

STOW ON THE WOLD & THE SWELLS

Neighbourhood *Plan*

2023 – 2031



Published by Stow on the Wold Town Council and Cotswold District Council for referendum under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

May 2024

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 its purpose.

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 summarises 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.

Appendices

This section contains important policy details and supporting information, as well as a summary of the evidence documents used to inform the plan.

STOW AND THE SWELLS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2023 - 2031

May 2024

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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.

This referendum version of the Neighbourhood Plan will help achieve a part of the community's vision for the future of the town. The Town Council will endeavour to promote the other key parts of that vision – reversing population decline, building a new economic base, investing in upgrading community facilities and enhancing the Market Square – through the Cotswold Local Plan. In the meantime, this plan will help us protect the best of what we have now through its design code and green policies especially.

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

Swell Parish Councillors:

Councillor Diane Cresswell, Councillor Tom Blythe

Residents:

Mr Nicholas Carr, Mrs Ashleigh Cox, Mr David Cox, Mr Peter Dixon, Mr Stephen Gurmin, Mrs Bridget Ritacca, Mrs Merlyn Stracey (now a councillor), 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 Lenton, Phillipa Davy, Ella Forster, David Germaney, Arun Hamilton, Colin Piper, Janet Piper (now a councillor), 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 Consultants, ONH Planning for Good, who have provided invaluable support and advice to NPSG, and AECOM who have carried out the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the plan.

This document is the last step along the way to final adoption of our Neighbourhood Plan that the Town Council controls. As the local planning authority, it is now for Cotswold District Council to arrange the referendum.

Ben Eddolls
Chairman
Stow on the Wold Town Council

LIST OF POLICIES

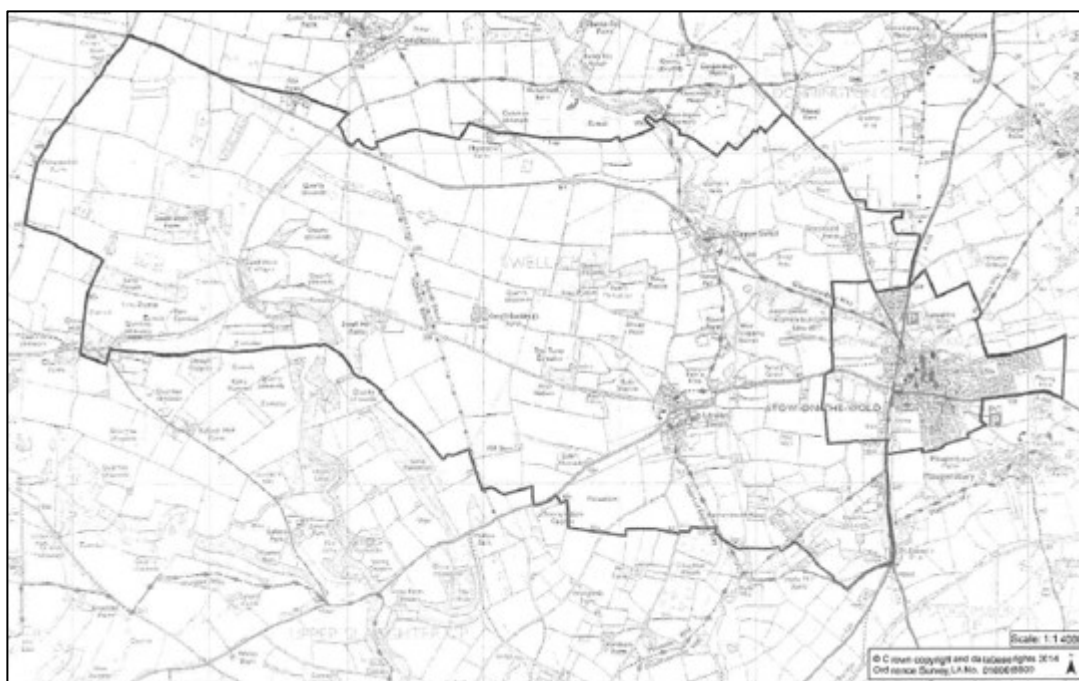
POLICY NO.	POLICY TITLE	PAGE NO.
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1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 Stow on the Wold Town Council and Swell Parish Council have jointly prepared a Neighbourhood Plan for the area designated by the local planning authority, Cotswold District Council (CDC) in April 2015. The plan was 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 Mangersbury 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 Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), previously known as the Cotswolds 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 2031. The Plan forms 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'. The basic conditions are:

- having regard to national policies and advice contained in the guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the plan.
- the making of the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- the making of the plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area
- the making of the plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU-derived obligations
- prescribed conditions are met in relation to the plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the plan.

1.6 In addition, the council needs to demonstrate to an independent examiner that it has successfully engaged with its 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.

Sustainability Appraisal & the Habitats Regulations

1.7 The District Council confirmed in its screening opinion of October 2020 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. An environmental (SA/SEA) report has been published separately alongside the plan in accordance with the regulations.

1.8 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.

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 National Landscape, previously known as the Cotswolds 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 1,905 in Census 2021, a drop from 2,042 in 2011 and continuing a longer term trend since 2001 (see Figure 1 below). 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.

