

STONESFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at Stonesfield Primary School on Wednesday 1st October 2025 at 7.00pm

Attendees: Cllrs U Rice (Chair), L Bate and D Brown.

Others present: The Parish Clerk. 45 members of public.

25/952 To receive and accept apologies for absence: Apologies received and accepted from Cllr C Renshaw (Vice Chair), P Lowe and S Powell.

25/953 Public Participation: Residents spoke regarding the planning application for 20 houses, land west of Combe Road. They raised concerns about harm to the Cotswolds AONB and Stonesfield Conservation Area, the failure of the proposal to meet relevant planning and environmental policies, the weakness of the ecological assessment and lack of measures to protect species, and doubts over the delivery of genuinely affordable housing. They questioned the need for more private houses in that area. They asked that the Parish Council take these issues into account when submitting its response. A couple of residents made comments regarding the draft Neighbourhood Plan, which was not an item on the agenda as it had been approved at the last meeting. The comments were noted.

25/954 Declarations of interest: There was none.

25/955 To approve the minutes of the meeting 3rd September 2025: It was **RESOLVED** to approve and sign the minutes as a true record.

25/956 Actions Register: The register was reviewed and updates noted.

- **Neighbourhood Plan – Green Spaces:** Letters to landowners regarding the proposed Local Green Spaces have been sent.
- **Neighbourhood Plan - Condition Statements:** To be completed and submitted by the end of October 2025.
- **Multipay Bank Card:** Multipay card application is being processed and will be finalised once the paperwork is signed by 2 signatories.
- **HR Committee:** The HR Committee still needs to confirm the Clerk's permanent appointment in writing.

25/957 Planning applications: Planning comments submitted under delegated authority in September 2025 were noted: 25/02130/HHD 13 Combe Road Stonesfield Witney – no objection. New planning applications were considered:

1. 25/02038/LBC

LOCATION: Stonesfield Manor Combe Road Stonesfield

PROPOSAL: Internal layout alterations along with conversion of 2x windows to external doors in S elevation (former school house) and 1x window to external door within E elevation (breakfast room).

Comments: No objection

2. 25/02205/HHD

LOCATION: 1 Limbeck Way Stonesfield Witney

PROPOSAL: Erection of a single storey rear oak framed orangery.

Comments: No objection

3. 25/01897/OUT

LOCATION: Land West of Combe Road Stonesfield

PROPOSAL: Outline planning application with some matters reserved for erection of 20 dwellings within a nature enhancement scheme.

Comments: Appendix A – attached.

25/958 To receive reports from County and District Councillors:

1. OCC Cllr Andy Graham report: Cllr A Graham provided an update on County and District matters, including:

- Ongoing discussions with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) regarding improved access to local GP services.
- The development of a community bus link to enhance rural transport connections in 2028.
- A Priority Fund of £2,000 over two years to support community organisations, events, and local projects – he will provide the Clerk with the application link, which is also available on the Oxfordshire County Council website; and
- Updates on the Judds Garage junction, where a new traffic management configuration is being planned which may include the installation of traffic lights. He also confirmed that a bus shelter will be installed at this location, partly funded from his Councillor allocation.

2. WODC Cllr Genny Early report:

Cllr G Early began by explaining that, as a District Councillor, she can represent residents' views on planning applications when they are considered by the West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Committee and encouraged residents to contact her directly if they wish their comments to be raised. She reported that Thames Water will be holding a public event at the Corn Exchange, Witney, on Saturday 25th October from 10am to 2pm, providing residents with an opportunity to discuss local water and sewage infrastructure issues directly. Cllr G Early also reported that WODC approved an introduction of a community infrastructure levy meaning that money will now be spent on local infrastructure from a fund. She also reported from a recent WODC Full Council meeting, where several motions were debated and approved, including:

- a motion to encourage the wider use and availability of e-bikes across West Oxfordshire to promote sustainable transport and reduce car dependency;
- a motion to boost work experience and apprenticeship opportunities, supporting young people and local employers to develop skills;
- a motion on planning and infrastructure, calling for stronger coordination between new developments and investment in essential services such as roads, drainage, schools, and healthcare; and

- a motion to support asylum seekers and refugees, reaffirming WODC's commitment to inclusion and access to services across the District.

Cllr G Early said that these motions reflected WODC's ongoing priorities around sustainability, inclusion, and long-term infrastructure planning.

