or bed sit	1	1	2

Note:

The survey enabled multiple options to be chosen, hence the numbers in the table above are inflated by those who chose more than one option. If these numbers are scaled back to the 26 households that said they were looking to move in Stonesfield in the next five years, the table would re-present as follows:

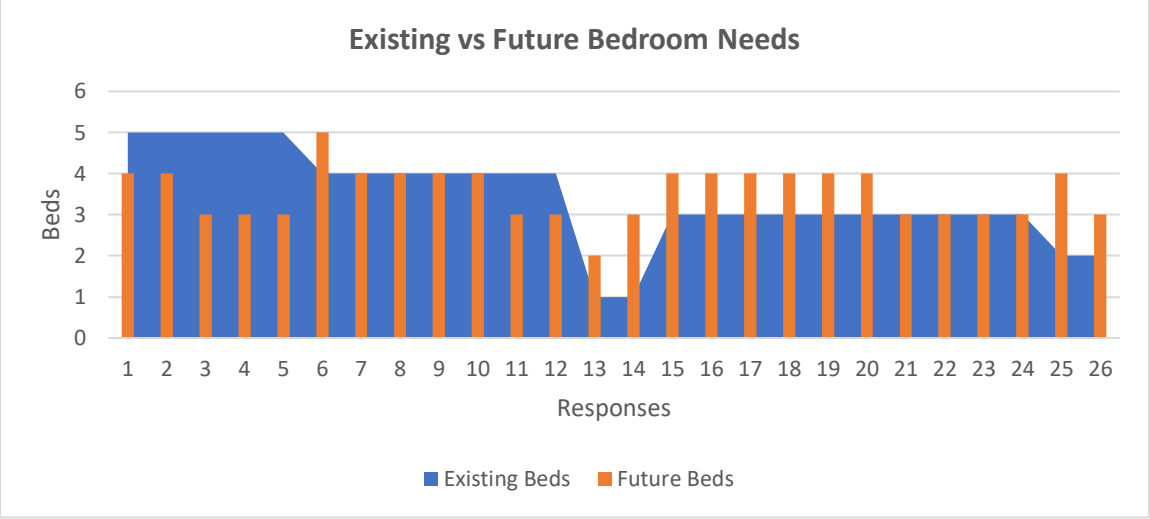
Adjusted down to 26 households	**EXTRAPOLATION RANGE**		
What type of house?	**Low**	**Mid**	**High**
Detached house	13	17	20
Semi-detached or terraced house	6	7	9
Detached bungalow	5	7	8
Semi-detached or terraced bungalow	2	2	3
Flat, Maisonette or bed sit	1	1	1
Total	26	34	42

Comparing future house types with existing house type for each of the 26 households shows the following:

		Future				
Existing		**Detached house**	**Semi-detached or terraced house**	**Detached bungalow**	**Semi-detached or terraced bungalow**	**Flat, Maisonette or bed sit**
Detached bungalow		√				
Detached bungalow		√				
Detached bungalow		√		√		
Detached bungalow		√				
Detached bungalow		√		√		
Detached house				√		
Detached house		√				
Detached house		√				
Detached house		√				
Detached house		√				
Detached house		√				
Detached house		√				
Detached house			√	√	√	√
Detached house				√		
Detached house		√				
Semi-detached or terrace bungalow			√			
Semi-detached or terrace house		√		√		
Semi-detached or terrace house		√	√			
Semi-detached or terrace house		√	√	√	√	
Semi-detached or terrace house		√	√	√	√	
Semi-detached or terrace house		√	√			
Semi-detached or terrace house		√				
Semi-detached or terrace house		√				
Semi-detached or terrace house		√	√			
Semi-detached or terrace house			√			
Semi-detached or terrace house			√			

The table offers no consistent pattern and as a result no obvious conclusions can be drawn from this data as need is spread, with some respondents choosing multiple options.

For completeness, the Survey enabled a comparison between the 26 responders existing beds vs their future requirement. Note, extrapolating this data would not be valid and would have limited usefulness.