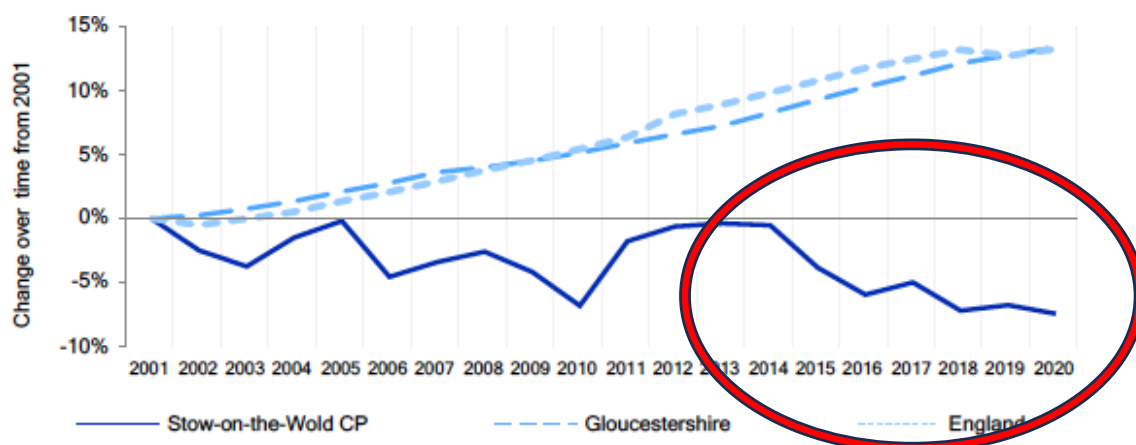
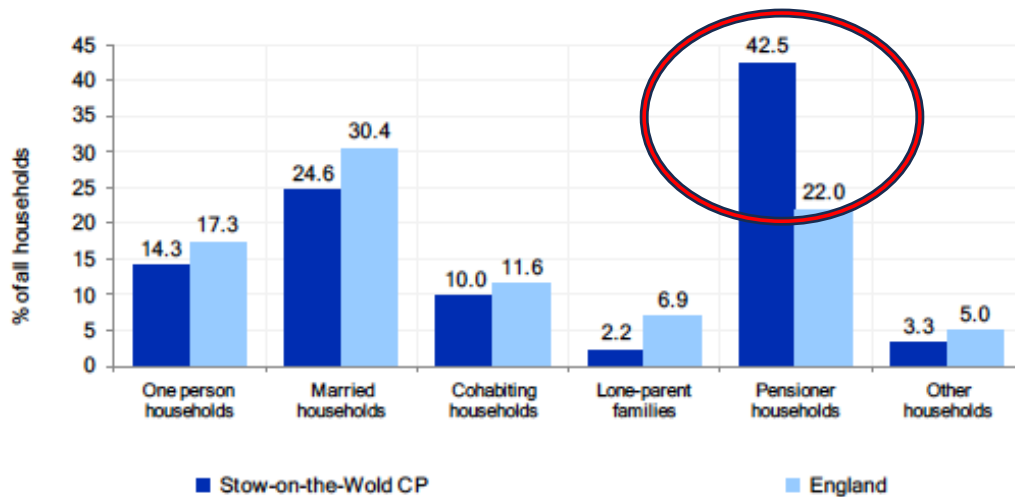


Figure 1: Population Change 2001 – 2020
(ONS via Local Insight Profile for Stow on the Wold CP, GCC)

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).



*Figure 2: Household Types
(Census 2021 via Local Insight Profile for Stow on the Wold CP, GCC)*

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.

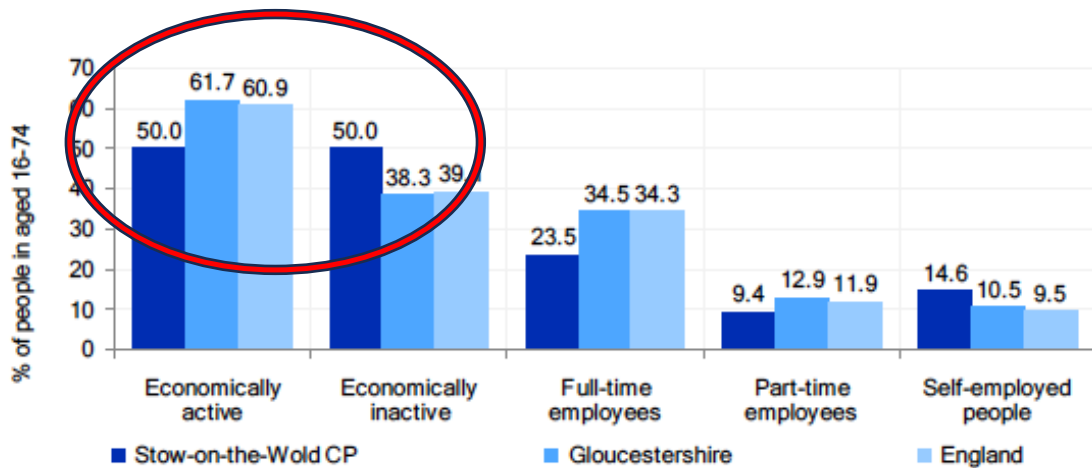


Figure 3: Economic Activity
(Census 2021 via Local Insight Profile for Stow on the Wold CP, GCC)

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 amount of social housing was built in two major developments – 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 CNL (AONB as was), 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 elderly residents to Stow’s population (currently about 1900).
- There is a strong case for seeking to improve Stow’s sustainability by providing a significant number of houses that local people, people of working age and essential workers can afford.

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 2023 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 (§743)
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres (§90)
- Promoting healthy and safe communities (§96)
- Local green spaces (§106)
- Promoting sustainable transport (§106)
- Supporting high quality communications (§119)
- Achieving well-designed places (§132 and §134)
- Conserving and enhancing AONBs (§182 and §183)
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (§196)

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.

