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**Stow on the Wold and Swell  
Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2031  
DRAFT  
Revision 12**

Adopted by Stow Town Council 28/9/17  
Revision 12

Stow-on-the-Wold Town Council and  
Swell Parish Council 2017

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## Foreword

Welcome to the Stow-on-the-Wold and Swells Neighbourhood Development Plan.

In this, the first Neighbourhood Development Plan for Stow-on-the-Wold and Swell Parish (“the Plan”), we have used the provisions in the new Localism Act to prepare a plan which should ensure the future of Stow-on-the-Wold and the Swells.

The Localism Act seeks to shift power from central government into the hands of individuals, communities and councils, by giving them the right to shape their local areas through Neighbourhood Development Plans. It is vital therefore that for Stow-on-the-Wold and the Swells, we have a Plan which has the backing of the community to provide guidance when decisions are made about the future of our town and parish.

This Plan builds on the Stow Community Strategic Plan which was approved by Stow Town Council in February 2011, the wide range of documents produced by Cotswold District Council in the preparation of the Cotswold Local Plan, the Cotswold District Plan 2011-2031 (June 2016) which is in its final stages of approval, and other guidance covering the Plan area.

The policies, projects and actions identified in the Plan should support and encourage a community where people can lead active and fulfilled lives in the place where they live and work. Stow Town Council and Swell Parish Council will ‘champion’ and provide support and encouragement for these policies. They will also monitor the Plan’s progress to make sure that the local community is kept informed.

We should like to extend our sincere thanks to all those who have helped with the

preparation of the Plan and I look forward to receiving the support of the community so that both councils can put the Plan into action.

Ben Eddolls  
Chairman  
Stow on the Wold Town Council

Jolyon Grey  
Chairman  
Swell Parish Council

## Acknowledgements

Stow-on-the-Wold Town Council and Swell Parish Council would like to thank the following individuals and groups for their assistance in preparing the Neighbourhood Development Plan:

To be completed by Stow TC and Swell PC

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## Neighbourhood Development Plan Summary

*Stow-on-the-Wold and Swell Neighbourhood Development Plan* will guide the development of the parishes of Stow-in-the-Wold and Swell from 2011 to 2031. It should be read together with Cotswold District Council's '*Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031*' which covers the whole of Cotswold District. The Local Plan contains a wide range of policies which could have an impact on Stow and Swell parishes, but these are not repeated in the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan contains a *Community Design Statement* and the District Local Plan contains the *Cotswold Design Code*, both of which will help guide the design of new developments, and alterations and extensions to existing buildings. Stow Town Council and Swell Parish Council will consult these two Design Guides when responding to planning applications in their areas.

### What the Community told us

The Neighbourhood Development Plan has been the subject of lots of research, discussion and consultation which identified key issues which the local community wishes the Plan to address:

- Conserving and enhancing the unique townscape and environment of Stow and Swell parishes and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - the AONB
- The need for affordable housing for local people
- Concern about the development of too many assisted living/care units in the town
- The need for the town's economy to be maintained and developed
- A new medical centre
- A leisure/community centre with a youth

- club
- Additional sports and leisure facilities for young people, including an adventure playground, and skate/BMX Park
- A town museum
- More parking
- Better access to public transport
- A reduction in through traffic, especially HGVs

### Plan Goals

In response to these concerns, the Plan has adopted 4 broad goals to ensure that:

- The unique townscape and environment of Stow and Swell parishes and the AONB are conserved and enhanced
- The community has an adequate supply of affordable housing to meet its needs
- The town's economy is secured and developed
- The community has appropriate infrastructure in terms of health services, community facilities, traffic, parking, public transport, and its green infrastructure.

### Policies and proposals

To help to achieve these goals, the Plan contains *policies* and *proposals* in 4 areas - **Environment, Housing, the Economy and Infrastructure.**

**Location Plans for each of the proposals are contained in Appendix 2.**

### Environment policies

- To be supported new developments will need to:
  - Conserve and enhance the unique character of the existing settlements and the AONB environment
  - Not adversely affect the character of

### Stow and Swell

- Conform to the ‘Cotswold Design Code’
- Conform to the Stow and Swell ‘Community Design Statement’ which is an integral part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Conform to the AONB, Conservation Area and Character Area Guidelines.
- Development in the AONB outside the settlement development boundaries will not be supported
- Developments proposed for the Plan area will be rigorously tested against environmental and design criteria. In order to do this, Stow and Swell Councils will set up an *advisory group* with suitable expertise, which will monitor the process by which developments are assessed, liaising with the District Council, and advising Stow Town Council and Swell Parish Council on their responses to planning applications as a statutory consultee

## Housing Policies

There are already permissions to develop 23 houses for sale, 44 extra care dwellings, a 48 place care home and 106 assisted living/extra care units in Stow.

