

STOW ON THE WOLD & THE SWELLS

Neighbourhood *Plan*

2023 – 2031



PRE-SUBMISSION VERSION

Published by Stow on the Wold Town Council and Swell Parish Council for Pre-Submission consultation under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

FEBRUARY 2023

A Guide to Reading this Plan

Of necessity, this Neighbourhood Plan is a detailed technical document. The purpose of this page is to explain the structure and help you find your way around the plan.

1. Introduction & Background

This section explains the background to this Neighbourhood Plan and how you can take part in and respond to the consultation.

2. The Neighbourhood Area

This section summarises the key facts and features of the designated Neighbourhood Area, that is Stow on the Wold and the Swells (the plan covers both the town and its neighbouring parish).

3. Planning Policy Context

This section identifies the key national planning policies and those of the local planning authority, Cotswold District Council that relate to this area and have guided the preparation of the plan.

4. Community Views on Planning Issues

This section explains the community involvement that has taken place so far.

5. Vision, Objectives & Land Use Policies

This section sets out a vision of the area in 2031 and the objectives of the plan. It then proposes the land use planning policies to achieve those objectives over the plan period, which are accompanied by some explanatory text. There are Policy Maps at the back of the document which show where area or site specific policies will apply.

6. Implementation

This section explains how the Plan will be implemented and future development guided and managed. It also proposes priorities for how the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be reinvested by the Town Council in support of the plan objectives. Finally, it proposes how any issues that are outside the scope of land use planning (and therefore this Neighbourhood Plan) may be taken forward by the Town Council.

STOW AND THE SWELLS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2023 - 2031

PRE-SUBMISSION VERSION

FEBRUARY 2023

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A PLAN BY THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY

I would like to start by expressing thanks to all those members of our community who have helped to create the exciting vision of the future which has led all our work on the Neighbourhood Plan (SSNP). By filling in questionnaires, attending meetings and offering views you have told us what we needed to know to complete this draft; your continued support and guidance is essential to achieve its final adoption.

The SSNP describes a vision, aspirations and plans for the future development and land use of the area covered by it, namely the town of Stow on the Wold and the parish of Swell. When finally approved our Neighbourhood Plan will be a statutory document that will be incorporated into the Cotswold District Council's planning framework and be used by them to determine planning applications. It is therefore of the greatest importance in protecting the AONB in which Stow and Swell sit from future uncontrolled development, as well as allocating land for development to meet the needs identified by the community over the next ten years.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan is based on the views of residents, local organisations, community groups and businesses of Stow on the Wold and Swell Parish, expressed through surveys and consultation events. Details of what the community has had to say on various issues is included throughout the Plan to illustrate how we have relied on your guidance.

The Plan has been drafted by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) of six residents and four councillors at any one time

NPSG Members

Stow on the Wold Councillors:

Councillor Alun White (Chair of NPSG), Councillor Jenny Scarsbrook (Chair of Stow on the Wold Town Council), Councillor Ben Eddolls, Councillor Peter Day, Councillor Sue Green, Councillor Mike Curtis, Councillor Maggie Deacon, Councillor Alex Clayton, Councillor Janet Piper

Swell Parish Councillor:

Councillor Diane Cresswell, Councillor Tim Blythe

Residents:

Mr Nicholas Carr, Mrs Ashleigh Cox, Mr David Cox, Mr Peter Dixon, Mr Stephen Gurmin, Mrs Bridget Ritacca, Mrs Merlyn Stracey, Mr Cathal Murphy

NPSG has been supported by other residents, who have been actively involved in developing specific policy areas and championing the Plan.

SSNP Champions

Susan Arthurs, Mary Beston, Alexander Clayton (now a councillor), Phillipa Davy, Ella Forster, David Germaney, Arun Hamilton, Colin Piper, Janet Piper, Millie Robinson, Paul Walker, David Wiblin, Sophie Winter (now a councillor) Clare Stubbs, Ed Shaw, Marc Buffery, Mike Clarke, Scheila Maliska, Sean Clarke, Steve Gurmin, Sue North-Bond, Stow Civic Society Committee.

As Chair of Stow on the Wold Town Council, I would like to thank the community for its feedback and members of NPSG and SSNP Champions for their commitment and hard work, together with Stow on the Wold Town Council Clerk/RFO Heather Siphthorp and her successor Claire Evans, Deputy Clerk, Liz Sajewicz and our Planning Consultant Neil Homer who have provided invaluable support and advice to NPSG.

This consultation draft is a step along the way to final adoption of our Neighbourhood Plan. The process of consultation and inspection is likely to take until early 2023. Comments and views will continue to be welcome during the various consultation opportunities leading up to final adoption of the Plan. An electronic copy of the draft SSNP and the evidence papers supporting it can be found online at www.stowonthewold-tc.gov.uk. Just click on the Neighbourhood Plan link.

Jenny Scarsbrook
Chair Stow on the Wold Town Council

LIST OF POLICIES

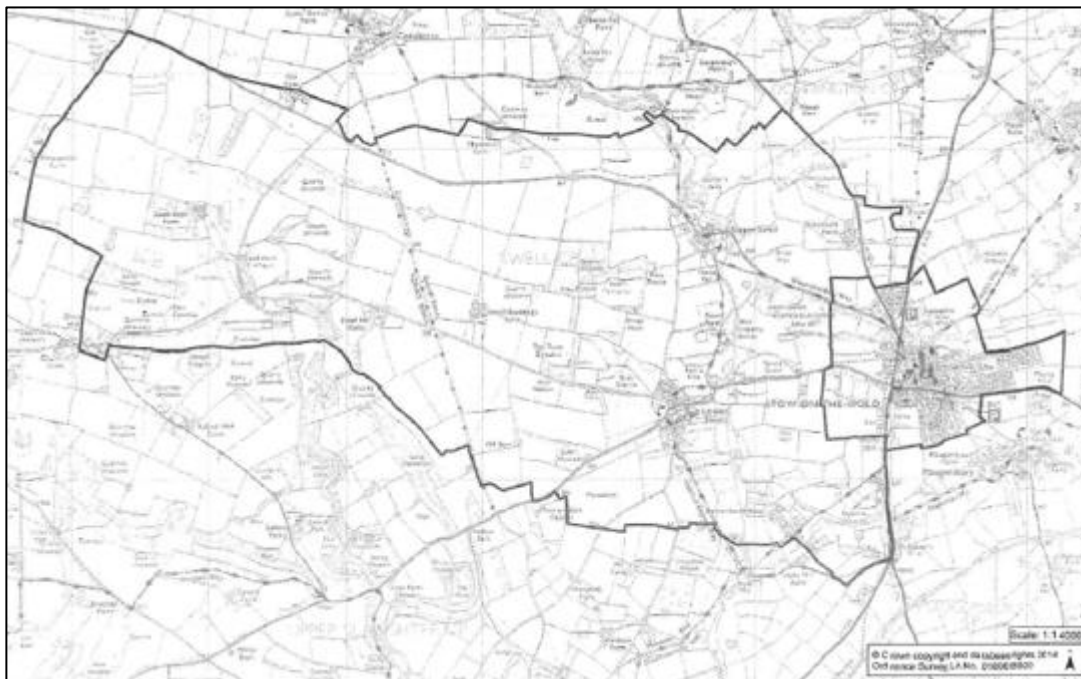
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1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 Stow on the Wold Town Council and Swells Parish Council are jointly preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the area designated by the local planning authority, Cotswold District Council (CDC) in April 2015. The plan is being prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations of 2012 (as amended) with the Town Council defined as the 'qualifying body' on behalf of the joint venture, as per the regulations.

1.2 The area coincides with the boundaries of the two councils (see Plan A below) with the town of Stow on the Wold on its eastern edge and the two villages of Lower and Upper Swell to its west, along with a large area of countryside further to their west towards the Guitings. To its north (along the ancient Fosse Way) is the town of Moreton in Marsh; to its east are the villages of Maugersbury and Broadwell; and to its south (also on the Fosse Way) the town of Bourton on the Water and the Slaughters. All of the designated area lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

1.3 The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to set out a series of planning policies that will be used to determine planning applications in the area in the period to 2040. The Plan will form part of the development plan for the area, alongside the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan and its successors in that period.



Plan A: Designated Stow on the Wold and Swells Neighbourhood Area

1.4 Neighbourhood Plans provide local communities with the chance to manage the quality of development of their areas. Once approved at a referendum, the Plan becomes a statutory part of the development plan for the area and will carry full weight in how planning applications are decided. Plans must therefore contain only land use planning policies that can be used for this purpose. This often means that there are important issues of interest to the local community that cannot be addressed in a Plan if they are not directly related to planning.

1.5 Although there is considerable scope for the local community to decide on its planning policies, Neighbourhood Plans must meet some 'basic conditions'. In essence, the conditions are:

- Is the Plan consistent with the national planning policy?
- Is the Plan consistent with local planning policy?
- Does the plan promote the principles of sustainable development?
- Has the process of making the plan met the requirements of European law?

1.6 In addition, the councils will need to demonstrate to an independent examiner that they have successfully engaged with their respective communities in preparing the Plan. If the examiner is satisfied that it has, and considers the Plan meets the above conditions, then the Plan will go to a referendum of the local electorate. If a simple majority of the turnout votes in favour of the Plan, then it becomes adopted as formal planning policy.

The Pre-Submission Plan

1.7 The Pre-Submission Plan is the opportunity for the councils to formally consult on the proposed vision, objectives and policies of the Plan. They have reviewed the relevant national and local planning policies and assessed how they affect this area. They have also gathered their own evidence and their reports are published separately in the evidence base.

The 2022 Levelling Up & Infrastructure Bill and 2021 Environment Act

1.8 During the preparation of this plan the Government published for consultation its proposed Levelling Up & Infrastructure Bill with some helpful changes to both the development plan and management system. It suggests that there is a positive future for neighbourhood planning in that system. The expectation is that the Bill will be enacted during 2023 and therefore likely after the examination of this Neighbourhood Plan.

1.9 The Environment Act 2021 has also come about during the preparation of the plan. It contains a number of proposals that may influence the final version of the plan, notably in respect of development proposals delivering biodiversity net gain and of addressing local nature recovery. The councils will keep a keen eye on the implementation of the Act in the coming months as these new policy initiative chime well with the expressed interests of the local communities.

Sustainability Appraisal & the Habitats Regulations

1.10 The District Council confirmed in its screening opinion of February 2019 that the Plan would require a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) as per the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004. The councils have proceeded to meet that obligation in the form of a broader sustainability appraisal (SA/SEA) to enable them to assess the social and economic effects of the plan, as well as its environmental effects. A draft environmental (SA/SEA) report has been published separately alongside the plan for consultation in accordance with the regulations.

1.11 That same screening opinion confirmed that the plan would not require an appropriate assessment (as per the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)) as it is not considered to have the potential for significant adverse effects on any international habitat.

The Next Steps

1.12 Once the consultation exercise is complete, the councils will review the comments made and prepare a final version of the Plan. This will be submitted to CDC to arrange for its independent examination and then the referendum.

Consultation

1.13 If you have comments to make on this plan, please do so by **MONDAY 20 MARCH 2023** at the latest in the following ways:

Email (preferred):

stowplan@stowonthewold-tc.gov.uk

Post:

**Neighbourhood Plan Comments
The Town Clerk,
Stow on the Wold Town Council,
Stow Youth Centre,
Fosseway,
Stow on the Wold,
Gloucestershire GL54 1DW**

1.14 Further information on the Plan and its evidence base can be found on the project website at:

www.stowonthewold-tc.gov.uk

2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

2.1 Stow on the Wold is an ancient Cotswold market town. It sits on a hill at about 800 feet above sea level. The town was founded as a planned marketplace to take advantage of its unique position at the convergence of eight trackways, now eight busy roads. The main source of wealth in the Cotswolds was wool and Stow grew to provide accommodation and other services for those visiting its fairs.

2.2 Buildings in Stow were built with the mellow Cotswold limestone from local quarries. Many of the houses were built in the 16th century, but those built later have blended in to become part of the character of this beautiful town. The historic core of the town is a Conservation Area with an extensive concentration of listed buildings. Stow and Swell lie within the Cotswold AONB. Stow is popular with visitors for its architecture and range of independent shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs and accommodation.

2.3 The number of Stow residents was 1,941 in 2019 (ONS est), a drop from 2,042 in 2011 (2011 census). 14% of the population comprises children under 15 compared with 18% in England, and this proportion is declining. 54% of the Stow population is aged 16-64 compared with 66% in England, and the percentage of the Stow population over 65 is 32%, compared with 16% in England.

2.4 Between 2011 and 2019 the proportion of Stow residents aged 18 and under dropped by 30%, the proportion of working age dropped by 6% and the proportion aged 65+ increased by 44%. (Data from 2011 Census and GCC Population Mid Year Estimates for 2019).

2.5 Swell Parish (pop 380) was formed in 1935 by the amalgamation of Upper and Lower Swell parishes. Both villages are located one mile west of [Stow-on-the-Wold](#). The River Dikler, which is prone to flooding, runs through Upper and Lower Swell to join the River Windrush. In doing so it passes old farmsteads and some of the loveliest countryside of the Cotswolds.

2.6 The attractiveness of the area has brought housing and parking pressures. Movement out of London and the south-east has made Stow and Swell particularly attractive for retirement, second homes and holiday lets. There have been two major retirement complexes built outside Stow's development boundary in recent years. There is continuing decline in private long term rentals, with consequential pressure on rents. There has been no significant development of socially rented accommodation since the mid twentieth century and much of the existing stock has been taken up by right to buy.

2.7 While exact figures cannot be verified, information provided by Cotswold District Council, and the number of Stow on the Wold properties available for rent through holiday rental websites, indicate that currently around 16% of Stow on the Wold housing stock is used as holiday rentals and/or second homes. It is apparent that, since Covid, the number of properties being turned into holiday lets continues to increase rapidly, in both Stow and Swell.