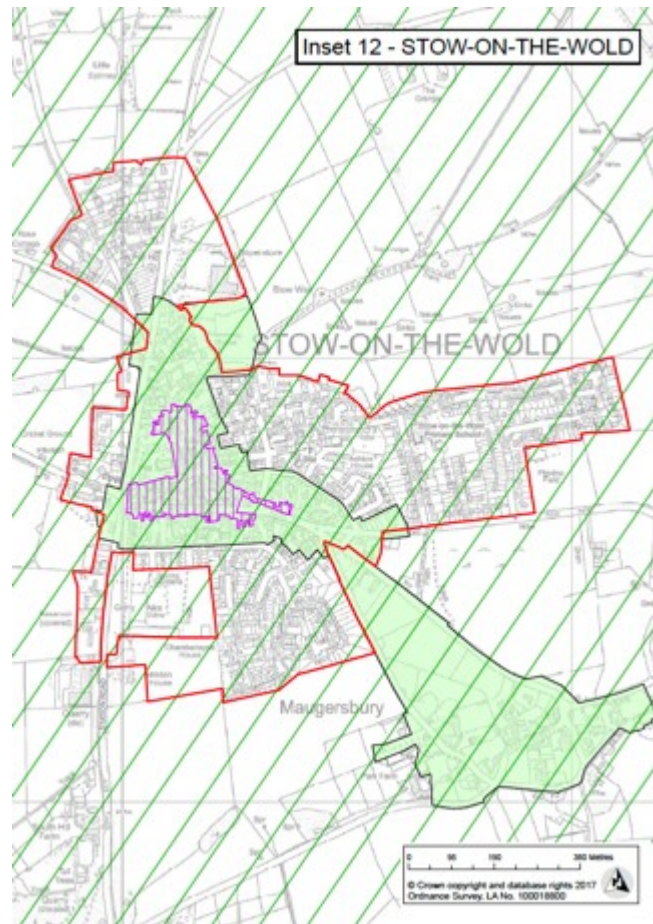
3.4 More recently, the Government published its first National Model Design Guide in autumn 2019 to encourage better design outcomes from the planning system. The Guide encourages local communities to engage in understanding the character of their areas and, where preparing neighbourhood plans, to prepare 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. Although the majority of its policies have some relevance to this Neighbourhood Plan, some are especially important:

- 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 and guidance shaping the Local Plan, a 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. This steer has been especially important in shaping the vision, objectives and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

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 reached the ‘Issues & Options’ stage in 2022, and more recently a Regulation 18 consultation took place through February and March 2024. The Neighbourhood Plan was examined in relation to the adopted Local Plan and not the emerging Local Plan. The Town Council intends to promote the vision for change wanted by many in the town through the examination of the emerging Local Plan.

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. Although it is not part of the development plan, the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan has been considered in the preparation of this Plan as it is relevant for some of the issues that the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address.

Cotswolds CNL Management Plan

3.11 The Neighbourhood Plan was prepared in the context of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023. That document has subsequently been replaced by the Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-25 - the Cotswold AONB was rebadged as Cotswold National Landscape in late 2023. . The management plan set out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the AONB (now CNL) to conserve and enhance its natural beauty and to increase the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. It considered 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 extended well beyond that of the land use and development planning system but inevitably the majority of its policies were 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) were:

- 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 National Landscape 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' as , '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 on the website.

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. 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.

4.15 The Pre-Submission version of the plan was consulted on in early 2023 in line with the Regulations. The consultation generated significant interest in the town and the surrounding rural areas, most notably in respect of its main housing development proposal to the north east of the town.

4.16 The Submission version continued to address these main issues and concerns. However, its main land allocation and primary residence proposals did not secure the support of the examiner or District Council at its examination. Hence, they are not included in this final version. As noted above, the Town Council will continue to promote its proposals through the Local Plan process.

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 Cotswold National Landscape have been conserved. The town has some additional affordable housing to help meet its needs. The town's tourism appeal remains vital. Its public car parks are well used and have encouraged visitors to walk to the Market Square.

The Swells have retained their special rural Cotswold 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 housing types and tenures to meet its needs.
- 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 SSNP1: Development in The Swells and the Countryside

A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies Lower Swell as a small village with very limited local services which may be suited to no more than 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 identifies Upper Swell as a hamlet with no local services that is likely to be unsuitable for small scale residential or any other form of urban development.

C. In the open countryside beyond the settlements of Lower Swell and Upper Swell proposals to improve the agricultural economy, equestrian facilities and to deliver nature recovery will 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 National Landscape. For clarity, the policy does not alter the ‘non-principal’ status of either settlement, nor sets any precedent for modifying or undermining the strategic intent or meaning of the Local Plan’s Development Strategy as set out in policy DS1. The purpose of the policy is to provide certainty for applicants and CDC in clarifying the types of development that are suitable in each settlement based on their settlement character.

5.9 The policy 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.

Policy SSNP2: Housing Mix

A. Within the Stow on the Wold Development Boundary proposals for residential development schemes of 6 or more dwellings are required to deliver as part of the scheme at least 30% of the affordable dwellings (rounded as necessary) as First Homes to be made available at a minimum 50% discount. The mix of other affordable home tenures should have regard to the evidence in an up to date housing need assessment and should also be delivered within the scheme. Proposals that seek to maximise opportunities for new open market and affordable homes to be made available to persons with either a local connection as defined by the Homeseeker Plus Common Allocations Policy document or persons that are defined as key workers will be especially supported.

B. Within the Stow on the Wold Development Boundary proposals for residential schemes of 6 or more dwellings will be required to demonstrate that the mix of dwelling types and sizes is appropriate to meet the needs of current and future households.