- The objectively assessed demand for at least 27 affordable houses in Stow should be satisfied in a way that meets townscape and AONB guidelines
- Any affordable housing created will be sold or let through a *Community Land Trust* or other appropriate organisation, to ensure affordable housing for local people in perpetuity and minimising any incursion into the AONB
- In the letting or sale of new affordable housing, priority will be given to local people in need of affordable housing who can also demonstrate a local connection on first and subsequent occupation
- New housing developments should be limited to a maximum of 10 dwellings at any

one time so that the fabric of the town has enough time to absorb the impact of new housing developments and the increasing numbers of people living within its boundaries

- Residential development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that off-street parking provision is adequate to meet likely future needs and complies with the Community Design Statement
- To be supported, development proposals must demonstrate that they will make a contribution towards the provision of appropriate community infrastructure
- Support will be given to development proposals that bring previously developed land and existing buildings into use, provided the proposals conform to other environmental and design policies
- To ensure that the development of additional care home accommodation for older people does not place an undue burden on the community’s resources or results in an unbalanced population, new care home provision for older people will only be supported where the developer can demonstrate clearly that the development will provide accommodation for people already living in Stow and will not place an additional burden on the local health and social infrastructure. No such developments, other than truly affordable care housing for local older people will be supported before 2031.
- The Plan proposes that the following sites will be developed for affordable housing by a *Community Land Trust* or other appropriate organisation: Stow Town Council allotments – 5 to 7 self-build houses; Stow Youth Club – 3 to 5 flats; Bartlett’s Park – 2 to 4 houses; Fire Station.

## Economy Policies and proposals

- To provide suitable accommodation for small businesses and to ensure that Stow

benefits from the expansion of existing businesses, the creation of new businesses and any inward investing businesses, the former Stow Agricultural Services site should be reserved for business use, which may include small workshops, business space and craft shops.

- To help to create new employment by building on the large number of home workers already living and working in Stow, new housing developments, which include live/work units will be supported
- To generate additional turnover and additional employment by building on Stow's attraction for tourists, a town museum/heritage centre, craft shops and town council offices located in the former Magistrates Court and Police Station is proposed.

### Infrastructure Policies and proposals

- A new Medical Centre with 49 patients parking spaces located at Tall Trees is supported
- A new sports and community facility to be located on King George's and/or QEII playing fields is supported.
- Stow Town Council will work with the Planning and Highways Authorities to create a parking policy specific to Stow's needs and meets its unique requirements
- To reduce traffic flows in the town and

enhance the environment and improve pedestrian safety, investigation of the possibility of the construction of a Stow bypass is proposed.

- The Plan proposes that the following additional sites are developed for public parking: White Hart Lane; to the rear of Majestic Wines; Stow Town Council allotments; Parson's Corner; Back Walls; Mangersbury Road Car Park; Fire Station
- Part of the Rugby Club car park is proposed as a possible new 'Park and Ride' facility although this lies outside the Neighbourhood Development Plan Area
- Existing local green spaces will be maintained, protected and enhanced
- To create a green space network on the town, Stow Town Council will seek to have the following sites designated as 'green spaces': QEII Field/Cricket Ground; King George's Field and extension; Wragg's Row; Fountain Green; The Stocks Green; The Shrubbery; the triangular green at the junction of The Park with Back Walls; the green in front of and to the west of The Bell Inn; The Wells; the green at the junction of King George's Field road with Oddington Road
- The improvement of the Monarch's Way footpath is proposed
- A traffic calming scheme for Lower Swell is proposed.

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# The Stow and the Swells Neighbourhood Development Plan

## Introduction

The Stow-on-the-Wold and Swells Neighbourhood Development Plan (“the Plan” or “the Stow Plan”) is part of the Government’s approach to planning set out in the Localism Act which came into force in April 2012. The Stow Plan has been developed by a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group made up of members from Stow Town Council, Swell Parish Council and people from the local communities.

The Plan identifies the opportunities and the issues facing the town and parish, provides a vision and key goals for the future, and proposes planning policies, projects and actions which should help to achieve the vision and goals over the life of the Plan to 2031. The Localism Act states that policies in the Plan must be in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and the relevant Local Plan, which in this case is the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (the Local Plan). For brevity “Stow” is used in the Plan to refer to the whole Plan area unless otherwise stated.

The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on the issues facing Stow Town and Swell Parish which were identified through research and public consultation. It has considered the Local Plan policies in detail and the impact that they might have on the issues facing the town and parish. Local Plan policies that are relevant to the issues identified in the Plan are referenced in the Plan. Where the Plan is silent on particular issues the policies in the Local Plan will apply.

The Plan has been developed over a period of more than three years during which there have

been extensive consultations with residents, interested parties, the business community and others with an interest in the town and parish. It builds on the Stow 2011 Community Plan, and the 2015 Stow Housing Needs Survey. Guidance has been sought from Cotswold District Council and the format of the Plan follows the District Council’s instructions. Details of the consultations, evidence gathering and decision making have been recorded in a Consultation Report which is available on Stow Town Council’s website and provides an overview of the consultations, demonstrating that they fully accord with the requirements of the Localism Act and meet the requirements of Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Plan has been amended in response to comments and other information received during its preparation particularly in the Cotswold Local Plan. The Plan is in seven parts:

1. **Neighbourhood Development Plans and the planning system** – sets the Plan in the context of national and local legislation
2. **History and character of the Cotswolds, Stow and Swell** – provides a snapshot of the Cotswolds and the Plan area
3. **Current opportunities and issues facing the town and parish** – considers the current situation, the Local Plan proposals and the community’s responses to four key topics: historic and natural environment, housing, the economy and infrastructure
4. **The vision and goals for the Neighbourhood Plan** – sets out the goals which will guide the policies in the Plan
5. **Neighbourhood Plan policies** – the policies to achieve the goals
6. **Projects and actions** - that should help to achieve the goals and deliver the policies
7. **Supporting documentation** – documentation that legislation requires to accompany the Plan.