3. WODC Cllr Tim Sumner report:

- **Leisure Centres Investment:** WODC has committed £3.5 million towards the refurbishment and improvement of leisure centres across the District. The investment aims to ensure long-term sustainability and accessibility of facilities, focusing on energy efficiency, community use, and modernisation of outdated infrastructure. The Council is currently reviewing leisure contracts and operational models to deliver best value for residents.
- **Carterton Regeneration Plan:** Progress continues on the Carterton Regeneration Plan, which seeks to revitalise the town centre and surrounding area. The plan includes improvements to public spaces, retail areas, and leisure facilities, along with efforts to attract new businesses and enhance local infrastructure. This initiative forms part of WODC's wider commitment to supporting its key service centres and strengthening local economies.

25/959 To receive reports from Stonesfield PC working groups:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:

To receive reports from Stonesfield PC Working Groups.

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:

- a) **To receive and approve the minutes from the meeting on the 28th September 2025.** There were no minutes - the meeting was cancelled.
- b) **To note progress and to approve any further recommendations arising.** Cllr P Lowe was not present at the meeting but prepared an update. There has been no Steering Group meeting since the last Parish Council Meeting. The next meeting is 27th October.

NP Plan Document

Revisions to the document had been made as agreed following review by the PC. The text has been proof read and corrected for errors. It is undergoing a final proofread. Appendix C, Local Green Spaces needs updating to reflect the changes agreed at the last PC meeting; this is in hand.

Local Green Spaces

All but one of the LGS counter response letters are drafted for sending out to Landowners and are due with Clerk imminently. The only one being finalised is the letter for the land behind Miller's Garage.

Consultation and Basic Conditions Statements

The Consultation and Basic Conditions Statements are being prepared. The Statements and the Revised NP will be sent to WODC by the end of October, as agreed, delegated to Cllrs Lowe and Brown to sign off, with copies circulated to Councillors for information.

25/960 Finance:

- a) **Payments:** It was **RESOLVED** to approve the ratification of payments (with the correction that the War Memorial Poppy Display materials cost was £68.19, not £168.19).

Gross Amount (£)	VAT Value (£)	Payee	Details
192.96	32.16	Microshade VSM	Sept IT & Email hosting
266.43		HMRC	Aug & Sep PAYE/NI
401.69		OCC pensions	Sept LGPS £401.69
150.00		C Carruthers	RFO Oct 2025
168.19		Stonesfield Gardening Club	War Memorial
1558.46	259.74	WODC	£286.18 May Cutting £143.09 June Cutting £1004.88 July cutting £124.31 bin relocating
<i>Confidential</i>		<i>K Linnington</i>	<i>Clerks Salary</i>
65.00		K Linnington	Clerks Monthly Expenses

b) **Expenditure under the Clerk's delegated authority**

The following expenditure was ratified:

- I. Window cleaner – all three bus shelters. It was noted that the contractor instructed was unable to carry out the work. **ACTION:** The Clerk will seek an alternative.
- II. WODC – Glebe clearance £165.00.

Proposer: Cllr U Rice

Seconded: Cllr D Brown

All in favour

25/961 Website:

- a) Three quotations for the provision of a new Parish Council website were received and considered (**Paper 3 – Comparison Table**).
- b) Following review, it was **RESOLVED** to approve Parish Online as the provider for the new Parish Council website. The decision was made on the basis that Parish Online offered:
- full compliance with current accessibility requirements (WCAG 2.2 AA),
 - extensive experience of working with parish and town councils,
 - a comprehensive package including domain registration, hosting, SSL certificate, content migration, and ongoing maintenance,
 - the provision of training and support for clerks and councillors, ensuring long-term continuity, and
 - overall value for money.
- c) It was further **RESOLVED** to grant delegated authority to the Clerk, in conjunction with the Chair and Vice Chair, to agree and approve the final website design prior to launch.

Proposer: Cllr U Rice

Seconded: Cllr D Brown

All in favour

25/962 Clerks Report: The PC noted the Clerks report.