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 (which requires at least 40% of homes to be affordable), in line with the evolution of national policy since 2018 (notably the launching of the ‘First Homes’ affordable housing for sale product). Secondly, it requires a locally appropriate mix 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 and published separately in the evidence base. This report recommended that the Plan should increase the proportion of First Homes from the minimum 25% to 30% and should increase the sales discount rate from the minimum 30% to 50% to reflect the acute affordable housing problem of the town. Applicants should take into account that report and any later such evidence as circumstances may change during the plan period. Proposals with a number of dwellings that does not break down in whole units against the percentages specified in Clause A may need to adjust the percentages marginally. However, applicants should accommodate the percentages to the furthest extent possible.

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. 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. The policy especially favours proposals that will make provision for key workers (as defined by CDC's adopted Affordable Housing SPD) and that can show they will appeal to, and be marketed at, local households as part of CDC's housing allocation process.

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 SSNP3 to bring about a more sustainable community.

Policy SSNP3: 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 affordable housing for households with a local connection as defined by the Homeseeker Plus Common allocations policy.

5.14 The policy is intended to slow down the supply of age-restricted housing in Stow for the plan period by confining such schemes to those of a small scale linked with the plan's affordable housing objectives. Although national policy encourages planning for an increasing demand for such accommodation to meet the needs of an aging population, it does not take into account those places like Stow that already have an over-supply and where such an approach will only exacerbate the problem.

5.15 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. 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.

5.16 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 policy SSNP5 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.

5.17 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 prophecy, 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 housing provision, which would broaden the town’s economic case and patronage of local services.

5.18 However, the town has benefited from almshouse-type schemes in its past as a means of providing genuinely low cost housing for people who have a local connection, as defined by CDC. The policy therefore provides an exception for minor schemes – defined as 9 or fewer C2 units and/or C3 dwellings of this type (per the definition of minor development in national policy). However, it requires such proposals to be only almshouse-type schemes for elderly person households relocating from within the Town or Parish or from a Parish that immediately adjoins the Neighbourhood Area. And it caps the total number units and dwellings of this type that are provided to 40 over the plan period to avoid a higher number of incremental proposals whose cumulative effect may otherwise undermine the vision of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy SSNP4: 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**
- **deliver on site green infrastructure that meets Building with Nature standards and the principles set out in Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework as relevant to the nature, scale and location of the proposal**
- **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 as defined by NPPF §183 and footnote 64, 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**

5.19 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.

5.20 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 SSNP5: 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 non-designated heritage assets.

5.21 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.

5.22 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.

5.23 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.

5.24 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.

5.25 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.

5.26 The policy also encourages the use of upper floors by refining Local Plan Policy EC8 to acknowledge the challenges of doing so in an historic environment.

Policy SSNP6: 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.

5.27 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 SSNP7 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.

5.28 Proposals need to comply with recognised standards on dark skies including ‘The Reduction of Obtrusive Light’ guidance note published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals and the Dark Skies Technical Advice Note published by the South Downs National Park Authority.

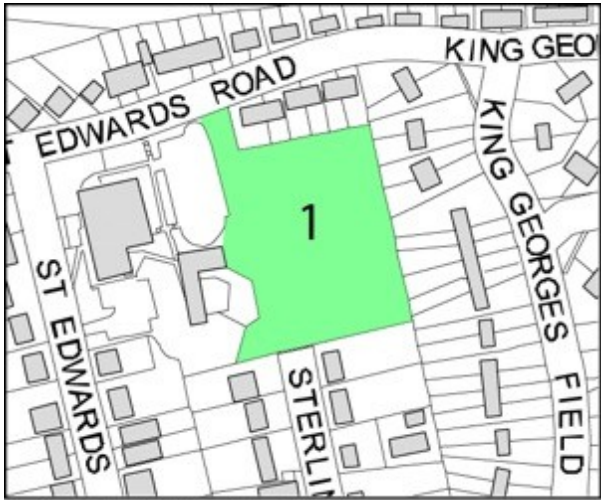
Policy SSNP7: Local Green Spaces

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

- 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**

Inappropriate development within a Local Green Space will only be supported in very special circumstances as defined by national policy.

5.29 This policy designates nine Local Green Spaces to protect them from inappropriate development, the detailed maps of which are shown below. All of them are considered to meet the tests of NPPF §106 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. They are all owned by one or other public body.



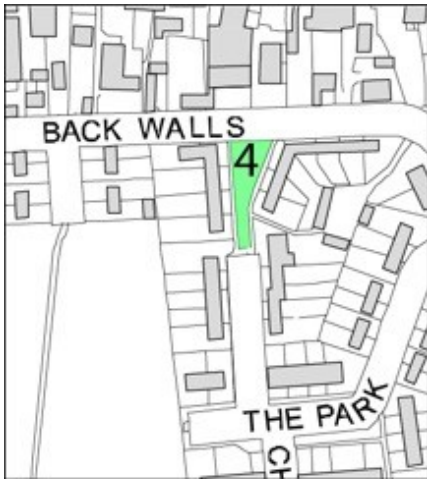
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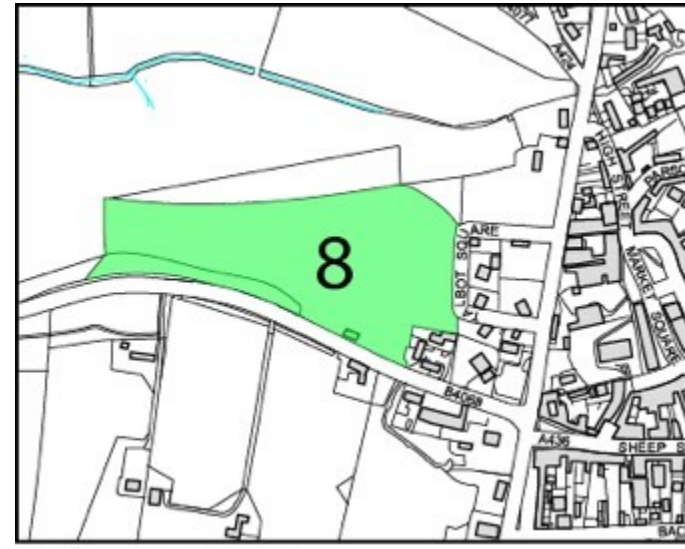
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Policy SSNP8: Stow and the Swells Design Code