# 1 Neighbourhood Development Plans and the planning system

## What is neighbourhood planning?<sup>1</sup>

1.1 Unlike ‘Parish’ or ‘Community’ Plans, a Neighbourhood Development Plan forms part of and sits alongside, the Local Plan prepared by the local planning authority. Decisions on planning applications will be made using both the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan. Because of this, Neighbourhood Plans are covered by detailed central government guidance and legislation, most notably that:

- Neighbourhood Development Plans should:
  - ‘Support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development
  - ‘Plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan
  - ‘Identify opportunities to use Neighbourhood Development Orders to enable developments that are consistent with their neighbourhood plan to proceed
  - ‘Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. Communities are able to choose where they want new

homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.’

- Local communities can choose to:
  - ‘set planning policies through a neighbourhood plan that will be used in determining planning applications’
  - ‘Grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order’.
  - ‘Neighbourhood planning is not a legal requirement but a right, which communities in England can choose to use. Communities may decide that they could achieve the outcomes they want to see through other planning routes, such as incorporating their proposals for the neighbourhood into the Local Plan, or through other planning mechanisms such as Local Development Orders and supplementary planning documents or through pre-application consultation on development proposals. Communities and local planning authorities should

<sup>1</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government  
Planning Practice Guidelines

discuss the different choices communities have to achieving their ambitions for their neighbourhood.

- 'Neighbourhood planning provides the opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop over the next ten, fifteen, twenty years in ways that meet identified local need and make sense for local people. They can put in place planning policies that will help deliver that vision or grant planning permission for the development they want to see'.
- 'To help deliver their vision, communities that take a proactive approach by drawing up a neighbourhood plan or Order, and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, will benefit from 25 percent of the revenues from the Community Infrastructure Levy arising from the development that takes place in their area'.
- 'Neighbourhood planning can inspire local people and businesses to consider other ways to improve their neighbourhood than through the development and use of land. They may identify specific actions or policies to deliver these improvements. Wider community aspirations than those relating to development and use of land can be included in a neighbourhood plan, but actions dealing with non land use matters should be clearly identifiable. For example, set out in a companion document or

annex.

### Sustainable development

1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>2</sup> requires local plans to seek to achieve sustainable development which the NPPF says has three dimensions - economic, social and environmental:

- An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy'.

1.3 It is against this background that the Plan has been prepared.

<sup>2</sup> National Planning Policy Framework

<sup>3</sup> Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031: submission draft reg.19 June 2016

### Significance of the Cotswold District Local Plan<sup>3</sup>

- 1.4 The current ‘approved’ Local Plan for Cotswold District is the Cotswold Local Plan 2001-2011. However, the emerging Local Plan - Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (June 2016) is at its final consultation stage before being submitted to an external Inspector for approval and if approved, will replace the 2001-2011 Local Plan. The Stow Plan therefore seeks to take into account the provisions in the emerging Local Plan 2011-2031.
- 1.5 When considering the content of the Stow Plan it is important to see this in the light of the national legislation which governs the Plan’s contents. It is also advisable that readers of the Plan are aware of the contents of the current Cotswold Local Plan. This is a substantial document which contains a wide range of policies not all of which are repeated in the Plan.
- 1.6 The Stow Plan is based on the policies and proposals in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Cotswold District Council’s Local Plan 2011-2031 (June 2016), the Stow Town Council’s Community Strategic Plan 2011, the Stow Needs Survey (June 2015) and the consultations, research and survey work carried out by the Neighbourhood Plan Team while bearing in mind the direction from central government that:
- ‘Proposals to be included in a Neighbourhood Development Plan must relate to planning and infrastructure issues e.g. housing and employment numbers; affordable housing types and location; design; conservation areas; listed buildings, infrastructure and services.
- Environmental, community and social, economic and transport proposals should only be included where they relate to changes to buildings or land’.
- 1.7 The Cotswold Local Plan also states that:
- ‘The Cotswold Local Plan sits alongside the NPPF, which, together with national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), must also be taken into account in making decisions on planning applications and in the preparation of local and Neighbourhood Development Plans. Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP), when adopted, form part of the Local Plan. NDPs are prepared by local communities and can be as simple or as detailed as local people want - provided they are in line with national planning policy and the relevant local plan. Where the Local Plan or any development plan documents are adopted after a NDP has already been adopted, the District Council will issue a statement of conformity to clarify whether any policies in the NDP have been superseded’.
- 1.8 Legislation states that, at the stage the Local Plan has now reached:
- ‘Any representations about the Local Plan should relate to the soundness of the Submission Draft Local Plan or to its compliance with legal requirements. Planning Regulations state that a local planning authority should submit a plan for examination which it considers to be “sound” – namely that it is:
- **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent

with achieving sustainable development;

- **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF.

‘Representations made at this stage should therefore focus on whether the plan meets the tests listed above. Representations can only be submitted in response to the contents of this document. The consultation exercise is not an opportunity to reiterate the content of representations submitted in response to earlier consultation documents.’

1.9 During the preparation of both the Local Plan and the Stow Plan, Stow Town Council made substantial representations to Cotswold District Council about certain aspects of the Local Plan which the Town Council did not feel were in the best interests of the town.