2.8 The area has high property values but low incomes. Failure to provide an appropriate mix of housing has led to more economically-active people, particularly the young, being forced to look elsewhere for somewhere to live. There is little unemployment in the North Cotswolds and local employers have difficulty in recruiting. This poses a significant risk to Stow's sustainability and raises its carbon footprint as many of those who work in Stow commute from the wider area. There is a strong case for the provision of affordable housing to address these issues. Given the high local house prices and private rental prices, this points to the need for a significant amount of social rented accommodation.

2.9 Stow has a tight development boundary with very little developable land. Any major development would have to be outside that boundary (as was the case with the two recent major retirement projects). Such development would need to be sensitive and address Stow's needs for new primary residences and socially rented accommodation available in perpetuity.

2.10 There is significant pressure on parking spaces in Stow due to commuters, visitors, and houses with no off-street parking. There is also a desire to make the historic town square and its immediate environs a more pedestrian friendly environment. To address these objectives, sufficient additional parking needs to be developed.

MAIN PLANNING ISSUES

- During the mid Twentieth Century a substantial number of social housing was built in two major development – King Georges Field and the Park estate. A substantial number of these properties have passed into private hands under the Right to Buy and have not been replaced. There is only limited turnover in the remaining social housing.
- Stow, a compact hilltop community within the AONB has a tight development boundary. Most developments in recent years have been minor infill developments within the development boundary. Stow's attractiveness has resulted in high prices well beyond the reach of almost all local residents. There has been an increase in the number of second homes. The private rented sector has seen a significant shift towards holiday lettings pricing local people out of that market also. This has forced many young people away from Stow leaving an increasingly ageing population.
- Stow's working age population has fallen over the last decade and the Primary School rolls have declined with an increasing number of pupils coming from outside the parish. Only two significant developments have been permitted outside the development boundary both of which have been restricted to retirement living. Taken together the McCarthy and Stone development north of Tesco and the Brio development on Stow Hill (for which approval was given on appeal) will add some 200 frail elderly residents to Stow's population (currently about 2000).
- There is a strong case for seeking to improve Stow's sustainability by providing a significant number of houses that local people and essential workers can afford. This can only be achieved by substantial development of affordable housing, primarily social rented, outside the current development boundary.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Neighbourhood Area lies within the Cotswold District Council area in the county of Gloucestershire.

National Planning Policy

3.2 The most recent version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the government in 2021 is an important guide in the preparation of neighbourhood plans. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are considered especially relevant to this neighbourhood plan:

- Sustainable development (§8)
- Non-strategic policy making (§18)
- Neighbourhood plan making (§28-§29)
- Supply of homes (§60-§64 and §67)
- Planning larger scale housing development (§73)
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres (§86)
- Promoting healthy and safe communities (§92)
- Local green spaces (§102)
- Promoting sustainable transport (§106)
- Supporting high quality communications (§115)
- Achieving well-designed places (§127 and §129)
- Conserving and enhancing AONBs (§176 and §177)
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (§190)

3.3 The combination of these policy objectives has been in effect in the neighbourhood area not only since the advent of the NPPF in 2012 but for decades prior, with their emphasis on environmental constraint in this type of area. In most regards, the area has greatly benefited from this continuity in policy but its downside has become more obvious to the community in the past few years. The introduction of neighbourhood planning in 2011 has allowed communities to consider striking a different balance between these objectives.

3.4 More recently, the Government published its first National Model Design Guide in autumn 2019 to encourage better design outcomes from the planning system. The Guide encourages local communities to engage in understanding the character of their areas and, where preparing neighbourhood plans, to prepare design policies specific to their local areas. Here, the Cotswold Design Code pre-empted this initiative in 2018.

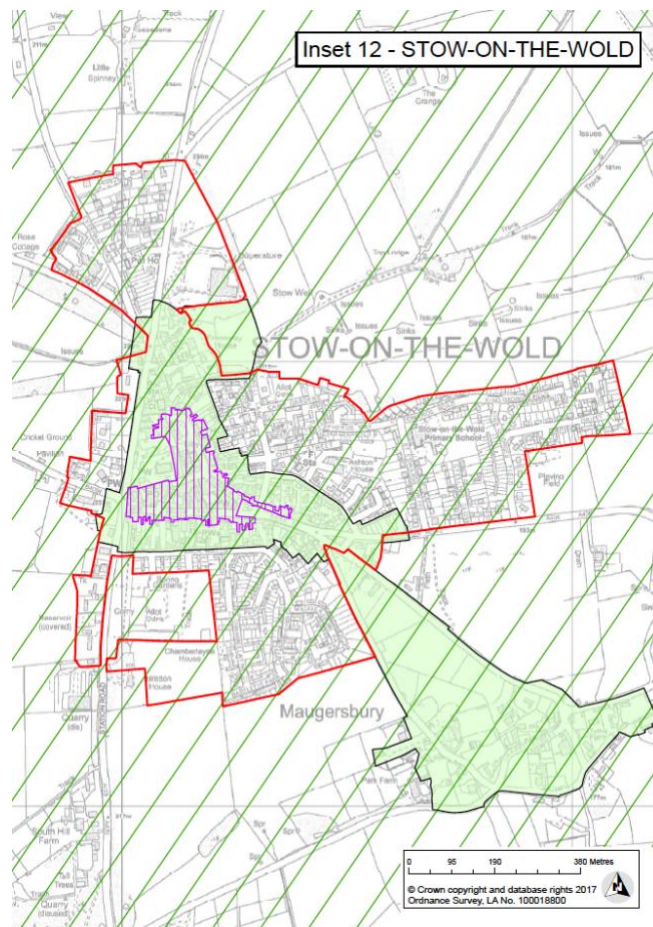
Strategic Planning Policy

3.5 The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan, which primarily comprises the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011 - 2031 adopted in August 2018. Its key policies of relevance to this Neighbourhood Area are:

- DS1 Development Strategy
- DS2 Development within Development Boundaries
- DS3 Small Scale Residential Development in Non-Principal Settlements
- SA2 Mid Cotswold Principal Settlements
- S13 Stow on the Wold
- H1 Housing Mix and Tenure

- H2 Affordable Housing
- H3 Rural Exception Sites
- H4 Specialist Accommodation for Older People
- EC3 Employment Generating Uses
- EC7 Retail
- EC10 Tourist Facilities and Visitor Attractions
- EN1 Built Natural and Historic Environment
- EN2 Design
- EN4 Historic and Natural Landscape
- EN5 Cotswolds AONB
- EN10-EN12 Heritage Assets
- INF1 Infrastructure Delivery
- INF2 Social and Community Infrastructure
- INF10 Low Carbon Energy Development

3.6 As with the direction of national policy shaping the Local Plan, the dominant theme for this part of the District with these combined policies has been to see the town, villages and countryside remain much as they are and have been for many years. Its Policy S13 is specific to the town and encourages improvements to community and tourism facilities but contains no development proposals. Its notes that, “tourism is crucial to the long-term economic prosperity of Stow, and the high quality of the town’s environment has been a key factor in the town’s economic success. The town is an important contributor to the District’s economy, with a good range of shops and services” (§7.15.2).



Plan B: Local Plan Policies Map – Stow on the Wold Inset

3.7 It notes too that, “enhancing the town centre further (e.g. by reinstating the Market Square as the focal point of the town) is an important economic priority. Addressing car parking and congestion problems in the town would help to achieve this” (§7.15.3). It goes further in advising that, “options should be explored for improving the physical environment of the town centre, including moving car parking provision from the Market Square to a suitable location within easy reach of the town centre. A suitable site could also be identified for additional off-street car parking provision to alleviate the impact of tourism and maintain the contribution that visitors make to the town’s economy” (§7.15.4) but stops short of making specific proposals.

3.8 The District Council is currently carrying out a Partial Update of the adopted Local Plan to cover the same plan period to 2031. This exercise has reached the ‘Issues & Options’ stage (under Regulation 18) with the intention of submitting the plan for examination in 2023. It is possible that the process may generate helpful evidence in the coming months to inform the Neighbourhood Plan, but this Plan will be submitted and examined in relation to the adopted Local Plan. To date, it has advised the Town Council that it has no plans to seek housing growth at Stow to meet District needs (as per NPPF §67).

3.9 However, the Issues & Options consultation document highlighted a number of ways in which the District Council is considering how its area may better respond to the challenges of climate change and of wider sustainable development issues. The Town and Parish councils have been very mindful of those issues from the start of the project in 2018 – indeed, they have been at the very forefront of their thinking, driving the vision, objectives and policies.

3.10 There are other waste and minerals development plans for Gloucestershire that apply in the Parish, but they are not considered relevant in the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan. There are no made neighbourhood plans in the vicinity, but others in the District have been made or are in the process of being prepared.

Cotswolds AONB Management Plan

3.11 The latest iteration of the statutory Management Plan covers the period 2018 – 2023. It sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the AONB to conserve and enhance its natural beauty and to increase the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. It considers the key issues for the AONB to be the erosion of that beauty and those qualities combined with an inconsistent approach to management across the AONB and a lack of understanding of its benefits.

3.12 The scope of the Management Plan extends well beyond that of the land use and development planning system but inevitably the majority of its policies are closely related to how the development plan – the Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan – should seek to manage development proposals in this area to 2031. Of these policies, those that are considered the most relevant to shaping the Neighbourhood Plan (and which refine more general Local Plan development management policies) are:

- CE1 Landscape – requiring attention is paid to the CCB’s Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy & Guidelines
- CE3 Local Distinctiveness – requiring proposals to be designed and landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials
- CE4 Tranquility – seeking to avoid and minimise noise pollution and visual disturbance
- CE11 Major Development – requiring proposals to be ‘landscape-led’

- CE12 Development Priorities – wanting priority to be given to the provision of affordable housing, maintaining and enhancing local community amenities and services, and improving access to these amenities and services



Plan C: Map of the Cotswolds AONB area

4. COMMUNITY VIEWS ON PLANNING ISSUES

4.1 Stow on the Wold Town Council, Swell Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan steering group have consulted with the local community during the course of the Plan preparation process, and the Neighbourhood Plan is based on the result of these consultations, which have included meetings, community barbecue, open days, newsletters and community surveys. Particular emphasis was placed on early community consultation to engage as wide a range of local people and interested parties as possible at the start, before any proposals were formulated. This raised the awareness of residents and businesses and ensured that their views and priorities could influence the plan from the outset.

4.2 Then during 2011, 2012 and the first half of 2013 a Neighbourhood Plan for Stow on the Wold was consulted upon and a draft was very close to publication, when, at the suggestion of Cotswold District Council, in August 2013 the plan was put on hold pending the outcome of a number of planning applications in the town. If all of the applications were to be approved the character of the town would be entirely changed and the Neighbourhood Plan rendered obsolete prior to its publication.

4.3 A public meeting was held in March 2014 to inform the community of the pressing need to produce a new Neighbourhood Plan and establish a vision of what the community wanted for the future of Stow and the Swells.

4.4 After the meeting a steering group was formed. The group designed a comprehensive questionnaire for residents which was delivered to all households and businesses during August and September 2014 asking the community's views on a number of issues including planning, housing, sports facilities, traffic and on street car parking, education, health and wellbeing etc. In September 2014 a community barbecue with entertainment was held in the town square, free to residents in return for completion of the questionnaire. In November 2014 a public meeting was held at Stow Primary School seeking the views of parents, teachers and the children as to how Stow should look in the future and more questionnaires were distributed. Residents were able to respond about individual issues or all issues. The number of responses received was: Environment - 115, Health, welfare and community - 136, Traffic, parking and transport - 209, Planning and housing - 140, Education - 214, and general comments - 17.

4.5 The steering group analysed responses and in April 2015 community road shows were held at three locations in Stow and one in Swell parish to update residents with results from the questionnaire. The findings of the questionnaire and other surveys identified several development proposals and infrastructure projects within the town of Stow and the villages of Swell to improve their facilities. The steering group put together a list of proposals and preferred sites to address these improvements and during 2015 those land owners whose property could possibly be involved were approached and their permission sought to include the various pieces of land in the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.6 The following typifies feedback from within the community to a number of questionnaires and housing surveys: we must address 'the lack of affordable housing', we need to 'ensure that any new affordable housing is made available in perpetuity and then only to people who can demonstrate a local connection', 'any development should conserve and enhance the character of the parishes in a way that meets townscape and AONB guidelines'. In response to these demands during 2015 and early 2016 discussions took place with interested parties within Stow and the Swells regarding the publication of a Design Statement or Code to regulate future developments and alterations and additions to existing properties within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

4.7 The views and opinions of many residents were sought as to the content of the Design Statement. Those consulted included local architects, members of the planning committees from both of the parishes, representatives of Stow and District Civic Society, local builders and residents of Stow and the Swells. The final Draft of the Community Design Statement was published in May 2016.

4.8 In parallel with the creation of a Design Statement, during 2015 and early 2016, at the instigation of Stow Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and subsequent to a number of public meetings, a committee of volunteers was formed to set up a Community Land Trust with a view to facilitating the development of truly affordable housing and other developments within the Parishes to meet the identified needs of the community.

4.9 During The Stow Cotswold Festival, in July 2015, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group manned a stall in the Market Square informing the community and visitors to the festival of the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan and what lay ahead before the plan could be approved and adopted. In October and November 2015 at the behest of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group GRCC carried out a further Housing Needs Survey in Stow. A questionnaire was delivered to every household in Stow and the results of the survey are available on the project website.

4.10 A survey was conducted with a questionnaire delivered to every household in October 2015 seeking the residents' views on "Play and Sports Facilities in Stow". The results are available [here](#). Two further roadshows to discuss the results of the Housing Needs Survey and to announce the formation of the Community Land Trust were held in Feb 2016. Also in February a survey of every business within 250m of Stow Market Square was conducted to evaluate the daily on-street parking requirements for the managers and staff of all the businesses. In February and March 2016 a further survey was carried out to determine the on-street parking requirements of households within 250m of the square. The results of each of these surveys are also available on the website. At the same time a survey of the residents of The Swells was conducted via "The Swell Voice" to establish the support for a children's play area in the community. Support was so sporadic that the proposal has been temporarily shelved.