- **War Memorial Display:** The Stonesfield Gardening Club produced a knitted poppy display for Armistice Day instead of additional planting. The Council covered the cost of materials (less SGC's contribution).
- **Multipay Card:** The Clerk is in the process of applying for the Council's Multipay card, as approved at the September meeting.
- **Website Project:** Three quotations for a new Parish Council website were received (for discussion under the relevant agenda item).
- **Maintenance Responsibilities:** The Clerk is clarifying ownership and responsibility for maintenance across the village - including bus shelters, verges, and overgrowth with OCC Highways and other authorities.
- **Window Cleaner / Bus Shelters:** The existing contractor is unable to carry out the cleaning of the bus shelters "any time soon." The Clerk will seek an alternative.
- **Email from MP's Office:** The local MP's office requested a list of upcoming parish events; the Clerk has provided general details of forthcoming community activities.

25/963 Biodiversity Plan/Policy: To discuss and approve the draft plan completed by Cllr U Rice. **ACTION:** The PC agreed to defer the draft Biodiversity Plan/Policy to the November meeting.

25/964 Policies and Parish Council Insurance.

- a) **IT Policy:** Review and approve amendments to the IT policy (**Paper 5**) **ACTION:** The PC **RESOLVED** to approve with the addition of the following clause:

Reporting Inappropriate Communications - Any councillor or officer who receives inappropriate, offensive, or abusive communications via Council email accounts, WhatsApp groups, or other authorised platforms should report the matter to the Clerk in the first instance. Where the complaint relates to the Clerk, the report should be made to the Chair of the Council. The Clerk or Chair will determine the appropriate action, which may include referral to the Monitoring Officer, reporting under the Council's Code of Conduct, or, if necessary, to the police.

- b) **Risk Management Policy:** To review the Council's Risk Management Policy along with the Risk Assessment Schedule and confirm that the policy remains fit for purpose (**Paper 6**) The PC **RESOLVED** to approve the Risk Management Policy.
- c) **Representative to Outside Bodies Policy:** Review and approve a new 'Representative to Outside Bodies' policy (**Paper 7**) The PC **RESOLVED** to approve the Representative to Outside Bodies.
- d) **PC Insurance:** Review and approve the PC insurance renewal. The PC **RESOLVED** to approve the renewal of the insurance.

Proposer: Cllr U Rice

Seconded: Cllr D Brown

All in favour

25/965 Village Hall.

Hedge cutting: To discuss responsibility for the maintenance of hedges at the Village Hall, including whether there is any historic agreement in place and to consider how this should be managed going forward. It was reported that WODC have carried out the work in the past. It was

agreed that the Clerk will contact the Playing Field Association, who have offered to undertake the hedge cutting. The Council noted that appropriate risk assessments and insurance documentation will be required before any work can proceed. **ACTION:** Clerk to make contact with the Playing Fields Association and enquire into whether this should be given out to tender and advertised.

25/966 Purchases.

Video and audio-conferencing device: The Council discussed the possibility of contributing towards the purchase of a 360° video and audio-conferencing device, in partnership with local village groups, to enable the Clerk to attend meetings remotely in the event of illness or adverse weather. The Clerk recommended that the most appropriate arrangement would be for the local pub to own the conferencing equipment, with the Parish Council providing a grant contribution towards the cost. This would allow the Council to use the equipment when required while keeping ownership, insurance, and maintenance responsibilities with the pub, which is clearer from an audit and governance perspective. Councillors did not make a decision at this stage. **ACTION:** Cllr L Bate agreed to speak with the local pub group to obtain their views on the proposed arrangement, and the matter will be brought back to a future meeting for further consideration.

25/967 Working Groups Membership and Representatives to Outside Bodies (Paper 8)

- a) **Working Groups Membership:** To review membership of working groups and to approve the appointment of additional members.
- b) **Reps to Outside Bodies:** To approve Parish Council representatives to outside bodies who will be responsible for attending meetings and reporting back to the Parish Council:
 - I. Village Hall
 - II. Playing Fields
 - III. Stonesfield Community Trust

ACTION: It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting when more Councillors are present.

25/968 Maintenance.

- a) **Maintenance log:** The PC reviewed and approved the Parish Council's maintenance log, in line with boundary maps to be received from OCC Highways and other authorities confirming their areas of responsibility, so that the Council can identify appropriate tasks for the new Maintenance Operative (**Paper 9**)
- b) **OCC Delegated Model:** It was agreed for the Clerk to make further enquiries into the OCC delegated model, under which the Parish Council can be funded to carry out tasks that are not its responsibility but are not currently being maintained in the village. **ACTION:** The Clerk to get in touch with OCC to make further enquiries.
- c) **Maintenance Operative Advert:** The PC agreed to discuss and approve the advert for a self-employed, zero-hours Maintenance Operative (**Paper 10**) at the next meeting in November as the Clerk was waiting on OCC to send an updated boundary map. **ACTION:** To add to the November agenda. We need to see what we are responsible for before we can do the list for the new maintenance op to add to the advert.