1.10 All of this means that, as things stand, the Stow Town Council is not at liberty to change the proposals and policies in the Local Plan once the Local Plan is adopted. Stow Town Council may make policies in the Stow Plan for additional actions to address the opportunities and issues that it has identified in the Plan area provided these policies do not

conflict with the policies in the Local Plan.

1.11 To ensure that the Stow Plan met the legal criteria for the preparation of the Plan, advice was sought on the format and content of the Plan from Cotswold District Council and by consulting the relevant legislation. This indicated that the Plan should focus on the goals the Plan seeks to achieve and the land use policies it proposes to achieve these goals. Although specific projects are not part of the Plan for statutory planning purposes, they are included in the Plan as statements of actions intended to achieve the Plan policies. Some of these projects may not be land use based but may nevertheless help to achieve the Plan’s goals.

1.12 Government guidance requires that the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans must follow six broad stages which Government has set out in national guidelines<sup>4</sup>. These are:

Stage 1: Defining the neighbourhood

Stage 2: Preparing the Plan

Stage 3: Independent check

Stage 4: Community referendum

Stage 5: The plan comes into legal force

Stage 6: Implementation of the Plan.

1.13 Further details of the Plan making process are contained in the Supporting Material.

### **How the Stow Neighbourhood Development Plan was prepared**

1.14 Government guidance recommends that Neighbourhood Plans should build on any consultation and planning work

<sup>4</sup> The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012  
Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012

that has already been carried out in the community. The Stow Plan is the result of a long planning process in Stow stretching back a number of years.

1.15 In November 2000, the Government published a Rural White Paper entitled 'The Future of the Countryside', introducing measures aimed at securing a strong future for rural communities. The main objective was to provide ideas and help with access to funding and, with assistance from a number of different agencies, to address the changing face of the countryside and its communities. Following the publication of the White Paper Stow Town Council commissioned a Town Appraisal which was followed by a Stow Business Appraisal, Parking Survey and Housing Needs Survey which led to the creation and approval of the 'Stow Community Strategic Plan' in 2011. That year the Government published the Localism Act which set up Neighbourhood Development plans, followed by the Neighbourhood Plan Act and the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012. The same year Stow Town Council decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan which covered the town itself and later the same year Stow Town Council decided to commission a Community Design Statement. The Community Strategic Plan was submitted to Cotswold District Council for approval but in August 2013 District Council asked Stow Town Council to put the Plan on hold in the light of the new Neighbourhood Plan legislation.

1.16 In March 2014, Stow Town Council decided to proceed to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan - a public meeting was held and members of the public invited to join a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group which would examine the environmental, health, parking,

transport, educational and business issues facing the town. This was followed by two years in which a number of surveys were undertaken, questionnaires distributed, the results analysed and roadshows held to keep the community informed, and seek its views on the issues facing the town and parish, and possible solutions to those issues.

1.17 The Steering Group has remained in place for the duration of the Plan preparation and was a key part of the community engagement process. It performed a number of important functions including researching existing plans and survey material, carrying out new surveys, holding roadshows, keeping a 'consultation diary', preparing reports on particular issues such as the Community Design Statement and parking, and consulting with Stow businesses, the Cotswolds Conservation Board, local schools, the local surgery and the owners of sites that might be considered for development. The Group met together regularly with Stow Town Council representatives to report on and discuss their findings in order to find out whether the outcomes of one theme had an impact on other themes. The Group also acted as a 'sounding board' of community opinion on the issues facing the town and parish, the proposals in the Cotswold District Local Plan and the likely content of that Plan as the planning process progressed.

1.18 Most importantly in June 2016 Cotswold District Council issued the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031. The Plan is required to comply with the policies and proposals in the Local Plan.

1.19 Preparation of the Plan comprised ten stages some of which ran concurrently. Stage 1: Definition of the area to be

covered by the Plan

Stage 2: Setting up of a community based 'Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group'

Stage 3: Review of existing plans, studies, guidance and other relevant material, and consultation with the wider local community and stakeholders to identify the issues, opportunities and constraints affecting the future of the Plan area, particularly the policies and proposals contained in the Cotswold District Local Plan

Stage 4: Formulation and agreement on the vision for the plan

Stage 5: Identification of the Plan goals to achieve the vision

Stage 6: Identification of the policies which will help to achieve the Plan goals

Stage 7: Identification of the projects and actions that could help to achieve the Plan goals

Stage 8: Bringing all this together into a draft Plan ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan is in line with national and local planning policies.

Stage 9: Consulting the local community and other stakeholders on the draft Plan

Stage 10: Submitting the Plan for approval to Cotswold District Council as the Local Planning Authority.

### **The Plan making timetable**

1.20 Planning for Stow has been under way for a number of years and involves a considerable amount of research and community consultation. It is also covered by a wide range of legislation and guidance including:

- November 2000 – Government Rural White Paper 'The Future of the

Countryside'