4.11 During 2017 a number of drafts of the Neighbourhood Plan were issued by the Steering Group with the final draft, version number 12, being adopted together with the Community Design Statement by both Stow Town Council and The Swells Parish Council on 28th September 2017.

4.12 In 2019 a group of Neighbourhood Plan champions from across the community was established, whose members were briefed on the Neighbourhood Plan so they could support the steering group and help family, friends and neighbours to understand the issues. In March 2020 community consultations were held by means of a postal survey created by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council to identify residents' concerns and what they supported in the Neighbourhood Plan. 325 households returned the postal questionnaire, a response rate of 31.4%, or 37%, if the total number of households is discounted for second homes and holiday lets. In March 2020 public drop-in days were held to consult the community about possible development sites. 170 forms were completed.

4.13 During the summer of 2020 the Steering Group followed this up with detailed surveys and face to face interviews with residents and visitors to ensure the views of more young people and businesses were gathered about sport, leisure, community facilities, green spaces, access and parking.

4.14 In May 2022 a letter was sent to all households in Stow and Swell parishes to update the community on what they had asked for and what progress had been made. This was followed by public drop-in events to seek the community's views on potential development proposals which were presented at public drop-in sessions in Stow. Responses received 214.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS RAISED AS A RESULT OF CONSULTATIONS

- Concern that the unique townscape and environment of the town, parish and AONB should be conserved and enhanced and not spoilt by inappropriate development.
- The need for truly affordable housing for local people.
- Concern regarding the development of too many assisted living/care units.
- The need to maintain and develop the town's economy.
- The desire for a new leisure/community centre including a youth club.
- An identified need for additional sports and leisure facilities for young e.g. adventure playground, skate/BMX Park, etc.
- A desire for a town museum.
- The critical need for more parking close to the town centre, better access to public transport and a reduction in the impact of through traffic especially HGVs.
- A desire to reconfigure the market square re-establishing it as the focal point of the town and make visiting it a more enjoyable experience for residents and tourists alike.
- A desire to achieve a balance between social, environmental and economic sustainability.
- Support for the development needed to address current threats to sustainability.
- A desire to achieve a sustainable social and economic future for Stow and the Swells.

5. VISION, OBJECTIVES & LAND USE POLICIES

Vision

5.1 The vision of the neighbourhood area in 2031 is:

The unique townscape and environment of Stow and Swell parishes and the AONB have been conserved and enhanced. The community now has a better supply of market and affordable housing of a variety of types to meet its needs, which has led to a higher proportion of young people living in the town. Preventing new homes being used for second homes has also made a difference.

The town's economy has diversified with new small businesses and home workers, although its tourism appeal remains vital. The Market Square is now less dominated by parking with its public realm being significantly improved. Its public car parks are well used and have encouraged visits to walk to the Market Square. The town has also benefited from its new community hub building, which has complemented its longstanding community facilities.

The Swells have retained their special rural Cotwolds character. Little has changed but Lower Swell has benefited from improved car parking arrangements for local residents.

Objectives

5.2 The key objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are:

- To ensure that the unique townscape and environment of the town and the surrounding parish is conserved and enhanced.
- To ensure that the community has an adequate supply of affordable housing to meet its needs.
- To secure and develop the town's economy.
- To ensure that the community has appropriate infrastructure in terms of health services, community facilities, traffic and parking, public transport, and its green infrastructure.

Land Use Policies

5.3 The following policies relate to the development and use of land in the designated Neighbourhood Area. They focus on specific planning matters that are of greatest interest to the local community, especially in seeking to make a step change from the past to deliver a more sustainable future for the town, villages and countryside.

5.4 Special care has been taken by the councils to avoid any unnecessary repetition of policies between this plan and the Local Plan. However, for completeness there is some overlap so that this plan can be read without having to continuously cross reference.

5.5 Each policy is numbered and titled and it is shown in bold, coloured text. Where necessary, the area to which it will apply is shown on the Policies Map attached to the document. After each policy is some supporting text that explains the purpose of the policy, how it will be applied and, where helpful, how it relates to other development plan policies.

Policy STOW1: The Stow on the Wold Development Boundary

The Neighbourhood Plan defines the Stow on the Wold Development Boundary, as shown on the Policies Map. Within the Development Boundary applications for development will be permissible in principle.

5.6 This policy restates the principle in policies DS2 and DS4 of the adopted Local Plan for how proposals located within the Development Boundary of Stow on the Wold – a ‘Principal Settlement’ – will be managed, a distinct from proposals outside that boundary, which are addressed by Policy STOW2. The Boundary shown on the Policies Map has been modified to reflect the completion of the surgery development on Maugersbury Road but will not be redrawn to accommodate the site allocation proposed in Policy STOW7 until a scheme is approved and built out.

5.7 Proposals are only considered appropriate in principle. They must also accord with all the other policies of this Plan and of the adopted Local Plan as relevant to their location, nature and scale. The Stow & Swells Design Code of Policy STOW8 will be especially important in managing how well proposals fit with the very special character of the town.

Policy STOW2: Development in The Swells and the Countryside

A. The Neighbourhood Plan defines Lower Swell as a small village with very limited local services that is suited only to small scale residential development and where its existing community facilities and local green spaces will be protected and its off-street parking capacity improved.

B. The Neighbourhood Plan defines Upper Swell as a hamlet with no local services that is not suited to small scale residential or any other form of urban development.

C In the Rural Area beyond the settlements of Lower Swell and Upper Swell proposals to improve the agricultural economy, equestrian facilities and local nature improvement will be supported. Proposals for an isolated homes in the Rural Area argued on the basis that they are of exceptional quality alone will not be supported

5.8 This policy sets out the principles for development in Lower and Upper Swell and the rest of the countryside of the neighbourhood area. It is consistent with the policies of the adopted Local Plan, notably its Policy DS3 in managing small scale development in the villages (as ‘non-principal settlements’) that do not have defined Development Boundaries and its policies DS4, EN4 and EN5 in managing development outside settlements in the wider natural and historic landscape of the area, which all lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.9 However, it acknowledges that whilst Lower Swell is of a scale that may accommodate some small scale development, Upper Swell is a hamlet that is so small that proposals could not practically meet all of the criteria of Policy DS3. Furthermore, although the NPPF (§80) makes provision for isolated homes in the countryside, this policy rules out those proposed only under its clause (e) as being of exceptional quality, as it is considered there is no location in the countryside of the area where its immediate setting would be enhanced rather than harmed by such a proposal.

Policy STOW3: Housing Mix

A. Within the Stow on the Wold Development Boundary proposals for residential development schemes of 6 or more dwellings will be required to deliver at least 40% of the dwellings as affordable homes within the scheme and comprising the following mix (as defined by national policy):

- **45% social rented**
- **41% affordable home ownership (comprising 30% First Homes made available at a minimum 50% discount and 11% of other products)**
- **14% affordable rent**

B. Within the Stow on the Wold Development Boundary proposals for residential development schemes of 6 or more dwellings will be required to deliver the following mix of dwelling types:

- **17% 2 bed**
- **33% 3 bed**
- **34% 4 bed**
- **16% 5 bed**

5.10 This policy serves two purposes for the town: firstly it sets out the requirement for delivering affordable homes as a refinement of Policy H2 of the adopted Local Plan and in line with the evolution of national policy since 2018 (notably the launching of the 'First Homes' affordable housing for sale product). Secondly, it sets out the baseline proportions of housing types (by size) to meet local needs as a refinement of Policy H1 of the adopted Local Plan. At Lower Swell proposals will be determined in accordance with the adopted Local Plan policies H2 and H3 on affordable housing and rural exception sites.

5.11 The policy has been evidenced by the Housing Needs Assessment prepared for the neighbourhood plan by special consultants, AECOM, in March 2022. This report is published separately in the evidence base.

5.12 The report notes that the town has an above average number of affordable homes in its current stock but that this still falls far short of meeting needs in a place like Stow. The community wishes to use the opportunity presented by this plan to redress the balance of its stock and this policy will apply to the allocation in Policy STOW7 and to all other qualifying proposals over the plan period, unless a future review and assessment of need indicates otherwise. The report concludes that an emphasis on delivering a strong mix of social rented properties and First Homes will tackle the problem at a scale not seen in the town for generations.

5.13 In respect of housing types, the report has assessed the nature of the existing stock and the goals of the plan to encourage and enable young people and families to live in Stow to turn around its increasingly aging population profile. In that sense, the policy is intended to work in parallel with policies STOW4, STOW5 and the allocation of STOW7 as a combined and sustained effort to bring about a more sustainable community.

Policy STOW4: Principal Residence

Proposals for new open market housing, excluding replacement dwellings, will only be supported where there is a restriction to ensure its occupancy as a Principal Residence. Sufficient guarantee must be provided of such occupancy restriction through the imposition of a planning condition or legal agreement. New unrestricted second homes will not be supported at any time.

5.14 This policy follows those of other local and neighbourhood plans in England where the growth of second homes has begun to have a serious adverse effect on access to market and affordable homes and its consequences for local services. Although it has been observed that in larger towns to which this type of policy applies there have been an effect on the operation of the local housing market, it is not considered such effects will be of a scale in a smaller, more contained town like Stow.

5.15 Principal Residences are defined as those occupied as the residents' sole or main residence, where the residents spend the majority of their time when not working away from home. The condition or obligation on new open market homes will require that they are occupied only as the primary (principal) residence of those persons entitled to occupy them.

5.16 Occupiers of homes with a Principal Residence condition will be required to keep proof that they are meeting the obligation or condition, and be obliged to provide this proof if/when the District Council requests this information. Proof of Principal Residence is via verifiable evidence which could include, for example (but not limited to) residents being registered on the local electoral register and being registered for and attending local services (such as healthcare, schools etc). Although this presents enforcement challenges to the District Council, it has noted that other planning authorities have not had to devote considerable resources to its implementation and supports the initiative.

5.17 The Housing Needs Assessment cited 2011 Census data showing 17% of the housing stock was second homes. New data is imminent but will only show that this proportion will have significantly increased over the last ten years, in line with, or perhaps at an even greater rate, national rates in desirable rural areas like Stow and the Swells. With the allocation proposal of STOW7 creating a generational opportunity to change the town's housing stock, and alongside the provisions of STOW4 and STOW5, its housing supply cannot be undermined by second home ownership.

Policy STOW5: Specialist Accommodation for Older People in Stow

Proposals for specialist accommodation for older people falling within classes C2 or C3 of the Use Class Order, including sheltered and extra-care housing, care homes and other appropriate models of accommodation for the elderly and those with particular needs, will not be permitted unless:

- **they are of a small scale and are delivered as genuine affordable housing for households with a local connection; and**
- **they deliver no more than 40 such units in the plan period.**

5.18 The policy is intended to slow down the supply of age-restricted homes in Stow for the plan period by confining such schemes to those of a small scale linked with the plan's affordable housing objectives and by placing a cap on their total number. Although such an approach is discouraged in national policy it is not disallowed.

5.19 The town has seen two major such developments in the last decade – the only housing developments in the town of any scale since the 1980s – which will serve to exacerbate its already unsustainable, aging population profile. Neither Lower or Upper Swell are considered suitable locations for this type of use in any event, given their remoteness and lack of local services.

5.20 The change in the town’s age demographic between only 2011 and 2019 is stark. The Census data and mid-year estimate for 2019 show that the 65+ age group increased by 44% and the working age group and under 18s fell by 6% and 30% respectively. The policy is therefore needed in these special circumstances to sit alongside policies STOW3 and STOW4 as a package of measures seeking to bring greater, plan-led management of future housing supply. Its effect will be monitored and reported on in the next main review of the plan.

5.21 In doing so, it refines Local Plan Policy H4 on this same matter that allows for such proposals where there is a proven need and where they are well located and will provide affordable and other accommodation needs. This ‘predict and provide’ approach is a self-fulfilling prophesy, as shown in the Housing Needs Assessment report, and will only serve to make the town more attractive to wealthier, older households moving into the area from far afield. Though their spending power may be helpful to some local services, such schemes have a significant opportunity cost in using vital brownfield or greenfield land that could otherwise be used for a wider range of home types, which would broaden the town’s economic case and patronage of local services.

5.22 However, the town has benefited from almshouse-type schemes in its past as a means of providing genuinely low cost housing for local people. The policy therefore provides an exception for small schemes – defined as 5 homes or fewer – for elderly person households relocating from within the Town or Parish or from a Parish that immediately adjoins the Neighbourhood Area.

Policy STOW6: Health and Well Being

Proposals for housing development of any type should demonstrate how they will support the community’s physical and mental health and social networks. Proposals will be supported that:

- **encourage active lifestyles and healthy choices**
- **provide access to open spaces and links to footpaths and cycling routes and provide for cycle storage**
- **are designed to improve air quality, reduce noise pollution, reduce car use and calm traffic**
- **contribute towards the provision of new community infrastructure defined in Section 6 of this Plan**
- **for major housing development schemes, include publicly shared outside green, play and allotment space and sympathetic landscaping including appropriate native trees which screen the development from distant views**
- **incorporate ‘Healthy Home’ features, as described in the UK Green Building Council’s *Health and Wellbeing in Homes* (July 2016) document, and reflect the varied design of buildings in historic Stow**
- **do not differentiate between different types of housing tenure in respect of their design**

5.23 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any new housing development is focused on the people who will live there, the impact of the development on the environment and the future impact of climate change.

5.24 The challenges of COVID have highlighted how important it is to build sustainable communities through the design of the built environment. This area managed those challenges relatively well with its mix of local services and facilities. But it is vital that its assets are maintained well into the future to handle not just the potential for similar events, but also as a means of tackling climate change and of encouraging healthier lifestyles.

Policy STOW7: Land North East of Stow

A. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates 4.5 Ha of land to the north east of the town, as shown on the Policies Map, for a low or zero carbon residential-led, mixed use development comprising:

- **A housing scheme of approx. 170 homes comprising approx. 100 open market homes and approx. 70 affordable homes;**
- **A public car park scheme of approx. 150 spaces; and**
- **A community hub building for a mix of local community facility uses (falling within either Classes E(d) or F2(b) only) and managed workspace uses (falling within Class E(g)(i) only)**

B. The housing scheme shall comprise a mix of dwelling types as required by Policy STOW3 and an affordable housing mix of 70% social rent, 25% First Homes and 5% affordable rent, and shall be located in a way that relates well to the public car park and community hub schemes to aid their natural surveillance.