It is useful to compare what the past housing market has provided in Stonesfield against future requirements. Using the Mid extrapolation and comparing to Rightmove data of past sales, the results are as follows:

Comparison of demand with past sales			
What type of house?	Mid	Past Sales	Capacity
Detached house/bungalow	23	60	-37
Semi-detached or terraced house/bungalow	10	38	-28
Flat, Maisonette or bed sit	1	2	-1
Total	34	100	-66

Thus, comparing past market sales with future projection of need gives an excess capacity of 66 houses. This capacity would accommodate around 68% of those who didn't know if they might move in the village, a much larger percentage than those who are likely to actually look to move.

The conclusion is that the market, subject to the next 5 years delivering the same scale of available property for sale, will meet, from existing stock, the needs of people in Stonesfield wishing to move and still have excess capacity. There is no case for further market housing.

5.6 SCHOOL VITALITY

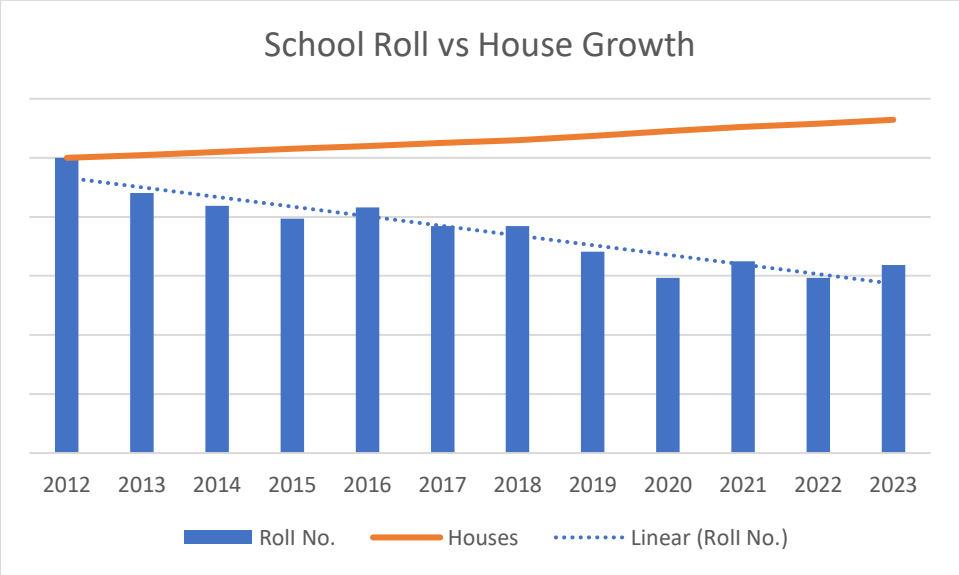
The next few paragraphs consider Stonesfield Primary School, and whether there are any issues of capacity in relation to population change and house numbers.

The School occupies an open site in the middle of the village within the conservation area. The school transferred to the current site in the late 1980s and in the 1990s had a roll of around 100 pupils. Since then there have been periods of expansion and retrenchment leading to the 2023 roll of 102, but at one point being briefly as high as 160.

The School roll numbers saw a steady decline from 2012 to 2019, but have stabilised since, as follows:

Year	Roll No.	Data from
2012	160	Government Stats
2013	141	Jan Census
2014	134	Jan Census
2015	127	Jan Census
2016	133	Jan Census
2017	123	Oct Census
2018	123	Oct Census
2019	109	Oct Census
2020	95	Oct Census
2021	104	Oct Census
2022	95	Oct Census
2023	102	Oct Census

Mapping the growth in houses against the School roll shows the following graph



In 2016, a report was prepared for the Stonesfield Parish Council by the governing body of Stonesfield Community Primary School regarding the impact of the proposed additional building in Stonesfield on the school and its ability to deliver a good standard of teaching and learning.

The Report identified that the school faces a number of premises issues and the existing constraints and issues based on 2016 school numbers, before addressing the impact on the school of potentially increasing the number on roll at various levels, primarily on accommodation and access.

At peak times traffic is a major issue and given that new housing is on the fringes of the village it exacerbates the problem. Stonesfield Pre-School also have issues with space and would like to move, ideally sharing the school site, although as a separate entity renting land or accommodation.