Proposer: Cllr U Rice

Seconded: Cllr D Brown

All in favour

25/969 Items to be added to the next agenda.

- 1. Budget

2. Biodiversity Plan/Policy
3. Contract for tender – grass cutting
4. Working Groups Membership and Representatives to Outside Bodies
5. Maintenance – Maintenance Op Job Advert and list of work to be carried out by them.

25/970 Date of the next Full Council Meeting: The date of the next full Parish Council meeting is Wednesday 5th November 2025 at 7.00 pm.

Meeting closed at 8.36pm

Stonesfield Parish Council - Appendix A

Application Reference 25/01897/OUT

Outline planning application with some matters reserved for erection of 20 dwellings within a nature enhancement scheme. Land West of Combe Road Stonesfield Oxfordshire

Stonesfield Parish Council met on 1 October and unanimously agreed to object to this planning application. 45 members of the public were present for the discussion and when asked by the Chair if anyone wished to support the application, there was no support forthcoming; all objected.

The Parish Council considers that the planning application fails a number of material planning considerations, specifically not complying with the requirements of the NPPF in respect of major development, protection of important views, protecting the Evenlode Valley and the adjacent dip-slope lowland, protecting Stonesfield's proposed Local Green Spaces, biodiversity and water quality, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and flood risk management

The proposal does not comply with the requirements of the NPPF in respect of major development within the NPPF. This is best articulated by looking at the development against the policies within the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan (NP), which has been written based on compliance with the NPPF, WODC Local Plan, a Housing Needs Assessment, Landscape Assessment, Character Assessment and the views of residents (via a detailed survey and Regulation 14 consultation).

Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan was submitted for Regulation 14 consultation, between March 2025 and May 2025. The feedback from key stakeholders and residents was assimilated into a revised document which was approved by The Parish Council for submission under Regulation 15 & 16 (submission due to be made end October 2025). Although not yet formally adopted, it is expected that the Local Planning Authority will have due regard for the Plan. The Applicant would appear to have taken little notice of this document which sets out the Housing requirement and housing need in some detail.

The proposed development is smaller than originally envisaged but is still a major development under the NPPF. The NPPF provisions for major development within an AONB therefore apply. The NP policies have been developed in this context. The proposed development does not comply with NPPF or relevant NP policies in a number of respects, as detailed below. The table summarises the position.

POLICY	COMPLIANCE
Policy SH1 – Meeting the housing needs of the parish of Stonesfield	Not compliant.
Policy SH2 - Size and type of homes	Insufficient detail provided to assess compliance, except in so far as the proposal exceeds the identified need per the Housing Needs Assessment
Policy SH3 – Mix of affordable rented housing	Insufficient detail provided to assess compliance.
Policy SH4 – Affordable homes	Not compliant.
Policy SH5 – Meeting the needs of older people and those with disabilities	Insufficient information in proposed development to assess compliance with this policy, except in so far as the proposal exceeds the identified need per the Housing Needs Assessment

Policy SH6 – Lower-cost housing	Not compliant.
Policy SH7 – Location of new affordable homes (Rural Exception Sites)	Not compliant.
Policy SH8 – Infill development	Not relevant for this proposal.
Policy SH9 – Sub-division of dwellings to create smaller units	Not relevant for this proposal.
Policy SH10 – Development in residential gardens	Not relevant for this proposal.
Policy SH11 – Residential parking	Insufficient information provided in the proposed development to assess compliance.
Policy SEL2 – Protecting important views	Not compliant.
Policy SEL3 – Protecting the Evenlode Valley and the adjacent dip-slope lowland	Not compliant.
Policy SEL4 – Protecting Stonesfield's Local Green Spaces	Not compliant.
Policy SEL6 Biodiversity	There has been insufficient time to assess compliance with this Policy. An expert opinion may be necessary although it would seem highly improbable that a net gain in biodiversity is possible from the proposed development.
Policy SEL8 – Water quality, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and flood risk management	Sufficient concern such that the Parish Council would request that WODC align the commencement of any development with the delivery of necessary infrastructure upgrades should any development take place. There is a high risk that further development along the Combe Road would exacerbate flooding in the dip below the village on Combe Road without investment to mitigate.