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

5.30 This policy supplements the Cotswold Design Code (in Appendix D of the adopted Local Plan) with a Stow and the Swells 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.

5.31 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.

5.32 As with the Cotswold Design Code and the CNL Management Plan, the policy 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 in the area of how this has worked well in recent years.

Policy SSNP9: Non-designated Heritage Assets

Proposals that may affect a non-designated heritage asset (listed in Appendix B) should take into account the significance of its heritage value and must demonstrate how any harm to, or loss of, that significance is outweighed by its benefits.

5.33 This policy assists with the implementation of Local Plan Policy EN12 and §209 of the NPPF, both of which set out how proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets 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.

5.34 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.

5.35 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 SSNP10: Zero Carbon Buildings

A All new buildings should be ‘zero carbon ready’ by design as relevant to their nature, scale and location so that they will minimise the amount of energy needed to heat and cool buildings by way of their 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.

5.36 This policy is in five parts, the combination of which is intended to deliver the type of step change required by §157-159 of the NPPF in making ‘radical reductions’ in carbon emissions. Its focus is on delivering on the energy performance standards required of all new developments in the area to encourage and thereby on incentivising the use of the Passivhaus or equivalent standard of building design. Achieving this level of performance will make a significant contribution to mitigating climate change that the Neighbourhood Plan can deliver.

5.37 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.

5.38 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 seeks to tackle a longstanding problem of constructed buildings not meeting the energy performance standard proposed by the builder, which only becomes obvious once the building is occupied. Without a check and balance in the approval system there is currently no means of correcting these failures that are resulting in higher energy bills for occupants and under-performance on meeting carbon reduction targets.

5.39 It therefore requires the developer of a consented housing development scheme of any size to ensure that they have made provision with future occupants to be able to enter properties after the first year of occupation, or thereabouts, to carry out a Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE), including actual metered energy use, and to submit a report to the local planning authority. It will be implemented by attaching a planning condition to this effect, 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. Although it is accepted that this will increase the post-application resource of CDC, it has declared a climate emergency and this will be one of the most effective ways of this ambition being acted upon. Further guidance on the purpose and operation of clause B is contained in Appendix C of this document.

5.40 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. Passivhaus certified schemes are exempted from the POE provision of clause B as they cannot fail in that way. Until such standards can be required by planning policy it is hoped that this exemption will be an effective incentive, especially as the build costs of doing so are now only just above those of conventional buildings.

5.41 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.

5.42 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.

5.43 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.

5.44 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.

5.45 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 SSNP11: 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 to the extent the route lies within the Neighbourhood Area will be supported.

5.46 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.

5.47 There is also the ambition of finding a way of creating an off-road cycle path to link the town with its neighbour Bourton on the Water to the south. The policy offers encouragement to this realising that goal to the extent that the route lies within the Neighbourhood Area. Strategic multi-modal connections would also be supported, such as provisions for cycle access to Kingham Rail Station and the National Cycle Network.

Policy SSNP12: 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.**

5.48 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.

5.49 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 SSNP13: Digital Communication Infrastructure

The public benefit of improving access to digital communication infrastructure in the area will be significant weight in the planning balance of proposals that may cause harm to designated heritage assets or to the special landscape and scenic beauty of the Cotswold National Landscape. Proposals are required to be sensitively located and designed in order to avoid or minimise potential adverse effects on the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape, including its landscape and scenic beauty.

5.50 This policy seeks to encourage the provision of new digital communications infrastructure that will drive technological advancements necessary to support new businesses and homes. This infrastructure includes the installation of new transmitters, antennas, junction boxes and satellite dishes. 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 significant weight is attached to the public benefit of having access to this infrastructure when weighed against any harm to heritage and landscape in the planning balance of each proposal.

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.