The main school building was expanded to 5 classrooms a few years ago in the wake of a fire and also houses the main hall which is used as a gym and dining hall; toilets, including an excellent disabled facility; staffroom; admin office; head teacher's office and a small kitchen. Some of the classrooms are quite small and are not suitable for groups of 30. The school has also used a large temporary building (terrapin) to the rear of the school which housed two classrooms.

Access to the school site is through gated access to the front from High Street, this is a narrow road with perennial parking issues at the start and end of the school day.

The report considered four scenarios for growth of the school based on potential increases of pupil numbers, as follows:

Capacity 155 – 170 The official projection of the building programme (Charity Farm and along Farley Lane) of 50 homes was for 20 new pupils. This would have taken the school up to around 160, where it was anticipated that the school could cope, but with difficulty.

175 – 195 This required building more capacity and the Council would need to increase the school's size through new building. Parking and access would have been worse.

200 – 230 At this level the school would need significant expansion. Traffic issues around the school were already a serious safety concern and the report's authors could see no obvious solution.

250+ It was considered unlikely that the existing site could support a school of this size; any alternative site would need good vehicle access.

Stonesfield Pre-School also has space issues and would like to move into larger premises, it is agreed that sharing a site with the primary school would be advantageous should the school require expansion plans.

It was noted the school has no budget to fund or even part-fund major expansion work.

Contrary to the projection for an increased school roll, based on Charity Farm and Farley Lane developments, numbers actually fell from 133 in 2016 to 102 in 2023. This is looked at in more detail in the paragraphs below.

From the Survey undertaken by the NP Steering Group of the Village, there were 30 responses from the 62 new houses in Stonesfield built at Charity Farm and off Farley Lane, which from the 30 responses had 63 adults with 15 children.

	Houses	Responses	Occupancy	Adults	Children <5	Pre-School	Primary	Secondary	School % per house
Total	62	30	65.5%	63	3	2	6	4	19.4%
Rent	2	2	150%	4	2	0	0	1	50.0%
Charity	37	17	58.7%	34	2	1	2	3	16.2%

Breaking this down by house type, the largest percentage of school children come from the semi-detached house type, albeit this is a small sample.

	Beds	Responses	Occupancy	Adults	Children <5	Pre-School	Primary	Secondary	School % per house
Detached	97	23	75.0%	49	3	2	5	2	52%
Semi	16	5	56%	9	0	0	1	2	60%
Flat, Maisonette	2	1	1.2%	2	0	0	0	0	0%
Link Det	4	1		3	0	0	0	0	0%

The conclusion is that new houses do not equate to a higher school roll of any significance. The current school roll means the School is operating at the level of utilisation it was originally constructed for. The projected population changes to 2031 do not indicate that there will be significant changes to 2031, however, an ongoing dialogue with the School should continue to ensure its continued viability.

SECTION 6 - CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

Any major housing development in Stonesfield would have to meet the 'exceptional circumstances' and 'public interest' criteria laid out in the NPPF and specified in WODC's Local Plan and Cotswold Landscape Management Board policies.

Stonesfield has had significant growth in housing in the last 12 years. This has predominantly been larger properties, which have mostly sold to people who haven't had a local connection and didn't fulfil a local (i.e. Stonesfield) need. Some social/affordable housing has also been built either under s106 or as rural exception sites.

The 2 significant allocations of land in the WODC Local Plan to 2031 have been built out, with just 10 'windfall' units pending.

This Housing Needs Assessment has considered whether there are exceptional circumstances and has drawn on available publicly held data and the Neighbourhood Plan Survey of the village, which had c60% response rate to the household survey and was broadly in line with the village demographic.

Like many small communities in the Cotswold National Landscape (formerly Cotswolds AONB), the demographic profile of Stonesfield is heavily weighted to an older, more affluent population and this trend is forecast to continue.

Employment and facilities in Stonesfield are very limited.

The number of houses in Stonesfield has grown from 241 in 1961 to over 700 in 2023. The housing stock is much more heavily geared to detached, owner occupied dwellings than the national average.

There is a bigger affordability gap for property in Stonesfield than the national average and the average sale price in the year to October 2023 was c£626k.