In addition, the Council considers the access to the field presents a high degree of risk as there are regularly parked cars on Combe Road, large vehicles including buses, tractors and delivery vehicles travelling along this narrow stretch of road and so turning in and out of the site will be treacherous and being near another difficult junction by the war memorial and turn to Manor Drive..

The following paragraphs cover the above points in more detail.

Policy SH1 – Meeting the housing needs of the parish of Stonesfield

The proposed development does not comply with this policy.

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

Policy SH1 states “On land adjoining the built-up area, housing proposals on previously-developed land will be accepted where they would deliver the Plan’s housing objectives as defined in the Housing Needs Assessment and would otherwise be in accordance with other relevant policies in both the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan. Housing proposals on greenfield land adjoining the built-up area will not be supported unless there is clear evidence they demonstrate exceptional circumstances and a public interest directly relevant to Stonesfield, as defined in the Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix A), and where the resulting development would otherwise be in accordance with other relevant policies in both the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 and the Neighbourhood Plan.”

The main conclusions of the Housing Needs Assessment 2024 (Appendix A) can be summarised as follows:

Conclusion 1: The housing market will provide more than sufficient housing to meet identified need, so there is no need (according to the WODC Local Plan 2031 and to the recent village Housing Needs Assessment) for any additional market housing, whether within the built-up area or on adjoining land.

The proposed development provides 10 market houses for which there is no identified need and under the NPPF and NP policies, planning should be refused.

Conclusion 2: The existing housing market provides significant turnover; and the same applies to the WODC housing register in letting existing affordable homes in the village to local people. There may be a shortfall of four to five additional social/affordable houses, which could be met by a small rural exception site.

The proposed development provides 10 affordable housing, and whilst the indicative conditions for these are favourable, being social rent and limited to occupation with a Stonesfield connection, its provision is in excess of identified need.

Conclusion 3: The Neighbourhood Plan should seek to ensure that any housing development should consist of dwellings that meet the identified local needs for social/affordable housing, while respecting the restrictions of Stonesfield’s location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; the CNL.

See comments under Conclusion 2.

It should be noted that in 2019, WODC were engaged in a planning appeal in Stonesfield against a major development. WODC were successful in the appeal and the Inspector’s appeal decision in 2019 sets out the law and policy to be applied in considering any proposal, either by plan allocation or by application for planning permission for major development in and around Stonesfield. In particular it confirms that ‘to provide exceptional circumstances to overcome the great weight attached to conserving the landscape of the AONB... proposals on undeveloped land adjoining built-up areas will only be supported where there is convincing evidence of a specific local housing need specific to a particular settlement.’

As stated above, the Housing Needs Assessment found no evidence of a local need for market housing.

Policy SH2 - Size and type of homes

All new development (except affordable housing, see Policies SH3, SH4 and SH7) should provide the following mix of dwelling sizes:

- at least 45% with 1-2 bedrooms;
- approximately 45% with 3 bedrooms, and

- no more than 10% with 4 bedrooms.

Homes with five or more bedrooms will not be supported unless a specific local need can be demonstrated and there is no prospect of the market in Stonesfield delivering to meet that need. New housing on land within the village built-up area and on the edge of the village must seek to make efficient use of space, but be fully in keeping with the character and vernacular of the immediate surroundings, spatially and in form. Schemes on land adjoining the built-up area will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

There is insufficient detail in the proposal to assess whether this policy will be complied with, except in so far as the proposal exceeds the identified need per the Housing Needs Assessment.

Policy SH3 – Mix of affordable rented housing

Development proposals for affordable/social rented dwellings, which include the provision of dwellings which have been designed to cater for the specific needs of young people and working-age people to address the trend of an ageing population in the village and/or people with disabilities, will be supported where this approach is evidenced by the most up-to-date information available demonstrating an identified need from within the parish.

There is limited information in the application for the proposed development to assess compliance with this policy, although the proposal exceeds the identified need in the HNA. Note, whilst the proposal identifies opportunities to downsize, there was little identifiable need for this within the HNA.

Policy SH4 – Affordable homes

Proposals for affordable housing schemes will be supported where they meet the requirements of Policy H3 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

Proposals which address the specific affordable housing needs identified in the Stonesfield Housing Needs Assessment 2024 developed for this Neighbourhood Plan will be supported; including suitable rural exception site(s) for small scale affordable housing schemes to meet specific local housing needs which cannot be met in any other way. All new homes on these sites must remain affordable in perpetuity to people in housing need who have a local connection with the parish.