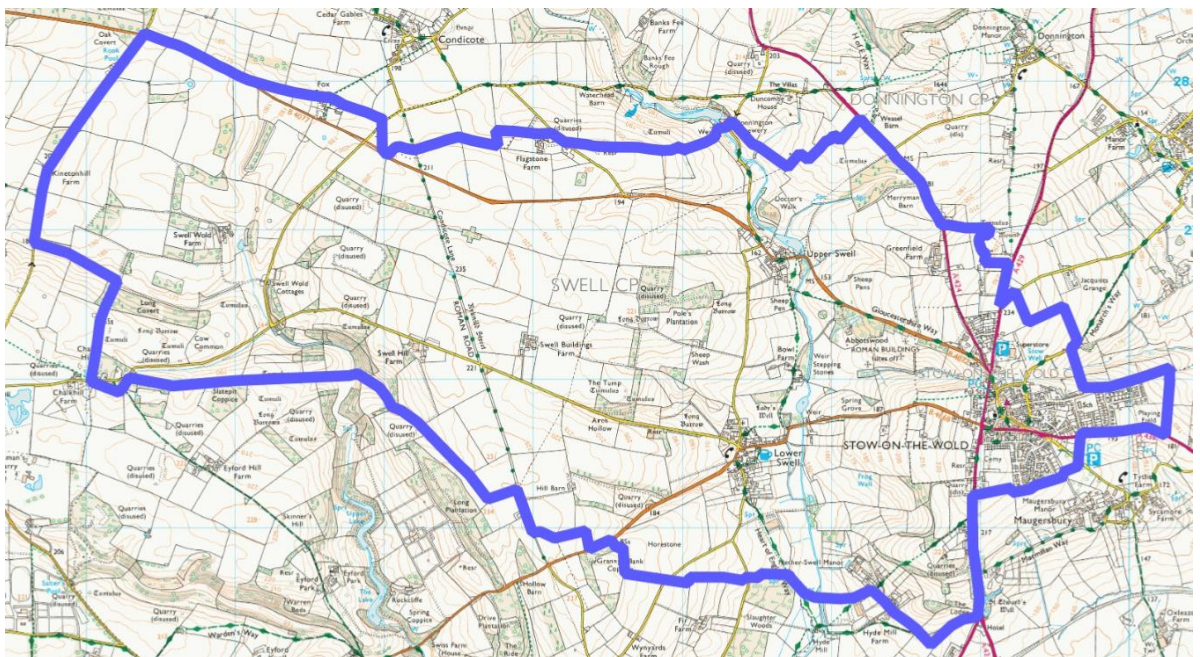
- 2002 - Stow on the Wold Town Appraisal
- 2003 - Stow on the Wold Business Appraisal
- September 2009 - Gloucestershire Local Area Agreement 2008-11
- October 2009 - Stow Parking Survey
- February 2010 - Stow Town Housing Needs Survey
- Jan 2011 - Stow Town Council approves the Stow Community Strategic Plan
- 2011 - Localism Act comes into force setting up Neighbourhood Development Plans
- 2012 - Neighbourhood Plan Act and National Planning Policy Framework
- June 2012 – Stow Housing Needs Survey
- July 2012 – Stow Council announces intention to prepare Stow Neighbourhood Plan
- September 2012 - Neighbourhood Plan Designated area approved
- October 2012 – affordable housing discussions
- November 2012 – decision to prepare Community Design Statement
- 2013 - Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-18
- August 2013 – original Neighbourhood Plan put on hold at request of Cotswold District
- March 2014 – North Cotswold Parking Review
- March 2014 - Inaugural Neighbourhood Plan community meeting advertised
- May 2014 - Survey of play and sports facilities
- August September 2014 – Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire circulated to all residents of Stow and Swells, in library, Stow Town Council office and at a barbecue in the town

- square, covering Housing, Health, Parking, Transport, Environment and Education
- 30 September 2014 – Natural England publishes National Character Area profiles: data for local decision making – the Cotswolds
  - December 2014 – questionnaire responses analysed
  - 2014/15 – traffic survey in Swells
  - January 2015 – consultation re including Swells in Neighbourhood Plan
  - January 2015 – notification of revised Neighbourhood Plan area
  - 8th, 14th, 17<sup>th</sup> and 20th April – Roadshows in St Edward’s Hall and other venues re questionnaire results
  - July 2015 – Roadshow in Town Square during Stow Cotswold Festival re content of Draft Neighbourhood Plan
  - Oct/Nov 2015 – Stow Town Housing Needs Survey
  - Dec 2015 – scoping report on Community Land Trust
  - 17 and 23 Feb 2016 – Roadshows with residents re Community Land Trust
  - Feb 2016 - Business Survey and Business Parking Survey
  - March 2016 – Residents parking survey
  - March 2016 – survey of residents of Lower Swell re children’s Play Area
  - July 2016 – Core document sent to CDC and discussion held with CDC.
  - June 2016 – Cotswold District Council publishes Draft Cotswold District Local Plan
  - Nov 2016 – Stow-on-the-Wold Community Land Trust board elected

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## The area covered by the Stow Plan

- 1.21 The Stow Plan covers the whole of the Stow and Swell Parishes. The boundary of the Plan area coincides with the Town and Parish boundaries. After public consultation period the Plan area was approved by Cotswold District Council in March 2015.



*Boundary of Plan area shown in blue*

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## 2 History and character of the Cotswolds, Stow and the Swells

### Stow's location

- 2.1 Stow and Swell – combined population 2,431<sup>5</sup> (Stow 2042, Swell Parish 389) - are located in the north Cotswolds. They are well placed for employment and shopping, lying 56 miles south of Birmingham, 60 miles north east of Bristol, 30 miles north-west of Oxford, 55 miles north of Reading, 19 miles east of Cheltenham and 25 miles east of Gloucester, all of which are major centres of shopping and employment.

The town is also about 2 hours by car from London.