The Survey focussed heavily on housing needs and no exceptional need was identified for the next five years.

It is projected that the housing market will satisfy local need for anyone in the settlement seeking to move in the next five years, with significant excess capacity to cater for anyone who might wish to move but didn't identify as knowing their future intentions at the date of the survey. There is no requirement for additional market housing and no requirement for a major development.

There may be a very small shortfall of social/affordable housing in the next five years.

Should the trend to an increasingly older population with a corresponding decline in working age people and children continue unchecked in to the future, it may become an exceptional circumstance. Whilst it is not presently impacting the vitality of the village, it could be of future

longer term concern. The projected population change is not sufficiently great to justify immediate action as the numbers aren't high in proportion to the village population. However, given the issue of affordability of owner occupied housing, it adds further weight to the conclusion that social/affordable housing might address this circumstance, whereas market housing would not. However, current projections from within the settlement do not indicate much demand for social/affordable housing and addressing the imbalance of population would therefore be likely to happen by influx of younger people from outside the settlement. There is no pressing need to address the ageing trend in the next five years.

Stonesfield has so far seen little in the way of second home ownership which is more prevalent in other settlements in the Sub-Area and so hasn't distorted the housing market and provision in the village, but the Parish Council should be mindful of this in future and whether it might alter the recommendations from this report, although there does seem to be excess capacity in the projected private housing market to manage this risk.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no exceptional circumstance or public interest justifying further major development in Stonesfield.

There may be a case to deliver more social/affordable homes for people with a local (Stonesfield) connection, which could be met via a small rural exception site. A specific assessment would be needed to justify demand and size and if deemed viable, SPC could make a call to landowners for a site which might be suitable. Stonesfield Community Trust could provide a vehicle to help meet this need once a site has been identified, the Trust being well established with a purpose to provide such housing.

Whilst not presently impacting the vitality of the village, the projected continued trend to an increasingly older population with a corresponding decline in working age population and children could, in time, give rise to an exceptional circumstance. Current projections from within the settlement do not indicate much demand for affordable/social housing for younger age groups which might address the growing imbalance in village population age. This presents the Parish Council with a dilemma in needing to weigh the benefits of building social/affordable housing against attracting a younger occupancy from outside the settlement, when there is little in the way of employment or facilities available to families and young people moving to Stonesfield. There is no need to address this in the next five years, but the Parish Council should review, in the future, the continued vitality of the village and whether there is benefit to such development as an exceptional circumstance.

The Parish Council should keep under review any future expansion of second home ownership in the village and whether a response is necessary in future to manage the risk if it impacts housing needs for local residents in the village.

The Neighbourhood Plan should provide policies which are consistent with the above conclusions.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group who assisted with some of the research needed for this report.

Appendix 1

WODC Local Plan 2031

Strategy for Burford Charlbury Sub-Area

POLICY BC1: The focus of new development will be Burford and Charlbury. Development in these rural service centres will therefore be of an appropriate scale and type that would help to reinforce the existing service centre role. Development elsewhere will be limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and will be steered towards the larger villages. Proposals for development in the sub-area should be consistent with the strategy which includes:

• delivery of about 774 new homes* to include affordable housing and homes designed to meet a range of different needs including older people.

• conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

• conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and heritage assets

• protection and enhancement of the Upper Windrush Valley and Wychwood Project Area

• maximising opportunities for enhancements within the Conservation Target Areas (CTAs).

• enhancing public transport and pedestrian and cycle routes and infrastructure together with managing car parking to reduce car use for short journeys

• avoiding development which will increase the risk of flooding and working with partners such as the Environment Agency to deliver flood mitigation measures

• support for additional small-scale employment opportunities including sustainable tourism and rural diversification

• ensuring development has access to superfast broadband to facilitate home-working

• seeking the retention and development of local services and community facilities throughout the sub-area and ensuring Burford Town Centre remains vibrant through resisting the loss of shops and other town centre uses, and promoting an increase in the availability and efficient use of parking provision in appropriate locations

• ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for essential supporting infrastructure, including new transport, education, health, green infrastructure and other community facilities in accordance with the IDP. The Council will work in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council to consider appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of HGV traffic on Burford.