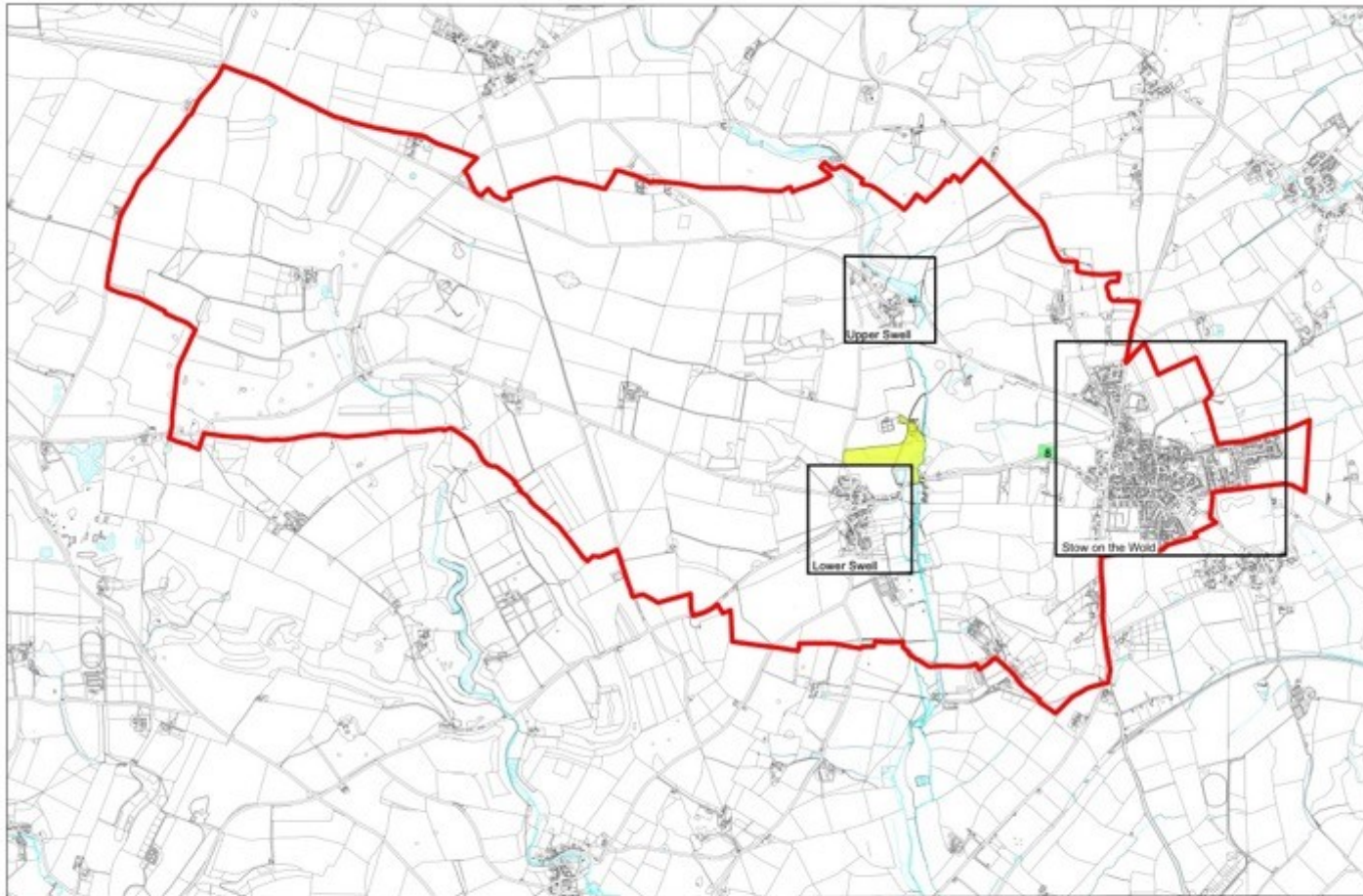
Local Infrastructure Improvements

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



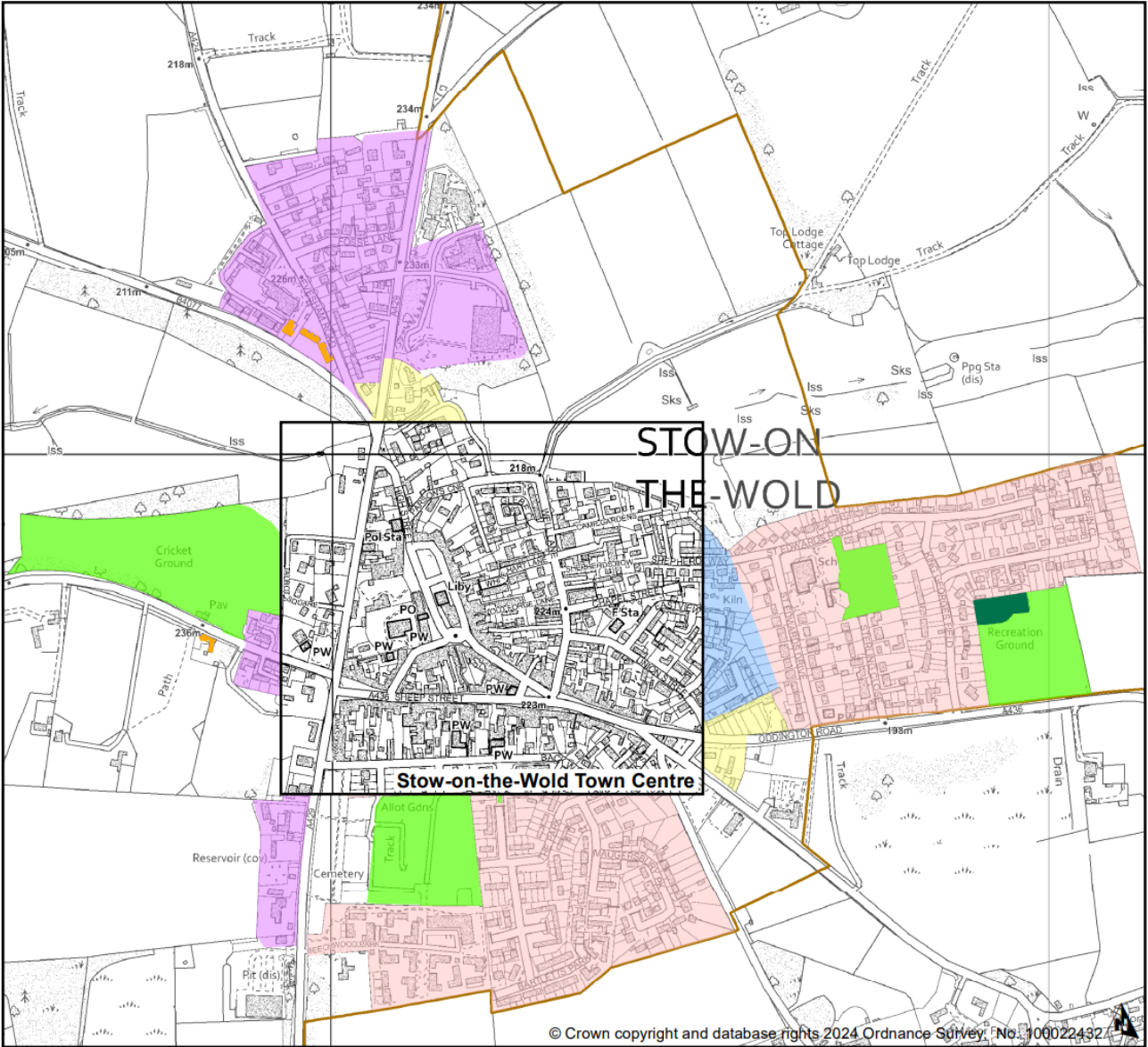
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