D. The public car park scheme shall be located as close to the Broadwell Lane junction as possible. It shall comprise a single car park laid out and landscaped in such a way as to minimise its urban appearance in the wider landscape. It shall be lighted using discreet columns that combine motion-sensitive lighting and CCTV to achieve a safe space that does not emit unnecessary light pollution. It shall comprise a permeable surface only. It shall be designed in such a way that every space can accommodate an electric charging point, with a minimum of 10% of the spaces having installed points at the outset. It shall be constructed and made available for operation prior to the first occupation of the housing scheme.

E. The community hub scheme shall comprise either a single, multi-purpose building or ground floor accommodation as part of the housing scheme and shall be of a detailed specification to be agreed with the Town Council. The building form and design should be distinct from the main housing scheme but should accord with the relevant requirements of the Cotswold and Stow Design Codes. It shall be located adjoining the public car park to be able to share some of its spaces. It shall be constructed and made available for operation prior to the full occupation of the housing scheme. Its hours of operation will be restricted to protect the amenities of nearby residential properties.

F. The design strategy shall comprise a layout, plots, building forms and designs and a landscape design that are informed by a clear understanding of the relevant guidance published by the Cotswold AONB and with the relevant requirements of the Cotswold and Stow Design Codes. Its character and appearance should be inspired by the Parks Estate in the town. It shall provide for a layout and landscaping scheme that successfully mitigate the effects of the development on the AONB countryside to the east and shall acknowledge the views across the site south eastwards from Broadwell Lane.

G. The active travel strategy shall comprise a layout that creates new pedestrian routes to connect with Well Lane, with the superstore development to its immediate west and with the pavement on the eastern side of the A429 Fosse Way at its junction with Broadwell Lane. These routes shall be well signposted to the town centre from within the housing scheme and from the public car park scheme.

H. The transport strategy shall seek to discourage traffic generated by the housing, public car park and community hub schemes from using Broadwell Lane other than to access the site from the A429 Fosse Way. It shall also implement any improvement works shown to be necessary to the A429 Fosse Way/Broadwell Lane junction prior to the occupation of the first dwelling.

I. The green infrastructure strategy shall make provision for onsite biodiversity net gain of at least 20% (as measured by the most up to date BNG Metric) as part of its proposals to integrate with the wider network of green infrastructure. It shall avoid any loss of the existing mature tree and hedgerows within the site boundaries and shall seek to reinstate historic hedgerows as part of the landscape scheme. The landscape scheme shall also seek to replace existing non-native tree species on the site boundaries with native species.

J. Proposals should be made in the form of a comprehensive planning application and should include:

- 1. an illustrative masterplan that defines the land uses and key development principles for access, layout, design and the principles of phasing and implementation;**
- 2. design features that improve energy efficiency and reduces carbon dioxide emissions; and**
- 3. a planning obligation to secure the release of the public car park and community hub schemes once completed and any other supporting infrastructure prior to the commencement of that scheme.**

5.25 This policy allocates land on the north-eastern edge of Stow to accommodate a sustainable extension to the town comprising valuable affordable housing, additional public car parking and a new building to support community and business uses. It is an essential component of delivering the vision for the future success of the town as a package of measures with policies STOW3 and STOW4 and an illustrative masterplan is shown below.

5.26 The land is in the control of a single developer and can be delivered in full within the next five year plan period. It is well located in respect of the town centre (less than 400m walking distance) and of the main superstore (less than 100m). The same developer also controls a smaller area of land that lies within the same defensible boundaries of the allocation site but lies outside the Neighbourhood Area (in adjoining Broadwell Parish). The developer has brought forward the outline proposals to date on the basis that a planning application would be made for all of the land should the Neighbourhood Plan be made with this allocation policy. The Town Council has therefore engaged with the community and other stakeholders – including Broadwell Parish Council – using that larger proposal for transparency, even though the Plan itself can only allocate land and contain policy relating to the larger part of the site within its area. In doing so, the developer has confirmed that there is no viability dependency of the larger site on the smaller site.

5.27 A small part of the site – its south-western corner – lies within the Conservation Area and all of the site forms part of the wider, gently sloping hillside sweeping to the east and south and so is visible in the generally setting of the town from the east. The land is reasonably well enclosed from public vantage points on its north, west and southern boundaries but is exposed to the east and the wider AONB countryside. In this regard, the allocation proposal is considered to comprise a ‘major

development’ in the AONB, the justification for which must show that its public benefits outweigh the harm to the AONB (as per NPPF §177 and set out in Appendix E).

5.28 It is therefore vital that the masterplan demonstrates how the layout and design of each of the component schemes will use the shape, natural features and topography of the land to conserve the special landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. In any event, the design of the overall layout and the distinct schemes will be expected to follow the distinctive design principles of this part of the Cotswolds – as set out in a number of Cotswolds AONB Conservation Board published guidance documents and by a combination of the Cotswold and Stow Design Codes – to ensure that it stitches into the fabric of the town visually as well as functionally. The vernacular aesthetic and general form of the Parks Estate on the south side of the town is considered as the most appropriate inspiration for the scheme.

5.29 The evidence base and site assessment note (also part of Appendix E) explain the rationale for selecting this land for allocation. The land presents a generational opportunity to address matters of increasing concern to the local community. The town is an internationally renowned, historic tourist attraction of few equals in the UK. But its success has created housing and parking problems that, if left unaddressed, have the potential to undermine that success in future years.

5.30 Although the current Local Plan requires no new housing supply from the town for the plan period, this proposal will make an important contribution to enabling the ever-aging demographic character to be arrested with a scale of new, genuine affordable housing not seen in the town for many years. The policy proposes a tenure mix that differs from the mix proposed in Policy STOW3 in order to deliver on the community’s desire to see a significant uplift in the number of socially rented homes built in the town on this the largest scheme.

5.31 The town has also lacked a community centre of a size commensurate with its population. In addition, in the light of the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic, the community is keen to reduce the town’s dependency on tourism for its commercial success. The land is well-located, and is of a sufficient size, to incorporate a new multi-functional building that can meet each of these objectives (or provided in ground floorspace as part of a larger building with the dwellings above). An initial specification (in Appendix C) has been agreed by the Town Council based on its analysis of community and business needs, comprising a mix of office/managed workspace accommodation (now Class E(g)(i)) and of a hall/meeting place also suited to indoor sport, recreation and fitness uses (now Class E(d) and F2(b)). The Town Council will seek to liaise and agree these matters with the developer as a priority on the making of the Plan and a condition will be attached to the planning permission restricting the uses to avoid any future change within those respective use classes.

5.32 The provision of a new public car park is another essential public benefit justifying the allocation of the land. The facility will be less than a 10 minute walk to the town centre and will enable the relocation of spaces out of the Market Square (see Policy STOW8) to allow for public realm improvements, as well as to increase capacity for those that work in the town as well as visitors. Although utilisation data is dated, it indicated that parking capacity in the town was negligible at most times – new research has been commissioned but it is not considered that it will conclude anything other than capacity being an even greater problem. Once completed, the Town Council will endeavour to work with the District and County Councils in agreeing a parking strategy across the whole town to ensure the new capacity is operated as efficiently as possible.

5.33 The green infrastructure strategy, aligned with a landscape design that follows the AONB guidance, should enable significant improvements to biodiversity and local nature recovery, which are also important AONB conservation objectives. There is sufficient non-developable land within the site to accommodate these requirements.

Policy STOW8: Stow Town Centre & Market Square

A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the Stow on the Wold Town Centre on the Policies Map. The Market Square is defined as the primary shopping area within the Town Centre and is also shown on the Policies Map. On ground floors within the Market Square development proposals for Commercial, Business and Service uses will be supported. On ground floors outside the Market Square, development proposals for Commercial, Business and Service uses and Pub or Drinking Establishment and Hot Food Take-away uses will be supported.

B. Development proposals for new or intensified Commercial, Business and Service uses and Pub or Drinking Establishment and Hot Food Take-away uses should be carefully designed and mitigated to ensure that the amenity of existing residential uses is not negatively impacted upon and that the potential for statutory nuisance is avoided.

C. Proposals in the Market Square to change the use of an active ground floor frontage to a residential use will not be supported.

D. Proposals for new residential uses on upper floors will be supported, provided they:

- 1. are carefully designed to achieve a good quality of life for residents;**
- 2. achieve well-designed development that creates a safe and comfortable living standard, and which positively addresses the townscape through good design that enhances the external appearance of buildings;**
- 3. take account of existing ground floor uses and mitigate accordingly to minimise the scope for conflict with existing commercial operations and ensure that future residents have a good quality of life in amenity terms and that existing commercial operations are not unduly constrained;**
- 4. so far as possible, avoid residential access via rear service yards in order to enhance natural surveillance and assist legibility. Where this is unavoidable, measures to enhance legibility such as lighting should be incorporated into design, and clear distinction should be made to delineate between residential access routes and areas required for commercial activity; and**
- 5. minimise street clutter by directing supporting infrastructure such as bin stores and cycle facilities away from active frontages.**

E. Development proposals that require some loss of ground floor floorspace to facilitate access to upper floor residential will be supported where this can be achieved without undermining the integrity and viability of the existing unit(s); and provided it will not result in a proliferation of residential accesses that would undermine the vitality and viability of an individual shopping frontage.

F. All development proposals in the Town Centre must accord with the Design Code in respect of sustaining and enhancing the special architectural and historic character of the Conservation Area and of responding to the presence of statutory listed buildings and buildings of local importance.

G. Proposals that lead to a reduction in the overall space in the Market Square dedicated to vehicle parking will be supported, provided that space is repurposed for public realm improvements only and that the number of spaces lost will not undermine the commercial viability of the Market Square.

5.34 This policy is intended as an expression of how the community wishes to see the town centre thrive in a ‘post-Covid’ world. It seeks to sustain and build on the success of the town centre as a vibrant and vital heart of the town and the wider rural area and as a renowned visitor destination. The combination of its historic form and range of retail, commercial and other uses makes it one of the best liked town centres in the Cotswolds.

5.35 However, although it has ridden the retail storms of the last decade better than many, with few vacant units, we cannot be complacent in the face of increasing competition from online retailing. The policy takes account of the new Use Classes Order which defines Commercial, Business and Services Uses by combining previous retail, financial services, café/restaurant, offices and other social uses. It updates and refines Policy EC8 of the adopted Local Plan to bring it up to date with the NPPF and the Order and is consistent with the role of the Market Square – which it defines as the primary shopping area – and other parts of the town centre as a ‘Key Centre’ in the District.

5.36 The neighbourhood plan project has reviewed the town centre boundary defined by the Local Plan and found that it continues to serve this purpose. The Market Square remains the ‘jewel in the crown’ as one of the most identifiable in the country. Its mix of ground floor (and above in some cases) commercial uses, all operating from historic buildings around its edge, plays a number of vital roles: in defining the essence of the character of the Conservation Area, in operating as a critical mass of vital and viable commercial activity (from shops to bars, pubs and hotels) and in generating a strong demand for tourism. It is vital that these roles are sustained.

5.37 The other parts of the town centre – Digbeth Street, Sheep Street, Church Street, Talbot Court and Brewery Yard – play a vital supporting role to the Market Square, providing locals and visitors alike with a wider range of commercial offers. However, there are some dwellings interspersed in some of them, as well as uses better located beyond the Market Square like takeaways.

5.38 The goal is to sustain this special retail-led mix of commercial uses within the Town Centre to promote a thriving daytime and evening economy whilst recognising the important contribution that other uses on its fringes, including residential development, can make in promoting a vibrant and competitive town centre where people want to visit, live and work.

The policy will operate alongside national and other development plan policies relating to heritage assets (including the Design Code of this plan), as the Conservation Area covers the whole of the Town Centre and beyond. There are also more than 60 listed buildings of various grades with most others have local heritage and/or townscape value. It must also operate within the flux of permitted development rights applying to town centres, although some of those rights are not applicable here because of its heritage assets.

5.39 The policy also encourages the use of upper floors by refining Policy EC8 to acknowledge the challenges of doing so in an historic environment and makes provision for the relocation of some parking spaces to the new public car park to be delivered by the allocation in Policy STOW7. Detailed proposals have not yet been drawn up, but the principle has been a feature of the community engagement activities. Many spaces are occupied by those working in the Town Centre (and having to drive from well beyond the town to access affordable housing) and the opportunity to relocate some spaces will enable public realm improvements to reduce the effect of vehicles in this special space.

Policy STOW9: Playing Field Facilities

A. Proposals to upgrade, extend or replace the pavilion facilities at Queen Elizabeth II Field, as shown on the Policies Map, will be supported provided that any extension of the building is no larger than 150% of existing floorspace and, if a replacement, it is located on or immediately adjoining the existing building footprint and its massing and height will not undermine the open character of the Local Green Space.

B. Proposals to provide a new pavilion facility to serve the King George’s Playing Fields, as shown on the Policies Map, will be supported provided the building adjoins the existing play facilities and its massing and height will not undermine the open character of the Local Green Space.

5.40 This policy responds to a desire to improve these important community facilities on the western and eastern edges of the town respectively. The playing fields are proposed as Local Green Spaces in Policy STOW10 but in each case it is considered possible to extend the existing building (at QEII if kept to no more than half the size again, i.e. 150% of the existing pavilion) or to erect a new building (at King Georges) without harming the open appearance or function of those spaces.

Policy STOW10: Local Green Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following Local Green Spaces, as shown on the Policies Map:

- 1. Stow Primary School Playing Field, Stow**
- 2. King George’s Field & Play Park, Stow**
- 3. Allotments, Stow**
- 4. The Park/Back Walls, Stow**
- 5. Lower Swell Playing Field**
- 6. Fox Drive Open Space, Lower Swell**
- 7. St Mary’s Close Open Space, Lower Swell**
- 8. QEII Field, B4068, Stow**
- 9. The Shrubbery, Stow**

Proposals for inappropriate development within a Local Green Space will only be supported in very special circumstances.