* Note: In accordance with Policy H1, the figure of 774 homes is not an absolute target or a maximum ceiling to development.

Appendix 2

Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025

Policy CE10: Development and transport – principles

CE10.1. Development and transport proposals in the CNL and it setting should have regard to – and help to deliver – the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. In doing so, they should have regard to – and be compatible with the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and guidance produced by the Cotswolds National landscape Board, including the: (i) Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (ii) Cotswolds National Landscape – Landscape Character Assessment (iii) Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan (iv) Cotswolds National landscape Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change (v) Cotswolds National Landscape Board's Position Statements

CE10.2. Development and transport proposals in the CNL should have regard to – and help deliver – the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities. They should also contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of CNL communities, in a way that is compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL.

CE10.3. Development and transport proposals in the Cotswolds National Landscape and its setting should comply with relevant national planning policy and guidance, particularly with regards to those paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that explicitly relate to AONBs.

CE10.4. The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the National Landscape's special qualities should be identified as strategic priorities in Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, Local Transport Plans and other relevant plans and strategies. These plans and strategies should explicitly identify the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan as a material consideration.

CE10.5. The cumulative impacts of development proposals on the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape should be fully assessed.

CE10.6. A landscape-led approach should be applied to development and transport proposals in the CNL and its setting, proportionate to the type and scale of development being proposed, whereby proposals:

a) address the natural beauty of the CNL as primary consideration at all stages of the development process (including design), from initial conception through to implementation

b) address all of the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the area

c) address access to natural beauty including the character of the public rights of way network and its role within wider green infrastructure

d) reflect and enhance the character of the local area

e) avoid adverse effects where possible and, if adverse effects can't be avoided, minimise them and

f) deliver substantially more beneficial effects than adverse effects for the natural beauty of the

CNL. This landscape-led approach is particularly important for major development.

This policy provides principles relating specifically to development and transport. However, it is important to note that development and transport proposals should have regard to the Management

Plan policies as a whole. For example, Policy CE7 (Biodiversity and Nature Recovery), paragraph 4, relating to biodiversity net gain, would be a key consideration in development proposals.

Policy CE10 refers to relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for context, as this national policy underpins much of what Policy CE10 is seeking to achieve. However, Policy CE10 expands on this national policy by referencing relevant case law and best practice. Planning legislation and policy affords the highest level of protection to AONBs (National Landscapes) in relation to landscape and scenic beauty – the same level of protection as for National Parks. Although some level of development may be required to meet local (National Landscape) housing needs and to ensure that the vitality of National Landscape settlements is maintained and enhanced, development should not be at such scale that either individually or cumulatively, it erodes the special qualities of the National Landscape

Policy CE11: Major development

CE11.1. In line with national planning policy, permission should be refused for major development within the CNL, in the context of paragraph 177 of the NPPF, other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest

CE11.2. Relevant stakeholders should fully assess relevant site allocations and development proposals to see if they constitute major development. In considering or deciding whether a proposed development constitutes major development, relevant stakeholders should have regard to the major development checklist in Appendix 5 of the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement.

CE11.3. Local authorities and other relevant stakeholders should explicitly state whether they consider relevant allocations and development proposals43 to be major development.

CE11.4. The mandatory major development 'tests' specified in paragraph 177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be rigorously applied and documented for all allocations and development proposals that are deemed to be major development.

CE11.5. When relevant stakeholders are considering or applying the major development 'tests' specified in paragraph 177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), it should be recognised that:

• 'exceptional need' does not necessarily equate to 'exceptional circumstances';

• no permission should be given for major development save to the extent the development was needed in the public interest, met a need that could not be addressed elsewhere or in some other way and met that need in a way that to the extent possible, moderated detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities.

CE11. 6. When making decisions on major development proposals, local authorities (and/or other relevant decision makers) should not simply weigh all material considerations in a balance, but should refuse an application unless they meet the exceptional circumstances and public interest criteria.

Policy CE12: Development priorities and evidence of need

CE12.1. Housing delivery in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity such as social rented housing.