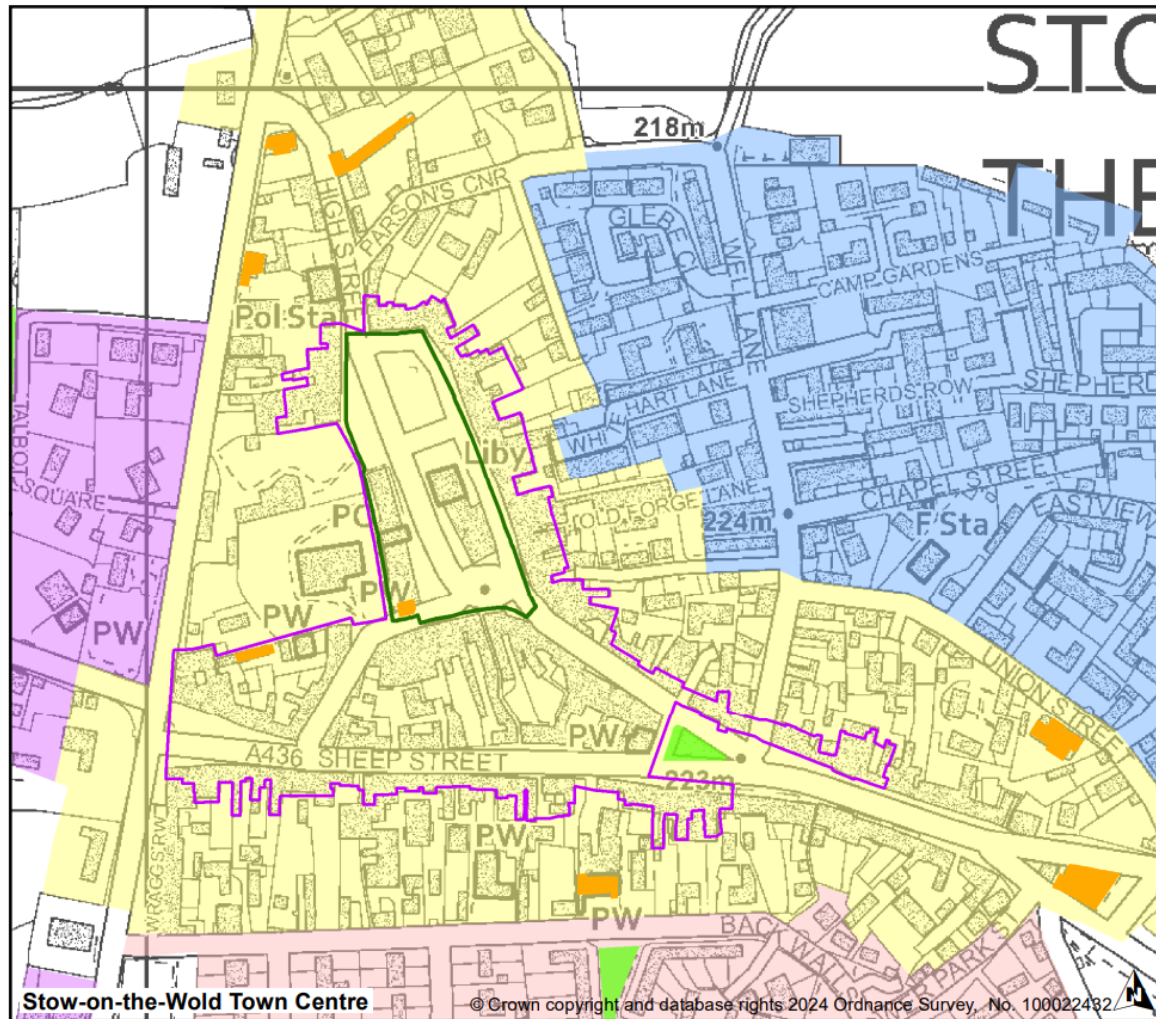
Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan:
Policies Map
May 2023

-  Designated Neighbourhood Area
-  Lower Swell Conservation Area
-  Policy SSNP10: 'Local Green Space'

Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan

May 2024



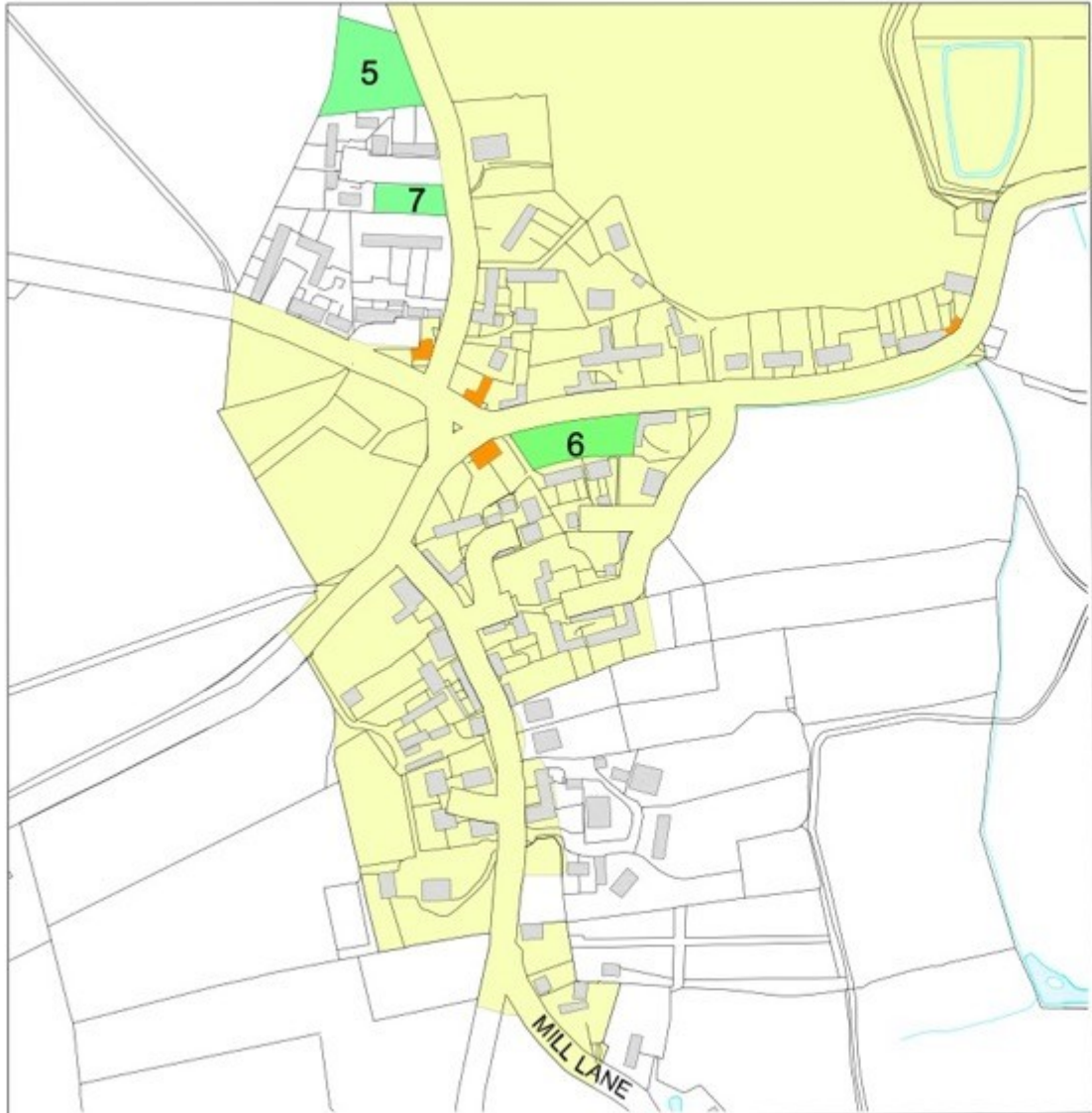


Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan

May 2024

Stow-on-the-Wold Town Centre Inset

- Market Square
Policy SSNP5
 - Stow-on-the-Wold Town Centre
Policy SSNP5
 - Local Green Space
Policy SSNP7
 - Non Designated Heritage Assets
Policy SSNP9
- Stow and The Swells Design Code
Policy SSNP8
- Character Area A
 - Character Area B
 - Character Area C
 - Character Area D





**Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan:
Policies Map
Lower Swell Inset**
May 2023

- Policy SSNP10:
'Local Green Space'
- Policy SSNP12:
'Non Designated Heritage Assets'
- Lower Swell Conservation Area

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**Stow & The Swells Neighbourhood Plan:
Policies Map
Upper Swell Inset**
May 2023

-  Policy SSNP12:
'Non Designated Heritage Assets'
-  Upper Swell Conservation Area

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APPENDIX A: LOCAL GREEN SPACES (SSNP7)

The policy designates a number of spaces as Local Green Spaces as per §106 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: Non Designated Heritage Assets (POLICY SSNP9)

The policy identifies a number of non designated heritage assets. 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 Maugersbury.



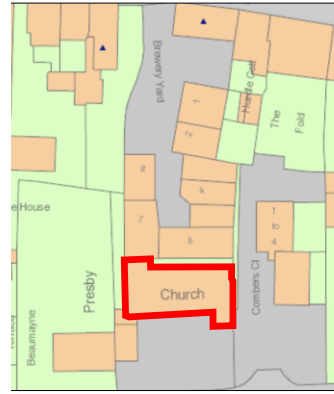
The Old School House, Union Street – impressive former girls school building of 1901 by architect H.W.Chatters, now a home, rock faced with most original architectural details surviving, including cupola tower (visible in views above rooftops from the west), large windows on N and E facades with ogee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



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: POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATION GUIDANCE (POLICY SSNP10)

This guidance note sets out how Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) should be undertaken to accord with clause B of Policy SSNP13 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 D: EVIDENCE BASE

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