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<sup>5</sup> Plan Population 2011 Census Office for National Statistics

## Cotswold District - a portrait<sup>6</sup>

2.2 The Local Plan provides a snapshot of the Cotswolds and the main issues facing the area, many of which are common to Stow. The Plan points out that:

‘The main challenge facing Cotswold District is to plan for future development requirements in the most sustainable way possible, making provision for homes for local people, jobs and community facilities, while protecting the area’s outstanding natural and built environment’.



Stow and the Cotswolds

## Natural and Historic Environment<sup>7</sup>

2.3 The Cotswolds is internationally renowned for its natural beauty. The distinctive local building stone and the many magnificent historic buildings are important parts of the character that makes the Cotswolds a famous tourist destination. The natural environment is a defining characteristic throughout the District, especially within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

2.4 This distinctive heritage is reflected in:

- The market towns and villages, their settings and townscape heritage
- The quality of the natural environment in the AONB
- 144 Conservation Areas
- 4,991 listed buildings
- 239 Scheduled ancient monuments
- 32 registered historic parks and gardens
- 37 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Over 260 locally designated Key Wildlife Sites

2.5 Since the District’s natural and historic environment is its greatest asset it is imperative that the character, appearance and diversity of the District is protected and wherever possible enhanced, especially within areas of high historic, landscape or nature conservation importance.

## Housing

2.6 Household growth between 2001 and 2011 was 5.3% in Cotswold District (England 7.9%) whilst population growth at 3.1% has been slower, leading to a decrease in the average household size. The District has a high proportion

<sup>6</sup> From Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031

<sup>7</sup> Op Cit

of elderly people and a low proportion of children and young people.

- 2.7 The attractiveness of the area has brought housing pressures, particularly in the north of the District, where Stow is located. These pressures are driven by commuting to and from the West Midlands. Movement out of London and the south-east has also made the Cotswolds particularly attractive for retirement and holiday or second homes.
- 2.8 Although the area has high property values, the median earned income of all employees in the Cotswold District is £19,131<sup>8</sup>. 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.

### The Economy

- 2.9 Each of the larger Cotswold towns has a strong and distinctive role. Moreton-in-Marsh is regarded by many as the main centre for the north Cotswolds, while Bourton-on-the-Water, Fairford, Lechlade, Northleach, Stow-on-the-Wold and Tetbury perform the role of service centres for surrounding rural areas.
- 2.10 There is a range of employment land and premises in most of the larger market towns and villages and, despite poor broadband coverage throughout much of the District, the economy has a strong representation of small businesses and a reasonably diverse economic base. These businesses make a significant contribution to the economic well-being of the District, offer local employment opportunities, and have made the area fairly resilient to fluctuations in the national and global economies. Unemployment rates are relatively low.
- 2.11 In 2011, almost 8,000 (13.3%) people worked from home in the Cotswolds. This rate is double the national average and significantly higher than Gloucestershire's average of 8.5%. This is partly due to the rural nature of the District and a highly skilled and entrepreneurial workforce.
- 2.12 The economically active population is declining across the District, and the labour market is considered tight by local businesses with labour supply issues, particularly in the professional, skilled trades and engineering sectors, potentially impacting on economic growth. Enquiries for employment land and premises, particularly from small, knowledge-based businesses who want to secure a quality environment or a site for an existing local business, tend to be focussed upon Cirencester and established business parks.
- 2.13 There are significant levels of retail "leakage" of comparison (non-food goods) shopping trips to other centres outside the District. The wholesale and retail trades represent the largest employer in the District (17.3%). The next largest groups are education (10.7%) and human health and social work activities (8.3%). Cotswold has an above average proportion of residents working in agriculture, forestry and fishing, accommodation and food services, and professional, scientific and technical activities. The service sector accounts for the largest proportion of local jobs.
- 2.14 Tourism is a major and growing part of the local economy. The challenge is to

<sup>8</sup> Office for National Statistics, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2014, [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

enable and manage sustainable tourism, which will safeguard the countryside, heritage and culture for future generations while providing benefits to the local economy.

- 2.15 The District's economy has been resilient during the recession and it is forecast to continue to grow. However, the District imports labour to support its growth and experiences problems recruiting suitably skilled staff, particularly in the professional, skilled trades and engineering sectors. A well-skilled and accessible workforce is necessary to support the growth of existing and new employers.

### Infrastructure

- 2.16 The continuing loss of village shops, post offices, schools and pubs has meant that the retention of rural services and facilities has become a key issue throughout much of the District. The relatively large and growing elderly population, coupled with a reduction in the numbers of young people, has implications for the structure of communities and the demand for health and public services.
- 2.17 To help ensure the continued success of micro businesses, there is a need to support the improvement of broadband speeds and mobile telecommunication connections in many rural parts of the District.
- 2.18 In 2011, almost 14,000 residents commuted out of the District; many using the area as a rural base from which to commute to larger employment centres, notably Swindon, Cheltenham and Gloucester, where there are higher value jobs. Conversely, almost 16,000 commuted into the District, an increase of around 5,000 since 2001. Over 16,300 Cotswold

residents also work in the District, excluding homeworkers and people with no fixed working location. Given the rural nature of the area, average travel-to-work times are longer than in most other parts of the County.