CE12.2. When local planning authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to setting policies for affordable housing provision in the CNL that require:

• at least 50% affordable housing in market housing developments

• 100% affordable housing on Rural Exception Sites, with a lower percentage only being permitted in exceptional circumstances and the absolute minimum being 75%

• on-site affordable housing provision for housing developments of five units or fewer

CE12.3. Priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing local community amenities and services and improving access to these amenities and services. Priority should also be given to supporting local employment opportunities.

CE12.4. It should be recognised that:

a) The housing need figure derived from the Government's 'standard method' f or calculating housing need is an unconstrained assessment of housing need53 and does not present a target for housing provision.
b) The decision on how many homes should be planned for (i.e., the 'housing requirement' figure in Local Plans) should only be made after consideration of the constraints that the local authority faces, including the AONB designation, and consideration of the land that is actually available for development. As such, when these constraints are factored in, the 'housing requirement' could potentially be smaller than the standard method's 'housing need' figure.
c) The application of national planning policies relating to AONBs may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs (OAN) in full in local authority areas that overlap with the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL)
d) The CNL is unlikely to be a suitable area for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining, non-designated areas. In the context of the CNL, this includes unmet needs relating to adjacent urban areas and unmet needs arising in local authority areas that do not overlap with the CNL.
e) Meeting housing need is never a reason to cause unacceptable harm to the CNL.58
f) The scale and extent of development in the CNL should be limited.

CE12.5. Consideration should be given to whether the constraints relating to the AONB designation merit 'exceptional circumstances' which may justify using an alternative approach to the standard method for assessing housing need.

CE12.6. When the allocation of sites is being considered in the Local Plan process, regard should be given to the evidence of need specific to: (i) the settlement/parish where the allocation is being proposed; and (ii) the CNL 'sub-area' within which the allocation is being proposed.

CE12.7. Within the CNL, windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining, or outside of, built up area boundaries (or equivalent) should only be supported where there is robust evidence of a specific local housing need such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement.

CE12.8. Where choice-based lettings systems, such as Homeseeker Plus, are used as part of the evidence base for affordable housing need:61 • the 'local connection' component of the choice-based lettings system should be applied consistently; and • data from the choice-based lettings

systems should not be used explicitly as a measure of affordable housing need unless the data has been verified and there is a clear local connection to – and preference for – the settlement in question.

CE12.9. When local authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to setting policies that ensure that new market housing is used as a principal residence rather than as a second home or holiday home.

Paragraph 35 of the NPPF states that, in order to be sound, Local Plans should 'as a minimum, seek to meet the area's objectively assessed needs' (OAN). However, Government guidance also states that the application of policies in the NPPF relating to the protection of AONBs 'may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs in full through the plan-making process'. As such, it should be recognised that, in some circumstances, it might be appropriate for the housing requirement figure identified in development plans (that overlap with AONBs) to be less than the OAN figure.

With regards to paragraph 6 of Policy CE12, the lack of a specific housing need figure, or housing requirement figure, for the AONB 'sub-area' within which an allocation is being considered could potentially make the allocation (and the Plan) unsound. This was the case in West Oxfordshire, where the Local Plan inspector concluded that 'in the absence of a housing need figure for the Burford – Charlbury sub-area… the allocation in the plan of housing sites, and the reliance on additional windfall housing development, in the Burford – Charlbury area, over and above existing completions and commitments, would not be sound'.

The wording of paragraph 7 of Policy CE12 is based on paragraph 5.39 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, which states that: 'Within the Cotswolds AONB, windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining built up areas… will only be supported where there is convincing evidence of a specific local housing need such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement, for example through a rural exception site'.

There is concern that second home ownership, retirement homes and buy to let have removed housing from the market that could otherwise be made available to first home owners. This results in increased demand within a reduced pool of housing stock, which inflates house prices and makes housing less affordable. The Board is particularly concerned that those who care for the landscape of the National Landscape and other key workers have an opportunity to live within it. All of these issues, including relevant case studies, are addressed in more detail in the Board's Housing Position Statement. The recommendations in the Housing Position Statement are based on government guidance and on best practice in the Cotswolds and other protected landscapes. Many of these recommendations have now been incorporated into Policy CE12, although the Position Statement provides additional, useful context.