5.41 This policy designates nine Local Green Spaces to protect them from inappropriate development. All of them are considered to meet the tests of NPPF §102 to show they are cherished by the local community (see Appendix A for further details). The effect of the designation is to give the spaces the equivalent protection as national Green Belt policy, meaning that only very special circumstances will justify inappropriate development.

Policy STOW11: Stow and the Swells Design Code

Development proposals must accord with the Cotswold and Stow and the Swells Design Code.

5.42 This policy supplements the Cotswold Design Code (in Appendix D of the adopted Local Plan) with a Design Code for the town and parish. It is a lengthy document and so is published separately to the plan, but the policy extends the full weight of the development plan to its contents.

5.43 The Code has been structured to fit neatly alongside the Cotswold Design Code so they can easily be read together. It has divided the town into four ‘character areas’ that are reasonably distinct in following the age of growth of the town over the centuries. It sets out for each character area how the principles of the Cotswold Design Code specially apply to that area, accepting that what might ‘fit in’ with one part of the town may not fit in with another. The Code also covers Lower Swell and Upper Swell as separate character areas with their own design guidance.

5.44 As with the Cotswold Design Code and the AONB Management Plan, it seeks to strike a balance between prescription and flexibility. In some regards – notably building form and materials – the Cotswold vernacular context is so strong that any significant departure would like lead to a harmful scheme. In others, the Code offers designers a degree of flexibility to accommodate modern solutions, and there are examples of how this has worked well in recent years.

Policy STOW12: Buildings of Local Importance

The directly or indirect effect of a development proposal on the significance of a Building of Local Importance (listed in Appendix A) will be taken into account in determining the application by weighing the scale of any harm or loss against the significance of the heritage asset.

5.45 This policy assists with the implementation of Local Plan Policy EN12 and §203 of the NPPF, both of which set out how proposals affecting Buildings of Local Importance – or ‘non-designated heritage assets’ as they are known – should be handled. Having carried out the design coding analysis, the councils have been able to draw up a list of such buildings, as set out in Appendix B.

5.46 The councils have followed the guidance published by Historic England so that the list is derived from a consistent and transparent methodology based on set selection criteria. The majority of the buildings lie within one of the Conservation Areas and so already benefit from some degree of extra protection in the planning system, most notably in respect of controlling their demolition. However, this status, and the specific local interest ascribed to each building, will enable their intrinsic architectural or historic interest to be defined and taken into account in future development proposals.

5.47 To be clear, this status is not the same as statutory listing (carried out by Historic England) which is governed by a combination of separate planning law (the Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas Act 1990), Local Plan policy (EN10) and national policy (elsewhere in the NPPF).

Policy STOW13: Zero Carbon Buildings

A. All development should be ‘zero carbon ready’ by design to minimise the amount of energy needed to heat and cool buildings through landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping.

B. Proposals for new and refurbished buildings should demonstrate that they have been tested to ensure the buildings will perform as predicted and a planning condition will be attached to a permission to require the provision of a Post Occupancy Evaluation Report to the Local Planning Authority within a specified period. Where the Report identifies poor energy performance and makes recommendations for reasonable corrective action, the applicant must demonstrate that those actions have been implemented before the condition will be discharged.

C. Wherever feasible, buildings should be certified to a Passivhaus or equivalent standard with a space heating demand of less than 15KWh/m²/year. Where schemes that maximise their potential to meet this standard by proposing the use of terraced and/or apartment building forms of plot size, plot coverage and layout that are different to those of the Design Code Character Area within which the proposal is located, this will be supported, provided it can be demonstrated that the scheme will not cause substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. Proposals that meet this standard are exempted from the provisions of clause B.

D. All planning applications for major development are also required to be accompanied by a Whole Life-Cycle Carbon Emission Assessment, using a recognised methodology, to demonstrate actions taken to reduce embodied carbon resulting from the construction and use of the building over its entire life.

E. An Energy Statement will be submitted to demonstrate compliance with the policy (except for householder applications). The statement will include a passive design capacity assessment to demonstrate how opportunities to reduce the energy use intensity (EUI) of buildings over the plan period have been maximised in accordance with the energy hierarchy. Designers shall evaluate the operational energy use using realistic information on the intended use, occupancy and operation of the building to minimise any performance gap.

5.48 This policy is in five parts, the combination of which is intended to deliver the type of step change required by §152-154 of the NPPF in making ‘radical reductions’ in carbon emissions. Much of its focus is on the energy performance of all new developments in the area to encourage and incentivise the use of the Passivhaus or equivalent standard of building design.

5.49 Along with the passive design capacity assessment, it is anticipated that designers will demonstrate compliance using a design for performance methodology such as the Passivhaus Planning package or CIBSE TM34 Operational Energy. Achieving this level of performance will make a significant contribution to mitigating climate change that the Neighbourhood Plan can deliver. The Government has confirmed that the Planning and Energy Act 2008 will not be amended. As a result, a Written Ministerial Statement on this subject in 2015 is out of date and the setting of energy efficiency standards at the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan scale is permissible.

5.50 Clause A of the policy requires developers to ensure they address the Government’s climate change targets and energy performance at the very initial stages of design as encouraged by the District Council’s own Net Zero Carbon Toolkit 2021. ‘Zero Carbon Ready’ by design means making spatial decisions on layout and orientation of buildings at the outset to maximise the passive design benefits (‘free heat’) of a site and avoids leaving this to technical choices and assessment at the Building Regulation stage, by which time the opportunity may have been lost.

5.51 Clauses B and C are intended to operate together in a way that incentivises the use of the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) or equivalent design methodology. Firstly, clause B requires the developer of a consented housing development scheme of any size to carry out a Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) including actual metered energy use, and to submit the report to the local planning authority. It will be implemented by attaching a planning condition, which will only be discharged once the report has been submitted and any recommended actions to rectify any performance gap with the design stage assessment are carried out by the developer. Passivhaus certified schemes will not fail in this way and they are therefore exempted from this policy requirement. Further guidance on the purpose and operation of clause B is contained in Appendix D of this document.

5.52 Secondly, clause C encourages all new buildings, no matter what their intended use or size, to adopt the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) or equivalent design methodology where it is feasible to do so. It is accepted that there may be some factors that make its use unfeasible, for example, the topography and orientation of the site. The policy will also ensure that expensive and unnecessary retrofit costs are not passed down to building occupiers in the future, particularly in an area which has relatively high property values. Until such standards can be required by planning policy it is hoped that the exemption of schemes using the standard from the POE condition will be an effective incentive, especially as the build costs of the doing so are now only just above those of conventional buildings.

5.53 The policy recognises that occasionally a feasible design solution cannot adhere to all of the parameters of the Design Code of its local area, especially given its special historic and architectural interest. It therefore strikes the balance in favour of that solution unless the proposal will cause substantial harm to a Conservation Area or to the setting of a listed building. Applicants will be expected to address this matter in the Design & Access Statement.

5.54 Proposals seeking to apply the PHPP must be able to demonstrate that the Passivhaus standard can be achieved. Prior to commencement a 'pre-construction compliance check' completed by a Passivhaus Designer accredited by the Passive House Institute (PHI) will be required and secured by condition. Upon completion a Quality Approved Passivhaus certificate for each building will be required prior to occupation, again secured by condition.

5.55 In the absence of any current adopted or saved Local Plan policy covering the energy performance of new buildings, Clause D requires all major development proposals (as defined by the NPPF) that are not householder applications to be accompanied by a Whole Life-Cycle Carbon Emissions Assessment. This requirement will be added to the Cotswold Validation Checklist for outline and full planning applications applying to proposals in the Neighbourhood Area until such a time that there is a Districtwide requirement.

5.56 In addition, Clause E requires an Energy Statement to be submitted to cover the following as relevant and proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal:

- an assessment of the proposal to minimise regulated and unregulated emissions, the embodied emissions and the emissions associated with maintenance, repair and replacement of the new building(s), as well as its dismantling, demolition and eventual material disposal;
- a calculation of the energy and carbon emissions covered by the Future Homes Standard and Building Regulations and, separately, the energy demand and carbon emissions from any other part of the development that are not covered by the Future Homes Standard or Building Regulations;
- the proposal to reduce carbon emissions beyond the Future Homes Standard and Building Regulations through the energy efficient design of the site, buildings and services;
- the proposal to further reduce carbon emissions through the use of zero or low-emission decentralised energy where feasible;
- the proposal to further reduce carbon emissions by maximising opportunities to produce and use renewable energy on-site, utilising storage technologies where appropriate;
- the proposal for a demand-side response, specifically through installation of smart meters, minimising peak energy demand and promoting short-term energy storage; and
- an analysis of the expected cost to occupants associated with the proposed energy strategy.

5.57 Every new build or redevelopment project in the Neighbourhood Area provides an opportunity to make a difference and a contribution towards meeting our climate change targets for 2050. This new information requirement need not be an unreasonable expectation of even the smallest schemes for new buildings. Land values in the town and parish are high relative to build costs and ought to be sufficient to ensure requirements to tackle improving energy and carbon performance are viable.

Policy STOW14: Walking & Cycling in the Town and Parish

Proposals that will improve the existing network of footpaths and cycleways through and out of Stow on the Wold will be supported. Proposals to create an off-road Stow to Bourton Cycle Path will be supported.

5.58 This policy brings an emphasis to the need for development proposals in the area to take proper account of their effects on walking and cycling. The town and villages are compact with few properties in the town more than a 15 minute walk to the Market Square, although its topography can be challenging in places. With the broader aim of reducing the effects of traffic in the town more must be made of the opportunities to encourage walking and cycling.

5.59 With that in mind Policy STOW7 will enable new routes to be created on the northern side of the town as residents and users of the new car park and community hub are encouraged to walk and cycle between that new area and the Town Centre and Tesco superstore. There is also the ambition of finding a way of creating an off-road cyclepath to link the town with its neighbour Bourton on the Water to the south.

Policy STOW15: Vehicle Parking

A Proposals for residential developments must meet the standards for off-street parking provision set out in the Design Code.

B Proposals to create shared off-street vehicle parking in Lower Swell will be supported, provided:

- **they are of a size and location that does not harm the special historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area;**
- **they do not cause significant harm to the amenities of local residents; and**
- **they include provision for EV charging.**

5.60 This policy seeks to ensure that new housing developments do not exacerbate already serious parking problems, especially in Stow on the Wold and that their parking provision will be adequate to meet likely future needs generated by the development, whether for residents, visitors or trades/delivery people. Community engagement on the plan has highlighted the problems the town faces in accommodating parking for residents, businesses and visitors on historic streets and in surrounding residential areas.

5.61 The policy also encourages land interests, including local residents, in Lower Swell to bring forward proposals to relocate the sporadic on-street and off-street car parking in the village to locations that are safer but still convenient. In doing so, those proposals may enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area and enable new provision for EV charging to benefit local residents that cannot access off street charging points at home.

Policy STOW16: Digital Infrastructure

Proposals to improve the digital infrastructure in the area by way of the installation of new transmitters, antennas and junction boxes will be supported unless they will cause substantial harm to designated heritage assets or to the special landscape and scenic beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.62 This policy seeks to encourage the provision of new digital infrastructure that will drive technological advancements necessary to support new businesses and homes. Creative industries, office space and commerce rely on high speed, reliable connectivity but this is difficult in much of this rural area. It is acknowledged that many such works may be permitted development but where they are not then the policy requires that substantial harm is demonstrated to justify a refusal of planning permission.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan policies will be implemented through the determination of planning applications for development in the Town and Parish by the local planning authority.

Development Management

6.2 The planning authority will use a combination of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies to inform and determine its planning application decisions. The Town and Parish Councils are statutory consultees on planning applications made in the area and they will be made aware of any future planning applications or alterations to those applications by the planning authority. They will seek to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been identified and applied correctly by applicants and by officers in their decision reports. The Town and Parish Councils will also prepare and publish an annual monitoring report outlining how the Neighbourhood Plan has been applied.