- 2.19 There is a high dependence on car travel coupled with a significant proportion of residents, workers and tourist visitors who commute daily into and out of the District. This is in the main caused by a paucity of public transport resources with very limited destination and time span scopes, exacerbated by the dispersed nature of the District. Whilst there is reasonably good access via local A-roads to the motorway network, this does not apply to the northernmost towns, including Stow on the Wold. Stow is within short driving distance of two railway stations, Moreton in Marsh and Kingham, both on the Cotswold line allowing rail travel to Oxford, Reading, London and beyond in one direction, and to Evesham, Worcester and Hereford in the other direction. Whilst both of these stations can be accessed by bus from Stow (Pulhams routes 801 & 802), these services do not readily mesh with train times or indeed cover the full span of train services. Consequently, by necessity, car travel to stations is heavily used, especially for those passengers travelling on longer train distances. There is no easy rail connectivity to Cheltenham or Gloucester. The parking at Kingham has been recently doubled in capacity, but that at Moreton in Marsh is very limited, leading to overflow into that town.
- 2.20 Stow on the Wold, at the top of a hill, is a nodal point for eight roads in the North Cotswolds. Running north/south is the A429 (Fosseway) primary route. Just south of the town, at the bottom of

a hill, the A424 from Burford joins the A429, at the top of the hill, in the town, the A436 from the east intersects at the Unicorn crossroads, this road having been joined down the hill on the eastern side by the B4450 from Bledington and Kingham (main access route to/from Kingham Railway Station). To the west at this Unicorn crossroads is the B4068, a steep decline to Lower Swell, Naunton and Andoversford. This point, where the A429 road only has one lane each way, is the first major traffic pinch and congestion point, which is recognised as such in the Gloucestershire Local Traffic Plan (LTP), and is the most heavily used section of road in North Gloucestershire, carrying 20,000 movements per day. Slightly further north up the A429, to the east, there is the main entry road (High Street) to the Stow on the Wold town square which takes all the visiting heavy traffic, including many tourist coaches, and a major proportion of the light traffic entering the town centre. Shortly afterwards on the A429 is the junction with the B4077 (another steep decline) to Upper Swell and Tewkesbury to the west, together with the A424 (Evesham Road) to the North West to join the A44 at Troopers Lodge. This combination of roads is the second major pinch point. Frequently, due to the convergence of all of these roads, plus resultant compression of traffic onto this short section of the A429, the roadway between the two pinch points is almost constantly congested, resulting in tailbacks on all of the town approaches. During peak hours, and in the holiday seasons, these tailbacks can extend for a considerable distance. Indeed, during a recent road resurfacing operation involving this second pinch point whereby the road was closed considerable traffic disruption was

caused in this part of the North Cotswolds.

- 2.21 The A429 is the major north/south road in east Gloucestershire and carries a very high proportion of transient traffic, travelling through these two pinch points. Furthermore, the A44, the main road from London to Aberystwyth, which routes through Oxford in the east and Evesham/Worcester in the west has been “tweaked” to eliminate most HGVs entering Chipping Norton (Oxfordshire), by an agreement apparently between Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire Highways for such traffic to alternatively route Oxford to Northleach on the A40, then north on the A429 Fosseway to Stow on the Wold, through Stow on the Wold and then north west on the A424 to rejoin the A44 at Troopers Lodge and vice versa. Whilst this action reduced the HGV traffic through Chipping Norton, Moreton in Marsh and Bourton on the Hill, it has increased this HGV traffic flow over the A40, and in particular the A429 through Stow, with associated increased air pollution, and without any compensating road upgrades, or planned measures to alleviate the major Cotswold pinch points on the A429 at Stow on the Wold. Furthermore, current proposals to downgrade the A44 through Chipping Norton, and associated air pollution in that town, should be treated with caution as, if implemented, they will further exacerbate the problems on the A429 at Stow and increase the air pollution levels in an area close to residential accommodation.
- 2.22 The congestion problems on the A429 at Stow on the Wold blight travel into and out of the town, especially at peak holiday times and weekends, constrict both business and tourism expansion of

the town, and hinder normal movement by residents; it is a stranglehold that urgently needs to be resolved. This has been recognised for some time and it has been noted that the traffic levels have increased significantly over the last 20 years without any compensatory improvement to the road. To raise awareness of this issue Stow Town Council detailed the problems in its letter TPJBL0002 dated 15 August 2014 to GCC (Commissioning Director – Communities & Infrastructure), copy to the MP, CDC and neighbouring towns. As part of the follow up staff action GCC Highways Authority formed the A429 Fosse Way Task Group study in early 2016 and its report was considered by GCC in November 2016. This report noted the pinch point congestion in both Stow on the Wold and Moreton in Marsh, the need to improve traffic flow by road widening, further passing places, plus consider the need for by-passes in the future for these two towns. It noted that, unlike other inter county main roads in Gloucestershire which were maintained by Highways England, this was the only road not classified as a trunk road and as such was maintained by GCC. (This road was part of a GCC submission to DfT in November 2016 for inclusion in the Major Road Network (MRN) review). Indeed, this non trunk status was a factor in allowing at appeal additional direct traffic access at the proposed care home site next to Bretton House south of Stow! In addition to these traffic flow problems, the lack of parking close to Stow Town Centre continues to cause issues for business users, residents and tourists alike. There is a need to develop land to provide additional parking and to render the historic town square and its immediate

environs a more pedestrian environment.