Appendix 3

2019 Planning Appeal Against Refusal of Planning Permission for a major development by Cala Homes

A site on the Woodstock Road was proposed as an allocation for housing in the draft 2031 WODC Local Plan, but was removed after the community group, Sustainable Stonesfield, and the Stonesfield Parish Council argued against it in the hearings before the Local Plan Inspector. The allocation therefore did not appear in the final agreed Local Plan. Despite this, Cala Homes put in an application to build 68 houses on half the site that WODC had identified. Sustainable Stonesfield and Stonesfield Parish Council made representations to the local planning authority urging rejection of the application. The application was refused and Cala appealed. The appeal was heard in 2019 by the Secretary of State's Planning Inspector, Stephen Normington, at a planning inquiry, in which much detailed evidence was presented by Cala, WODC and Sustainable Stonesfield on behalf of Stonesfield Parish Council. Mr Normington gave careful consideration to the evidence and dismissed the appeal giving full reasons for doing so in his lengthy written decision.

Some key points of principle as to how relevant planning policy affects Stonesfield, emerged from the decision:

1. Cala was determined on the basis of law and policy.

2. Section 70(2) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that in determining a planning application a local planning authority shall have regard inter alia to "the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application," and "any other material considerations."

3. The "development plan" is mainly, though not exclusively, the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. Probably top of the list of "other material considerations" is the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. Annex 2 of the NPPF defines "major development" when applied to housing as comprising development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more.

5. In determining the Cala application by way of refusal, the Planning Inspector, Stephen Normington, very helpfully pointed out the material considerations, i.e. provisions in the NPPF and WOLP, which would govern an application such as the Cala proposal.

6. The following paragraphs provide a summary of how the Inspector, Stephen Normington, applied the relevant material considerations in his decision letter rejecting the Cala appeal against refusal of permission to build 68 houses off the Woodstock Rd, and of how they apply to future proposals

7. Paragraph 176 of the latest edition (September 2023) of the National Planning Policy Framework says: –

> "Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues."

8. Mr Normington was concerned about the "significant harm to the landscape" of the AONB which would be caused by the proposed Cala major development. He said at paragraph 49 of his decision letter: -

> "…overall, in considering the landscape impacts of the proposal, the development would be contrary to the guidelines provided in the Cotswolds Area and the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, in particular as an expansion of the settlement it would not maintain the open, sparsely settled character of the Dip Slope Lowland. It would intrude negatively into the landscape by eroding part of its open character."

9. He noted the damage which had already been caused by the Charity Farm development, to which proposal, Sustainable Stonesfield and indeed the wider village had not wakened up in time, so that permission had been granted in the absence of significant objection. Charity Farm had ironically been described to Mr Normington in the Cala public inquiry by the WODC's own professional planning officer witness (i.e. as the witness of the very planning authority which had granted the Charity Farm permission) as the perfect example of a development which should not be granted in the AONB. In his 44uburbann letter at paragraph 52 Mr Normington commented on the views towards the village from the East on the approach along the Oxfordshire Way, Akeman Street, footpath: –

> "….such current views looking towards the village of this approach are dominated by the incongruity of the Charity Farm development which, owing to its urban form and materials appears as a disjointed protrusion into the rural landscape and displays little integration with the rest of the village. This development serves to emphasise my concerns at the sensitivity of the landscape to change and the harm that can be created by a relatively large-scale modern development that fails to integrate into its surrounds."

10. He was particularly concerned about the adverse effect of the proposed Cala development on views of Stonesfield from the Oxfordshire Way. At his paragraph 53 he said: –

> "The cumulative visual impacts of the existing and proposed development when viewed from Oxfordshire Way would fundamentally and unacceptably change the characteristic open character of the Dip Slope Lowland. This change would be visibly and perceptibly experienced at close quarters by users of the public right of way on the approach to the village such that in views looking north-west the village would appear as more of a modern "44uburbanization" of a rural settlement within the AONB. This change would be substantial and would adversely affect the enjoyment of the users of the path."