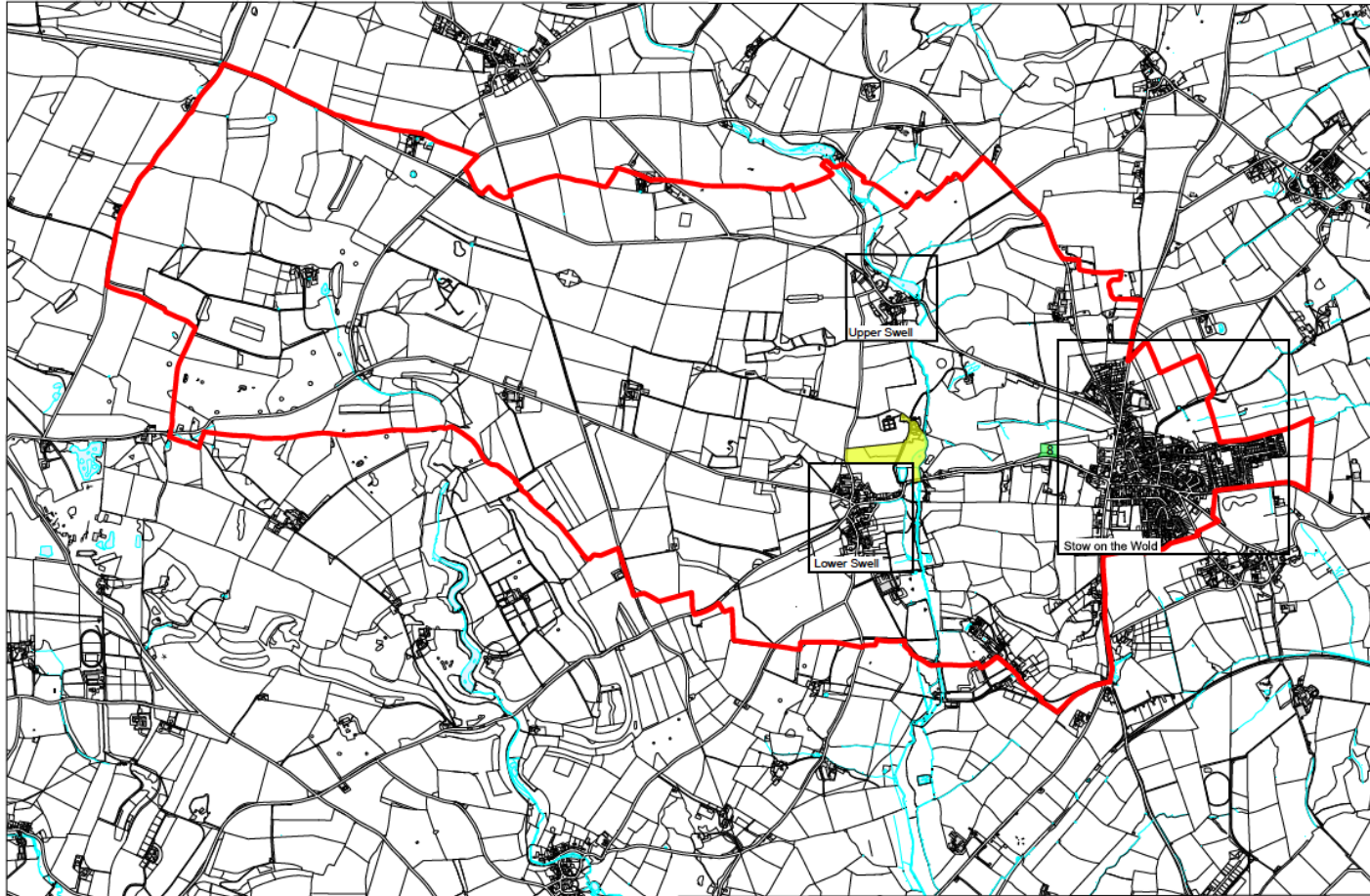
Local Infrastructure Improvements

6.3 Where opportunities arise through the Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 obligations to secure financial contributions to invest in improving local infrastructure, the Town Council proposes that the priorities for investment are Market Square public realm improvement and the Community Hub.

Other Non-Planning Matters

6.4 During the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, there have been many ideas for improving or addressing current problems in the area that lie outside the scope of the land use planning system to control or for which the timing of the plan is too soon. The Town and Parish Councils have noted these issues and will take them forward through their day-to-day business and in partnership with the local community and relevant parties. These include additional car parking and an increase in public EV charging points at Lower Swell.

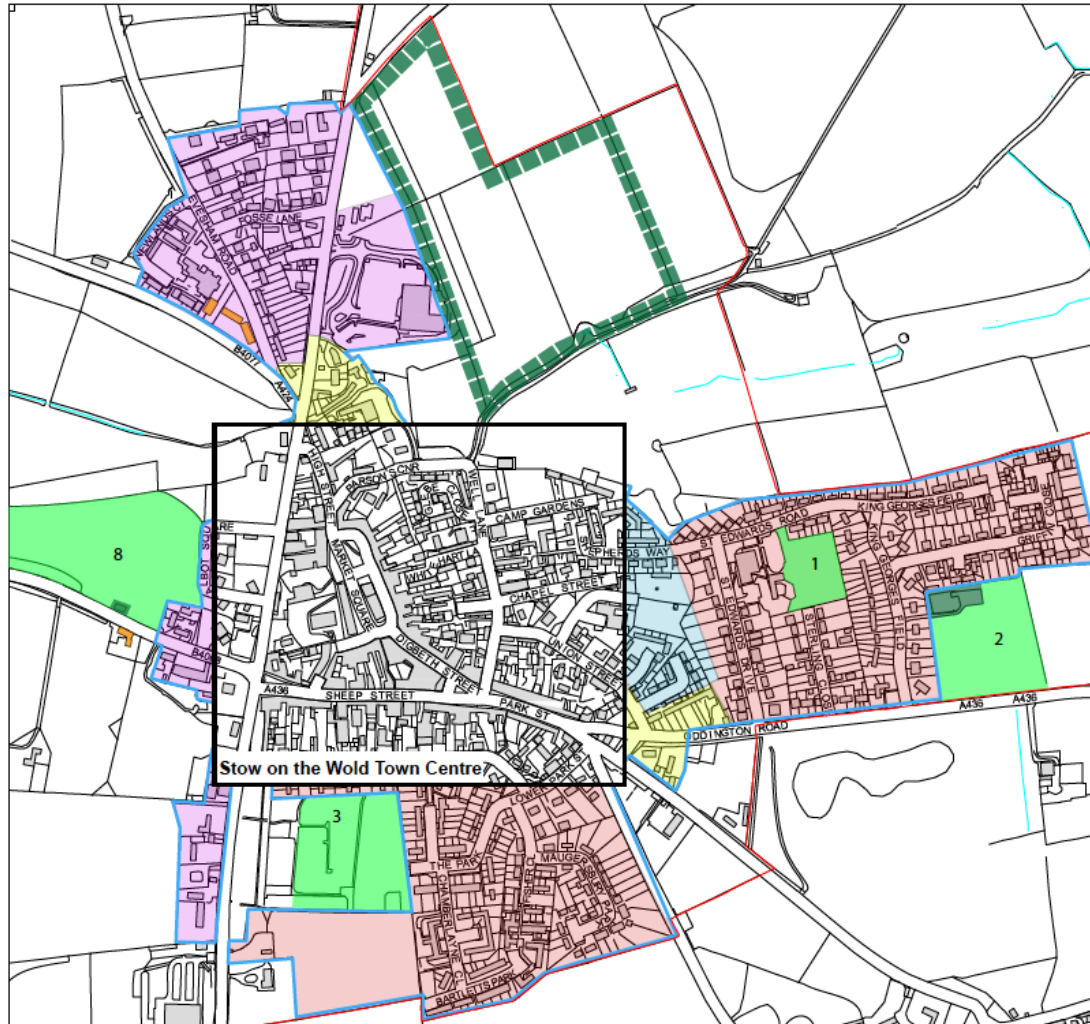
POLICIES MAP & INSETS













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Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan:
Pre-Submission Policies Map
January 2023

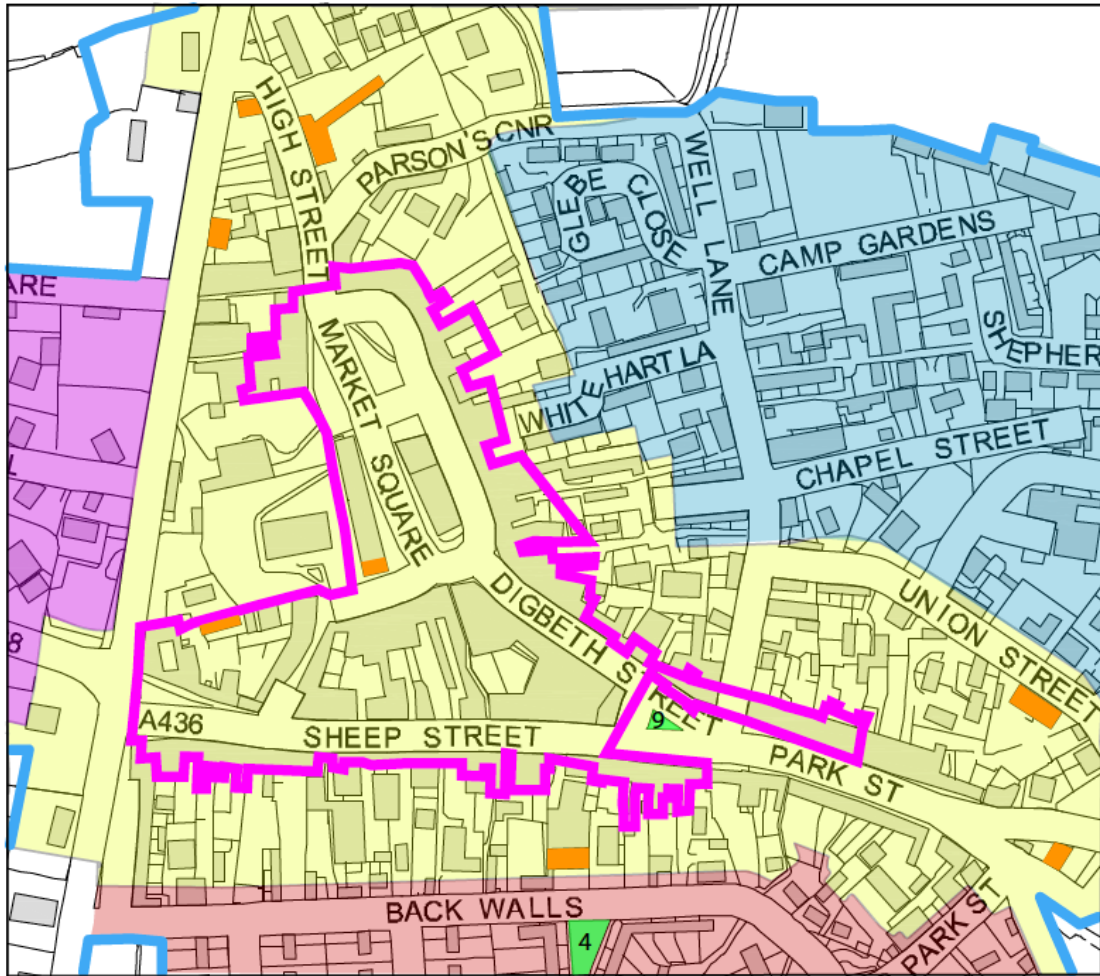
-  Designated Neighbourhood Area
-  Lower Swell Conservation Area
-  Policy STOW10: 'Local Green Space'




**Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan:
Pre-Submission Policies Map
Stow on the Wold Inset
January 2023**


-  Designated Neighbourhood Area
-  Policy STOW1: 'The Stow on the Wold Development Boundary'
-  Policy STOW7: 'Land North East of Stow'
-  Policy STOW9: 'Playing Field Facilities'
-  Policy STOW10: 'Local Green Spaces'
- Policy STOW11: 'Stow and the Swells Design Code':
 -  Character Area A
 -  Character Area B
 -  Character Area C
 -  Character Area D
-  Policy STOW12: 'Buildings of Local Importance'


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**Stow & The Swells
Neighbourhood Plan:
Pre-Submission Policies
Map - Stow on the Wold
Town Centre Inset
January 2023**


 Policy STOW1:
'The Stow on the Wold Development Boundary'


 Policy STOW8: 'Market Square'


 Policy STOW10:
'Local Green Spaces'


Policy STOW11:
'Stow and the Swells Design Code':

 Character Area A

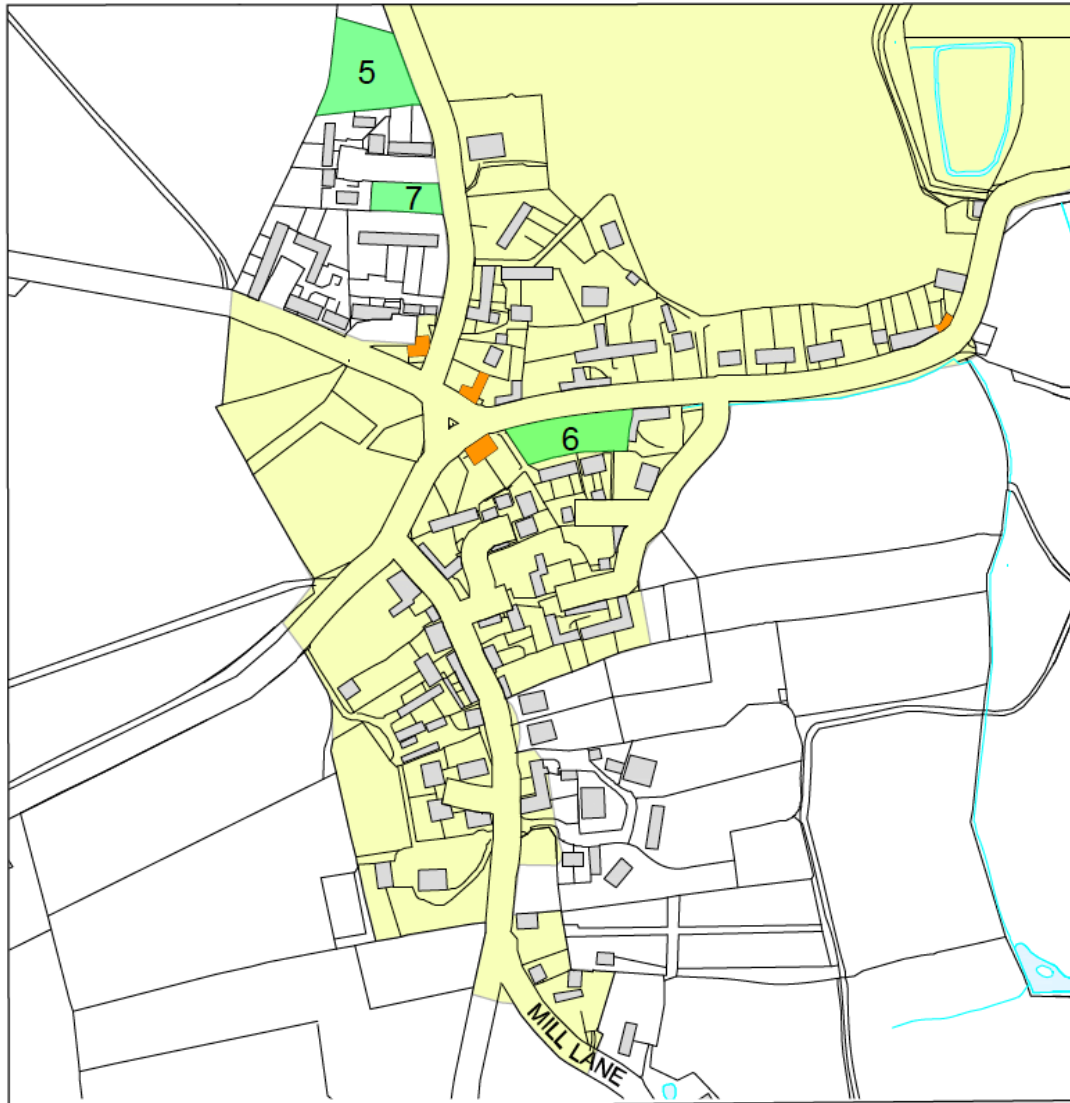
 Character Area B

 Character Area C

 Character Area D

 Policy STOW12:
'Buildings of Local Importance'