The proposed development exceeds the identified need, relying on market housing to deliver affordable housing. The proposal is, therefore, not compliant. The Applicant has taken an overly simplistic approach to justifying need compared to the detailed Housing Needs Assessment undertaken by the Parish Council and adopted by the Council in 2024. The same simplistic approach was taken by Cala in their planning appeal in 2019, which WODC successfully argued against, the argument being supported by the Planning Inspector.

Policy SH5 – Meeting the needs of older people and those with disabilities

There is insufficient information in proposed development to assess compliance with this policy.

Policy SH6 – Lower-cost housing

Development proposals for lower-cost homes for sale will be supported where they otherwise comply with other relevant policies in this Plan, and include measures to ensure that future resale of such homes is constrained so that the homes remain low-cost in perpetuity.

The proposed development includes 2 homes that would comply with this requirement, however, does not comply with other policies in the Plan.

Policy SH7 – Location of new affordable homes (Rural Exception Sites)

Development of small-scale Rural Exception Sites for affordable housing, defined as up to 10 houses, will be supported, provided they meet an affordable housing need identified in the Housing Needs Assessment, and provided they do not form part of any development constituting a major development as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF (i.e. more than 10 homes or on a site of 0.5 ha or more).

Small scale Rural Exception Sites for affordable housing on the edge of the village, where development would not normally be permitted, will be supported, subject to the same limitation and providing they are not in conflict with other policies in this Plan or any other material consideration, and provided the benefits can be shown clearly to outweigh any consequent harm to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and scenic beauty of the CNL.

The proposed development, being a major development, is not compliant with the requirements of this policy.

Policy SH8 – Infill development

Policy SH9 – Sub-division of dwellings to create smaller units

Policy SH10 – Development in residential gardens

Not relevant for this proposal

Policy SH11 – Residential parking

Insufficient information provided in the proposed development to assess compliance

Policy SEL2 – Protecting important views

Development proposals which would cause harm to Stonesfield's character as a gateway from the nearby UNESCO Blenheim World Heritage site into the Cotswolds National Landscape, by inhibiting furtherance of the statutory purpose of the CNL to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area (expressed in section 82(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), will not be supported...

.....Views of the landscape, from the village to the countryside, within the village and from the countryside into the village as highlighted in the Landscape Assessment 2024 (Appendix B) and Village Character Assessment 2024 (Appendix D) commissioned by Stonesfield Parish Council, should in particular be respected and protected from harm, including,...

.....LLCA C: Stonesfield Inner Fields and Bagg's Bottom - views across the landscape towards the settlement, or 'outward' views across the remaining pastoral fields southeast of Stonesfield Manor; views from the Oxfordshire Way long-distance footpath; open views and intervisibility with adjacent Limbeck to Callow Farm Plateau Farmland and long-distance views to south-west beyond the parish boundary

This policy was derived from the findings of the Landscape Assessment and Character Assessment commissioned by the Parish Council for the NP. The proposal does not appear to be compliant with this policy, having an adverse view towards the settlement. The proposal notably fails to deal with views towards the village from the Oxfordshire Way. These were pivotal in the planning inspector's decision in the "Cala appeal."

Policy SEL3 – Protecting the Evenlode Valley and the adjacent dip-slope lowland

Development proposals outside the existing building line defined by Brook Lane, Churchfields, Church Street, Boot Street, Combe Road, and Witney Lane will only be supported where they meet the following conditions:

- they respect and where possible enhance the landscape
- it can be robustly demonstrated that the consequent public benefit outweighs any harm to the landscape
- a similar benefit cannot be achieved by a development in another location (either in the Neighbourhood Plan area or elsewhere)
- any detriment to the landscape has, as far as practicable, been minimised and mitigated.

The proposal does not comply with this policy.

Policy SEL4 – Protecting Stonesfield’s Local Green Spaces

Development will not be permitted on Local Green Spaces except in very exceptional circumstances.

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following as Local Green Spaces.....