11. It is clear therefore that the Planning Inspector in Cala considered that major development of the kind then proposed would not contribute to "conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty" in the AONB and indeed would cause it significant harm. He said at paragraph 95 of his decision letter: –

> "….on close scrutiny of the development before me, I have found that it would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the AONB."

12. Paragraph 177 of the NPPF says: –

> When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major

> development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest."

13. Mr Normington considered in his Cala decision whether the need to provide affordable housing might constitute exceptional circumstances in the public interest. He reviewed much detailed evidence on housing need which had been placed before him by the developer and by the objectors. He found at paragraph 77 of his decision letter: –

> "I accept that district-wide there may be a need for the delivery of more affordable homes. However, in considering the exceptional circumstance test to justify development within the AONB, I do not consider that the evidence before me provides a convincing case to demonstrate that the development which includes 34 affordable units is necessary to meet an identified local housing need in Stonesfield."

14. The Cala decision of 2019 provides a precedent against which other "major development" in Stonesfield will be assessed. In particular the decision shows: –

a. it is likely that the local planning authority or the Secretary of State on appeal will consider that any proposal for "major development" in Stonesfield will not be compliant with the requirement of paragraph 76 of the NPPF that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which has the highest status of protection.
b. on the contrary it is likely that the local planning authority/Secretary of State will consider that any proposal for "major development" in Stonesfield will cause significant harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB;
c. it is likely that the local planning authority/Secretary of State will not consider that any major development is necessary to meet an identified local housing need in Stonesfield, thereby constituting the "exceptional circumstances" in the public interest which are required by paragraph 177 of the NPPF to justify a grant of planning permission;
d. "major development" in this context will be construed in accordance with the definition in Annex 2 of the NPPF as including housing development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more.

15. Mr Normington considered the "limitations in the use of the Affordable Housing Register", which he did not consider "to be a robust mechanism to constitute clear and convincing evidence of a need for 34 affordable homes in Stonesfield". He pointed out that "only 2 of the 52 names on the AHR said they wished to live in Stonesfield only."

BAND	Property size etc	Property conditions (this only applies to the district where the Notice is made)	Homelessness (this only applies to the district where any duty is owed)	Medical needs	Welfare needs	General
EMERGENCY	Existing Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire social housing tenants willing to move from family accommodation to non-family social housing property within the partnership area.	Where Environmental Health has inspected the property and requires immediate vacation of the property because of an imminent risk of harm due to disrepair, major defects or grossly inadequate facilities.		The applicant assessed as immediate need of re-housing on medical grounds.	The applicant assessed as immediate need of re-housing on welfare grounds where there has been a major incident and there is proven threat to life or limb.	
GOLD	Existing Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire social housing tenants willing to move to smaller family sized accommodation if this has been agreed with your local authority to release a property of higher demand or limited availability. Or: There is major overcrowding in the current property - lacking two or more bedrooms. Or: Environmental Health has inspected the property and has served a Prohibition Notice	Where Environmental Health has inspected the property and has served a Prohibition Order or Suspended Prohibition Order on the landlord that repairs have to be undertaken but the landlord is unable/unwilling to comply.	The applicant has made a homelessness application under part VII of the housing act 1996, as amended to one of the Homeseekerplus local authorities and the full s193 statutory homeless duty to secure accommodation for the applicant has been accepted by that authority.	Urgent medical need or long-term disability that would be alleviated by a move to more suitable accommodation.	Exceptional circumstances where the current property has a critical long-term detrimental effect on their welfare.	A young person owed leaving care duties under section 23C of the Children Act 1989 and in a housing need. Or: Move-on from supported accommodation funded County Council commissioned services and where a local connection was agreed at point of referral
SILVER	There is overcrowding in the current property - lacking one bedroom		A Prevention or relief duty has been accepted. Or: The applicant remains assessed as eligible for assistance and homeless but has either has been found either Non-priority, Intentionally homeless.	Significant medical need that would be alleviated by a move to more suitable accommodation.	Significant welfare need that would be alleviated by a move to more suitable accommodation.	Right to move
BRONZE	All other applicants					

Source: WODC HomeseekerPlus Policy 2022