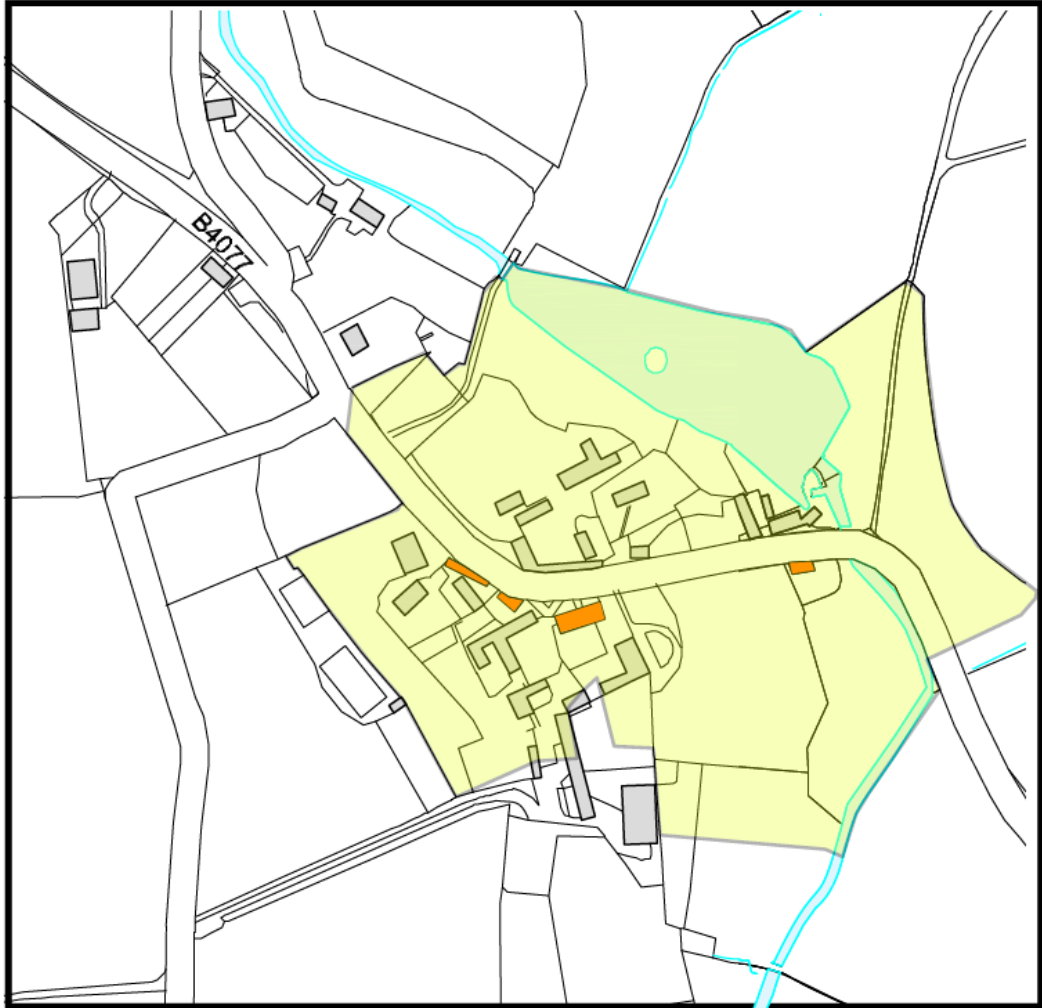
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**Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan:
Pre-Submission Policies Map
Lower Swell Inset
January 2023**

- Policy STOW10:
'Local Green Space'
- Policy STOW12:
'Buildings of Local Importance'
- Lower Swell Conservation Area



Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan:
Pre-Submission Policies Map
Upper Swell Inset
January 2023

-  Policy STOW12:
'Buildings of Local Importance'
-  Upper Swell Conservation Area

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APPENDIX A: LOCAL GREEN SPACES (STOW10)

The policy designates a number of spaces as Local Green Spaces as per §102 of the NPPF. Set out below is a brief description of the factors that may each space special – all lie in close proximity to, and are cherished by, their local communities and none are considered large tracts of land.

Stow Primary School Playing Field

An essential part of the school facility but limited in its size to accommodate one small football pitch and therefore precious to the successful operation of the school.



King George's Field & Play Park

An important recreational area serving the eastern side of the town and including a play park and special gated entrance in stone and decorative iron work on Oddington Road.



Stow Allotments

A popular social as well as green infrastructure asset for the town.



The Park/Back Walls, Stow

An area of amenity land laid out as part of the Park estate in the late 1950s and an essential part of its green character.



Lower Swell Playing Field

A popular local facility serving the village and used by the school.



Fox Drive Open Space, Lower Swell

Although not publicly accessible this open space lies at the heart of the village and is an essential part of its character and identity.



St Mary's Close Open Space, Lower Swell

This area of mature planting and open space was laid out as part of the St. Mary's Close development and is a precious asset for the village.



QEII Field

An important sports and recreational area serving the western side of the town and also hosting annual community events.



The Shrubbery, Sheep Street/Digbeth Street, Stow

A small green space at the edge of the town centre that is popular with visitors to the town.



APPENDIX B: BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST (POLICY STOW12)

The policy identifies a number of buildings of local interest. Set out below is a brief description of the local heritage interest of each building.

Fosseway Farm Cottage, High Street – a range of dwelling and barn/ancillary buildings in the Cotswold vernacular occupying a prominent, large site at the northern entrance to the Market Square



Google ©

Fern Bank, High Street - in the Cotswold vernacular, modified but retaining many original window and stone quoin features, occupying a very prominent position in the streetscene at the northern entrance to the Conservation Area



Google ©

Talbot Cottage, Fosse Way – comprising No2 of three storeys and a lower former coach house both in the Cotswold vernacular, occupying a prominent location at the back of pavement on the Fosse Way.



Google ©

Building, corner of Market Square and Church Street – a two storey building with a chamfered corner, with a ground floor retail unit of traditional design and low slate roof, adjoining the taller listed building ('5224 The Square') in the Cotswold vernacular and of considerable group value and occupying a prominent corner site with Church Street in the immediate setting of St Edwards Church and connected to its listed boundary wall and archway.



Google

The Bell Inn, Oddington Road – a three storey main building with two storey side and rear additions in the Cotswold vernacular with distinctive double bay window and porch arrangement on the ground floor frontage, occupying a very prominent position at the entrance to the main part of the Conservation Area and its extension towards Mangersbury.



The Old School House, Union Street – impressive former girls school building of 1901 by architect H.W.Chatters, now a home, rock faced with most original architectural details surviving, including cupola tower (visible in views above rooftops from the west), large windows on N and E facades with ogee gable and pediment above on N side, with “gawky, vaguely Jacobean detail” (Pevsner).



Our Lady & St Kenelm RC Church, Back Walls – described in Pevsner as a converted former infant school of 1836, a single storey building in the Cotswold vernacular set back from the road; stained glass window by Donald Brooke, c 1950.



Google ©

Hillside & West Deyne (former Swell Villas), Lower Swell Road – a pair of Victorian cottages.



Google ©

Westcombe and The Limes (former Batsford Villas), Tewkesbury Road – a pair of early Edwardian villas, two storeys with large two storey bay windows, original prominent twin window gabled W dormer and decorative stonework around windows and above doors; front gardens with lawns and original low brick and ironwork railings and gates. Extended to the E but successful in maintaining grant character.



Google ©

Newlands House, Evesham Road – likely to be by a fine group of c.1930 by Seth-Smith & Monro in with gables and mullioned windows of same vernacular style as Walter Reynolds Homes on adjacent site; secluded within grounds but a glimpse view of the main façade from the main road through gates.



Walter Reynolds Homes, Evesham Road – ‘a fine group of 1928 by Seth-Smith & Monro in two sections set at an angle with gables, mullioned windows and hipped bays’ (Pevsner), almshouses operated by local charity, occupying a prominent site on the NW entrance to the town off Fosseway



Google ©

Stow on the Wold Almshouses, Church Walk – a terrace of four and a pair of low, stone one bed cottages facing on to a small communal courtyard with their rear, windowless elevations on to Church Walk next to the grounds St. Edwards Church. The first record of almshouses on this site is in 1594, when the buildings were derelict and rebuilt in that year. The current almshouses are thought to have been built in the mid 18th century.



Corner Cottage, B4068, Lower Swell - of the Cotswold vernacular occupying a prominent site at the eastern entrance to the village and has group value with the listed Travellers Joy to Leys View Cottage



Leys View Cottage, B4068, Lower Swell - of the Cotswold vernacular and has group value with the listed Travellers Joy to Corner Cottage.



Google ©

Horseshoe Cottages, Cotswold House and Barn Cottage, B4068, Lower Swell - of the Cotswold vernacular and have group value in framing the war memorial village green and are prominent in the street scene.



Google ©

Lower Swell Village Hall - of the Cotswold vernacular, occupying a prominent location at the centre of the second, smaller village green and with significant historic social value.



Barn, Upper Swell Farm, B4077 Upper Swell – a large barn that is part of a larger converted farm complex, of Cotswold stone walls (with a regular pattern of triangular winnowing holes and a Victorian post box inserted into its wall) and a Welsh slate roof, occupying a prominent location at the centre of the village.



Bridge Cottage, B4077, Upper Swell – modern (1929) but in the Cotswold vernacular and with the listed Old Mill opposite creating a delightful entrance to the village.



Nos 1 & 2, Upper Swell House, B4077, Upper Swell – a semi-detached pair of cottages in the Cotswold vernacular behind a low rubble stone wall incorporating a former drinking fountain, occupying a prominent location in the village centre and with group value with adjoining the barn of Spring House.



Barn, Spring House, B4077, Upper Swell – a low, long former barn at a diagonal to the main road creating interest in the streetscene and with group value with adjoining Nos 1 & 2 Upper House.



APPENDIX C: SPECIFICATION FOR STOW ON THE WOLD BUSINESS & COMMUNITY BARN

VISION

To expand and support the economy of Stow on the Wold and the Swells by facilitating and supporting entrepreneurship and creativity towards a more balanced mix of tourism, retail and commercial enterprise by providing progressive, sustainable, and sympathetic spaces for dynamic and aspiring entrepreneurs and community use.

FOCUS

The focus for the Business & Community Barn will be for creative businesses, home working space and community events including those supporting the green economy. It will work with other venues in the town to create an integrated and appropriate offer to those wishing to hire space for events and activities.

BUILDING DESIGN AND MATERIALS

The Business & Community Barn sits within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As such the design of buildings must comply with the Cotswold Design Code and the Stow on the Wold and the Swells Neighbourhood Plan Design Code. In essence buildings must be complementary to the Cotswold vernacular. Buildings which abut countryside should also reflect the rural surroundings. Final design to be agreed with Stow on the Wold Town Council & Cotswold District Council.

OVERALL SPECIFICATION

The overall size of the Business & Community Barn could be approximately 1000 sq m. consisting of four main areas:-

- Circa 185 sq m of flexible space for businesses, consisting of units suitable for starter and pop-up businesses requiring space as offices, meetings rooms, retail or advisory/agency services.
- Circa 600 sq m of space including a serviced hall suitable to take about 200 people seated with associated facilities and capable of being divided into up to three smaller spaces suitable for events, meetings, performances and learning.
- Circa 100 sq m of space for a commercial gym sited next to the hall to enable exercise activities to take place in association with the gym.
- Circa 30 sq m of space for Town Council offices.

Toilets to be provided in two areas adjacent to the main hall serving all users of the building.

In accordance with the Stow on the Wold and the Swells Neighbourhood Plan Access & Parking Policy document (SSNP7), sufficient parking should be provided to serve the needs of all users of the Business & Community Barn, including businesses, customers, visitors including those using the hall for events and deliveries. This could be provided in association with the public car park also to be provided on this site.

DETAILED SPECIFICATION

Business space will focus on office and retail users in arts and crafts, wellbeing and rehabilitation, digital and tech, climate change mitigation, start-up businesses, learning and business support. Home workers will be encouraged to come to the Business & Community Barn to prevent social isolation and encourage shared learning and innovation. It could comprise:

- A 35 sq m open plan co working office space to accommodate 10 hot desks and 1 meeting room to accommodate 6-8 people available for flexible working and meetings

- 6 x 25 sq m offices/retail units should be available for rent for periods of under one year. Retail units should have mezzanine floors for effective use of space
- At least one of the potential retail spaces should be available for pop-ups.
- With the business space supported by ultrafast broadband.

CENTRAL HALL

The central hall of 600 sq m will provide opportunities for both business users and the community. There should be a storage area sufficient to take 200 chairs and 20 x 6 person tables. Shared kitchen facilities could enable event catering and workspace refreshment. Soundproof room dividers should enable the hall to be broken up into smaller spaces.

GYM

The focus of the gym (of approx. 100 sq m gym space) will be wellbeing and rehabilitation. An important support service for an area with a significantly large population of people over the age of 65. Effective use of space could be provided by a mezzanine floor.

COUNCIL OFFICES

Provision for 30 sq m dedicated to new Town Council office space.

APPENDIX D: POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATION GUIDANCE (POLICY STOW13)

This guidance note sets out how Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) should be undertaken to accord with clause B of Policy STOW13 and is derived from published guidance and best practice.

1. Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) is the method of obtaining feedback on a building's energy performance 'in use', to ensure it measures up to the commitments made by the team that designed and built it. It offers significant potential to address the performance gap and occupant satisfaction.
2. Where a monitoring regime to ensure the 'as designed' building performance targets are achieved in practice for all new and refurbished buildings is required, it is important that data is collected robustly, following good practice POE principles. It is therefore recommended that for residential development the POE methodology in section 11.4 of the Home Quality Mark ONE: Technical Manual: England, Scotland & Wales SD239 (2018)⁵⁸, or as updated, is used as a guide for meeting this requirement. For non-residential buildings the BSRIA Soft Landings and Design for Performance framework (BG 76/2019), or as updated, may be used.
3. Applicants are required to set out in their Energy Statement how their monitoring regime, based on the HQM, BISRIA or similar methodology, will work in practice and be independently verified by a third party. The Energy Statement to be submitted with the planning application.
4. As each new or refurbished building comes into use, the developer must ensure performance monitoring and data collection for all relevant parameters for one whole year is carried out once the building is substantially occupied, in line with good POE practice for residential or non-residential uses. This verification process should entail, after appropriate commissioning has taken place, comparison of the 'as designed' parameters (energy, carbon, air quality and overheating risk) to monitoring data under the same categories, to assess and compare actual performance.
5. In order to account for seasonality, a minimum of 12 months monitoring data is required. On the other hand, to account for actual weather, the modelling results can be adjusted with degree days for the relevant year. A 'performance gap metric', which will compare designed and actual performance (e.g. a percentage difference) for each of the 4 required parameters (energy, carbon, air quality and overheating risk) should be issued at POE stage. This needs to be issued for both the 'central' scenario and the 'lowest acceptable performance /reasonable worst-case scenario' as a minimum, with multiple scenarios considered if at all possible. The process and reporting methodology used for the POE will need to be repeatable, so that performance can be monitored for at least 2 annual space heating cycles.
6. A report will then be required to be submitted to both building owners/occupiers and to Cotswold District Council, which states the performance gap metric and identifies any reasons for deviation from predicted energy usage, carbon emissions, indoor air quality and overheating performance, as well as recommendations for reasonable corrective action that will be taken to reduce or eliminate the performance gap.
7. The submission of the monitoring report to owners/occupiers and the council must be secured by planning condition, to be determined at the time of application based on case-specific factors. The applicant must demonstrate that the reasonable corrective actions

committed to in the monitoring report, and subsequently agreed by Cotswold District Council, have been implemented through another annual heat cycle before the condition will be discharged.

APPENDIX E: STATEMENT ON MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE COTSWOLD AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (POLICY STOW7)

Purpose

The purpose of this statement is to set out the case for allocating land for a major, mixed use development scheme on Land East of the Town in Policy STOW7 in the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Background

Following its extensive community engagement work and site assessment process (including a sustainability appraisal) the Town Council (TC) is proposing to allocate land off Broadwell Lane for approx. 170 homes, a community hub and public car park.

All of the neighbourhood area lies within the AONB. AONBs benefit from the highest status of protection in relation to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. The TC acknowledges its obligation in respect of Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which places a duty on relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of the AONB.

It is also aware that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that ‘great weight’ be given to that objective in decision taking (§176), which may also be applied to plan making, and that its §177 states:

‘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. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.’*

The TC takes this obligation seriously and has discussed its NP vision, objectives and policies with the local planning authority, Cotswold District Council (CDC) and with the Cotswolds Conservation Board (CCB), which has responsibility for managing the AONB. It has reviewed the relevant policy and guidance published by the CCB for this purpose, notably the Management Plan 2018-2023, the Landscape Character Assessment, the Local Distinctiveness & Landscape Change report and the Position Statements on Housing and Landscape-led Development.

Proposal

The draft proposal comprises five essential features – the delivery of:

1. Approx. 170 homes (extending to approx. 240 homes on land outside the NP area) with at least 40% affordable housing
2. Approx. 150 space public car park to meet the needs of town visitors, employees and residents

3. A multi-functional building of community facilities and business workspace
4. New public footpaths to the town centre and adjoining superstore development
5. A design code and landscape strategy to successfully stitch the scheme into the town and surrounding landscape, as well as to deliver biodiversity net gain on site

It is driven by the vision of making the town a more self-sustaining community by 2030 than it is at present. Its population is aging quickly and its economy has become too dependent on tourism. Access to affordable housing is increasingly difficult and traffic and parking are blighting its national heritage significance.

The housing scheme will be the first of its type in the town for two generations. Its combination of smaller open market homes, First Homes, social rent and shared equity affordable homes will make a step change in meeting local housing need to shift its demographic profile. It will also create sufficient land value to enable a viable scheme to be delivered that includes its other essential features.

The car park scheme will increase total capacity for the town to enable spaces in Market Square to be relocated and the space reused for public realm improvements. The site will be well connected to the town centre – a ten minute walk – and to the superstore with a new footpath network. The highways access will be on to Broadwell Lane to the north only.

The community building will provide the town with much needed, modern facilities that it currently lacks. It will also meet the growing demand for managed business space and will provide a support hub for the town's working from home population.

The design code will ensure the scheme is inspired by The Park estate on the opposite side of the town, a development considered to capture the essence of the Cotswold vernacular in a modern form. All of the new buildings will be of a zero-carbon energy performance standard with on-site renewable energy generation. Its associated landscape strategy will blend the scheme into the wider countryside and incorporate new public open space and on-site biodiversity net gain.

The land is available now and is being actively promoted by the landowner and development partner. It is expected the scheme will be delivered in two phases: the first in the NP area by 2028 with the early delivery of the car park and landscape strategy, then of the community building before completion; the second on the land outside the NP area.

A suite of technical reports has been prepared to inform the evolution of the proposal and its environmental assessment. They are published separately in the evidence base and cover landscape and visual impact; highways and transport; heritage; flood risk and drainage; ecology; and arboriculture. Each report comprises the essential, proportionate information to enable the proposals to be justified in principle at this plan making stage. Once the Neighbourhood Plan is made, further technical work will be carried out as part of a planning application for the whole scheme, as required by Policy STOW7.

The Exceptional Circumstances

The community has become increasingly concerned about where past trends will lead to for the town if left unaddressed. The town has become a victim of its own success as it struggles to mitigate the dominance of tourism, traffic and an increasingly older, necessarily affluent, population. It has seen no meaningful growth in its housing stock or supporting infrastructure since the 1970s, other

than two major specialist accommodation for older people schemes, which have only served to reinforce its aging population profile.

A new vision and objectives to plot a course to a different, more sustainable future, present the essence of exceptional circumstances to justify the change proposed in the AONB in the wider public interest. In that regard, putting the NP to a referendum in due course, will be the ultimate test of measuring that interest.

The TC does not dispute that the proposal is ‘major development’ and that such a change will be harmful and permanent as a matter of principle. Nor does it dispute the fact that the land exhibits the special qualities of the AONB (as set out in the CAONB Management Plan), lying on an east facing slope of the town within its wider setting that is visible in part in long views from the east. That said, the existing physical extent of the King George Field estate on that same slope, which is more clearly within the setting of the historic town in those same views, diminishes that harm in part.

For the proposal to form an allocation policy of the NP it must meet the ‘basic conditions’ in both having regard to national policy and being in general conformity with strategic development plan policy (notably Policy EN5 ‘AONB’ of the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031). It is therefore necessary to demonstrate that all three of the tests of NPPF §177 (to which Policy EN5 defers) are met.

Test A: The Need for the Development

The scheme would secure both market and affordable housing for which there is a need in Stow to shift its demographic profile, economic base and self-sustainability. It would boost the supply of local housing in way that has not happened in 40 years and contribute to District-wide housing supply. Crucially it will deliver almost 100 affordable homes, some of which will be restricted to local people and to remaining as primary residence. It would also increase the number of working age people to help diversify its economic base away from a significant dependence on tourism.

Test B: The Absence of Alternatives

The whole of the NP area lies within the AONB. The benefit of the NP plan-led approach is that it allows for communities to envision their future, gather local evidence and come to a planning judgement on reasonable alternatives. Since the 1970s, any housing (other than for older people), economic (other than for tourism) and social (again, other than for older people) needs of Stow have been met by other towns in the northern part of the District, or in neighbouring Districts. For the vision to be realised, of necessity these needs must be met in Stow and therefore in the AONB.

Test C: Moderating Detrimental Effects

The concept masterplanning work has shown that the site is large enough to accommodate a landscape strategy that can successfully moderate the majority of the harmful environmental effects. The arrangement of uses and design strategy will enable new landscape to permeate the scheme and to bolster the existing tree belts and hedgerows within the site and around its eastern, southern and northern boundaries. The scheme has additional environmental benefits in the form of green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancements. It would also deliver recreational benefits through new footpath links and the creation of publicly accessible areas on land that is currently private.

Summary

The TC considers that the planning balance favours its proposal as the three tests can be met and the exceptional circumstances justified in principle. It will continue to work closely with the land interest, CDC and CCB to complete an evidence base in support of the proposal for the submission of the Plan in due course.

APPENDIX F: SITE ASSESSMENTS NOTE

Introduction & Purpose

This note describes the approach that has been taken to assessing sites for potential allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Background

From the outset of the project the Town Council has understood that there is no ‘top down’ driver for the Neighbourhood Plan making site allocation proposals for the plan period to 2031, either at Stow or in the Swells. In this regard, the District Council considers any ‘indicative housing figure’ (as per §67 of the NPPF) to be zero.

However, early community engagement work during 2018 and 2019 indicated that many in the town were growing concerned at the problems of traffic congestion, the dominance of tourism in the local economy, the inadequate provision of modern community facilities and worsening access to affordable housing. In response, the Town Council determined to explore options for allocating land to address these matters, recognising the significant constraints imposed by the Cotswolds AONB designation across the whole of its area.

A Two Stage Process

The work began in 2019 with the project working group carrying out a call for sites which resulted in 11 sites being identified for assessment, most for their potential to accommodate housing, or housing-led mixed use, schemes, but a couple for new public car parking only. The housing sites were assessed using a pro-forma and an indicative site capacity was provided for each site. During that exercise the group engaged with the respective land interests to ascertain likely availability and to confirm their interests.

This first stage reached a conclusion in late 2020, at which point it became clear to the working group that the only way in which the Town Council could address all of the concerns raised by the community and justify development in the AONB was to allocate a single site. The site would have to be large enough to accommodate not just market and affordable housing but also new public car parking and a community hub. It would also have to be sufficiently accessible to connect well with the town centre, especially if its car parking would enable spaces to be relocated from the Market Square.

The second stage was hindered by COVID 19 but eventually the working group focussed on liaising with the land interests of four of the sites during 2021 and 2022, with the other sites being discarded as unreasonable alternatives to pursue any further. Two (known at that time as sites 6 and 7) were controlled by the same land interest and were combined to form one larger site to the east of the town (south of Broadwell Lane). Similarly, sites known as 9 and 10 were combined to form one site south-east of the town (north of Oddington Road).

Both land interests were asked to put forward outline proposals in response to a brief provided by the working group. The brief summarised the nature and scale of the public benefits that were being sought to meet the community’s needs and to demonstrate the exceptional circumstances for major development in the AONB. In respect of the latter site, the Town Council acknowledged that similar development proposals had been made in the past and had been refused and dismissed at appeal, but it wanted to give the community the opportunity to reappraise the option in this light.

The land interests responded by providing concept proposals that the Town Council used to engage with the community again in June/July 2022, seeking to understand a) if a majority of the community were still interested enough in securing public benefits to support a large development scheme on the edge of the town and b) if so, which of the two sites would they prefer. It also requested that its strategic environmental assessment (SEA) consultants, AECOM, to assess the sites as 'reasonable alternatives'.



Land East of the Town (south of Broadwell Lane)

The land interest of the eastern land (shown above) offered a range of proposals, including an option for providing a new country park on land it also controls to the south of the site. Importantly, it acknowledged that the concept included land in its north-east quadrant that is not in the Neighbourhood Area (the Parish boundary with neighbouring Broadwell Parish runs partially through the site, shown with a blue line on the plan).

The land interest of the south-eastern land (shown below) focused the concept on the lower of the two sites making up the larger parcel, indicating that the scheme could extend on to the northern parcel at a later stage. It too offered a range of proposals in response to the brief.

The Town Council was satisfied that the two outline proposals met the brief to an extent that they offered a fair comparison on which to seek feedback. The plans shown here were therefore part of an online and offline engagement exercise that included the publication of vision documents prepared by each interest.



Land South-East of the Town (north of Oddington Road)

The exercise was successful in the scale and nature of the feedback generated to provide the Town Council with enough confidence to proceed with its overall vision for the town in the Neighbourhood Plan and to prefer the land to the east of the town. Both schemes were able to address the affordable housing and community hub needs but the preference rested on the closer proximity of the eastern land to the town centre. The feedback indicated that the south-eastern land was simply too far from the town centre to make walking (uphill) attractive enough for car park users, and there remained a legacy from the past proposals in terms of their perceived wider landscape effects.

Assessment & Site Selection

The working group blended its community engagement feedback with the SEA assessment and concluded that the land east of the town should be allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan for a scheme of approx. 170 homes, a 150 space public car park and a community hub building – the country park idea was not considered necessary or practical for the Town Council to manage. The SEA assessment reached a similar conclusion to the community feedback in observing the same relative strengths and weaknesses of the two proposals (see Draft SEA Report published separately).

During the production of the draft Plan the working group liaised with the land interest (Bloor Homes) to provide further technical evidence covering landscape impact, highways, ecology, heritage, arboriculture and drainage. Those reports are published in the evidence base. It also liaised with the District Council, the Cotswolds AONB Conservation Board and Broadwell Parish Council to help shape the proposed allocation policy (STOW7) and to inform its statement on the exceptional circumstances justifying major development in the AONB (see Appendix E).

The final outcome of the site assessment process is Policy STOW7 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

APPENDIX G: EVIDENCE BASE

- Cotswold District Local Plan (various)
- Cotswolds (AONB) Conservation Board (various)
- Conservation Area Appraisals
- Neighbourhood Plan Working Papers (various)
- Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Neighbourhood Plan Housing Needs Assessment
- Land East of Stow technical reports (various)
- Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record
- Natural England Magic Map