... Paddock between Manor House and Combe Road

The proposals for Local Green Spaces were surveyed with residents in 2022, with over 75% of respondents supporting designation of the Manor Field. Results were published shortly after the Survey and the Landowners would have been aware of this. The Landscape Assessment undertaken confirmed the importance of this space. Landowners were formally consulted on designation in early 2025. At the meeting on 3rd September, the Parish Council confirmed its commitment to seek designation of this field. Ultimately, the NP Independent Examiner will examine this and report accordingly to WODC, however, the proposed development is incompatible with the Local Green Spaces policy.

Policy SEL6 Biodiversity

The natural environment of Stonesfield should be protected, and where practicable enhanced, to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity, as set out in WODC’s Local Plan 2031, policy EH3 and Cotswolds Management Plan policy CE7.

All development proposals should result in a net biodiversity gain of at least 10%**.

Opportunities to incorporate wildlife improvements in and around developments are encouraged to help secure measurable overall gains for wildlife by implementing measures such as:

- retaining and ensuring ongoing sympathetic management of existing wildlife features, such as mature trees, hedgerows and other forms of wildlife corridors
- providing and ensuring ongoing retention of roosting features and/or nesting features for birds, such as owl, bat and/or bird boxes suited to, but not exclusively for swifts, swallows and house martins, on each new dwelling or building as an integral part of their design
- creating wildlife corridors or other features that support wildlife
- enabling hedgehogs to move between gardens through provision and retention of hedgehog highways
- encouraging features that support green infrastructure
- providing new green spaces, enhanced for pollinators including butterflies and moths, with native trees and/or hedgerows within the development
- retaining wildlife areas and strips of scrubland where development results in the loss of scrubland. Where onsite measures are not possible, offsite measures will be considered
- having no detrimental impact on the health of the River Evenlode, and where possible improving it.

There has been insufficient time to assess compliance with this Policy. Whatever the findings of an environmental assessment commissioned with a view to supporting the proposal, it is, without the benefit of a more objective second expert opinion. Intuitively, however, it is very difficult to understand how a proposal to build 20 dwellings on open land outside the built-up lifts of the village and adjacent to Bagg's Bottom could result in a net biodiversity gain of any kind, let alone 10%. The trees along the Combe Road are a well known habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Policy SEL8 – Water quality, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and flood risk management

Development proposals should not increase flood or pollution risk in Stonesfield or elsewhere along the Evenlode Valley.

The Local Planning Authority will seek to ensure that adequate water and wastewater/sewerage infrastructure is in place to serve all new developments.

Developers are encouraged to contact the water/wastewater/sewerage company as early as possible to discuss their development proposals and intended delivery programme to assist with identifying any potential water and wastewater and sewerage network reinforcement requirements. Sustainable Drainage Systems will be required for all developments and measures should be taken to reduce surface water run-off on every development site.

It is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface-water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding. Development proposals will not be supported if they will:

- result in increased surface water run-off without appropriate mitigation measures being included with the details of the proposal, including proposals for the long-term maintenance of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems or
- have an adverse effect on the quality of surface water in the Evenlode Catchment Area.

Grampian conditions will be applied as follows, where appropriate, to permissions granted by the Local Planning Authority relating to development sites within the parish.

1. Where there is a capacity constraint, the Local Planning Authority will, where appropriate, apply phasing conditions to any approval to ensure that any necessary infrastructure upgrades are delivered ahead of the occupation of the relevant phase of development or, where the Local Planning Authority considers it fairly and reasonably related to the proposed development, to ensure the upgrades are delivered ahead of the commencement of the relevant phase of development.

2. Where development will result in the need for off-site upgrades to waste water/sewerage and/or water supply infrastructure, planning permission will be subject to conditions to ensure that either the occupation of the houses to be built or, where the Local Planning Authority considers it fairly and reasonably related to the proposed development, the commencement of development is aligned with the delivery of necessary infrastructure upgrades.

The proposed development is directly adjacent to an area which has suffered significantly from sewage and drainage issues. Residents of Combe Road regularly have issues with the capacity of the pumping facility and also water pressure. The Council disagrees with the initial view of Thames Water and these issues are of such concern to the Parish Council that condition 2 applies and the Council would request that WODC align the commencement of any development with the delivery of necessary infrastructure upgrades should any development take place. It should be noted also that the dip below the village on Combe Road is frequently flooded; there is a high risk that further development along the Combe Road would exacerbate this problem without investment to mitigate.

Conclusion

Stonesfield Parish Council objects to the application for the reasons outlined above.

12/10/2025