## Stow

- 2.23 Stow (pop 2,041) is an ancient Cotswold wool town. It sits on a hill at about 800 feet above sea level, originally the location of an Iron Age fort beside the Fosse Way, the Roman road running from Exeter to Lincoln. Originally called 'Stow St. Edward' or 'Edwardstow', after the town's patron saint, the town was founded as a planned market place by the Normans to take advantage of its unique position at the convergence of eight trackways.
- 2.24 The small settlement was controlled by the local abbey and, when the first weekly market was set up in 1107 by Henry I, he decreed that the proceeds should go to Evesham Abbey. This market continued for 800 years, only ceasing about 1900.
- 2.25 The main source of wealth in the Cotswolds was wool and Stow grew to provide accommodation and other services for those visiting its fairs. Stow Fair was the largest in England and tradition says that during the fairs, every house in the Square was turned into an alehouse. The character of the Fair changed as the importance of wool declined, and it became a horse fair, favoured by farmers, huntsmen, professional horse dealers and gypsies. It is now the 'gypsy horse fair', one of the biggest gatherings of its kind in England which attracts hundreds of sightseers to Stow twice a year. In March 1646, the last important battle of the Civil War ended in the Square when the Parliamentary army under the command of Colonel Morgan

- overwhelmed Sir Jacob Astley's Royalist army.
- 2.26 Buildings in Stow were built with the mellow Cotswold limestone from local quarries. Some have massive internal oak beams from the days when Gloucestershire was covered in forest. 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 that has evolved over some 500 years. The historic core of the town is a Conservation Area with an extensive concentration of listed buildings.
- 2.27 Today Stow-on-the-Wold draws visitors from all over the world to see its stunning architecture, to shop in its many antique shops, to take afternoon tea in one of the old teashops and experience the ambience of this lovely old town. The large Market Square testifies to the town's former importance with the ancient market cross at one end and the town stocks at the other. Around the Square is an elegant array of Cotswold town houses and the many inns, restaurants and tea shops provide informal meeting spots for residents and visitors.
- 2.28 The number of Stow residents remains fairly static at just over 2,000 for the last 10 years. In 2011 it was 2,041. Almost 75% of those living in the town have lived there for more than 5 years, while only 3% have lived there for less than a year. 14% of the population comprises children under 15 compared with 18% in England, and this proportion is declining. 54% of the Stow population is aged 16-64 compared with 66% in England, and the percentage of the Stow population over 65 is 32%, compared with 16% in England.
- 2.29 The crime rate in is very low and neighbours are willing to provide help when needed.
- ### Swell
- 2.30 Swell Parish (pop 389) 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 Heart of England Way long distance footpath passes through both. Swell is bisected by Ryknild Street, the Roman road. 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.
- 2.31 Both villages have fine houses built from Cotswold stone. Lower Swell, the larger of the two, is said to have the "finest countryside, a tranquil village green and plenty of mellow stone cottages". Abbotswood House, or 'Swell Park' is it was originally known, is located midway between Lower Swell and Stow. It is a Grade II classic Cotswold house built of honey coloured local stone. It is reputed to have been worked upon by Sir Edwin Lutyens, and is said to have been his major work in the Cotswolds. The gardens of Abbotswood comprise a late-19th-century park of around 55 hectares with early-20th-century formal and woodland gardens of 4 hectares. The terraced lawn and fountain were created by Lutyens.

### 3 Issues facing Stow and Swell Parish

#### Historic and natural environment

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's first task was to identify the issues facing Stow, based on the outcomes of the work done to develop the Community Strategic Plan, the community consultations which began in early 2014 and other plans and documentation which emerged during the plan making period. Unsurprisingly the issues raised by the community reflected the issues for Cotswold District identified in the Local Plan namely:

- Concern that the unique townscape and environment of the town, parish and AONB should be conserved and enhanced by adhering to primary planning legislation, i.e. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, (the CRoW Act) and NPPG/NPPF protective guidelines and not spoilt by inappropriate development.
- The need for affordable housing for local people and the development of too many assisted living/care units.
- The need to maintain and develop the town's economy.
- The need for a new medical centre, leisure/community centre including a youth club, plus an identified need for additional sports and leisure facilities for young people e.g. adventure playground, skate/BMX Park, etc.
- The need for a town museum.
- The need for more parking, better access to public transport and a reduction in the impact of through traffic especially HGVs.

#### Current situation

3.2 In his book 'Villages Buildings of Britain'<sup>9</sup> Matthew Rice describes the unique character of Cotswold towns and villages.

'All the buildings in the Cotswolds look alike in one way as, from the manor house to the smallest cottage, every house is an exercise in the same style. This style is a legacy from the sixteenth century - of heavily mullioned windows, drip-mouldings where the protruding line of the masonry above the windows drops down through a right angle taking the water away from the walls, and dormer windows poking out of heavy stone roofs.

'Most extraordinary though is the stone. The warm yellow limestone, oolite, is part of the limestone belt that runs from the Dorset to the Yorkshire coast and is at its widest in the Cotswolds. There are huge quantities of limestone only just below the surface throughout the area. So easily accessible is it, that every wall and garden shed has been built from Cotswold stone, giving the Cotswolds more perfect villages per square mile than anywhere else in Britain. Oolite is easily workable when quarried but hardens with exposure to the atmosphere. This has led to a very high standard of decorative masonry, particularly in the splendid town and village churches.

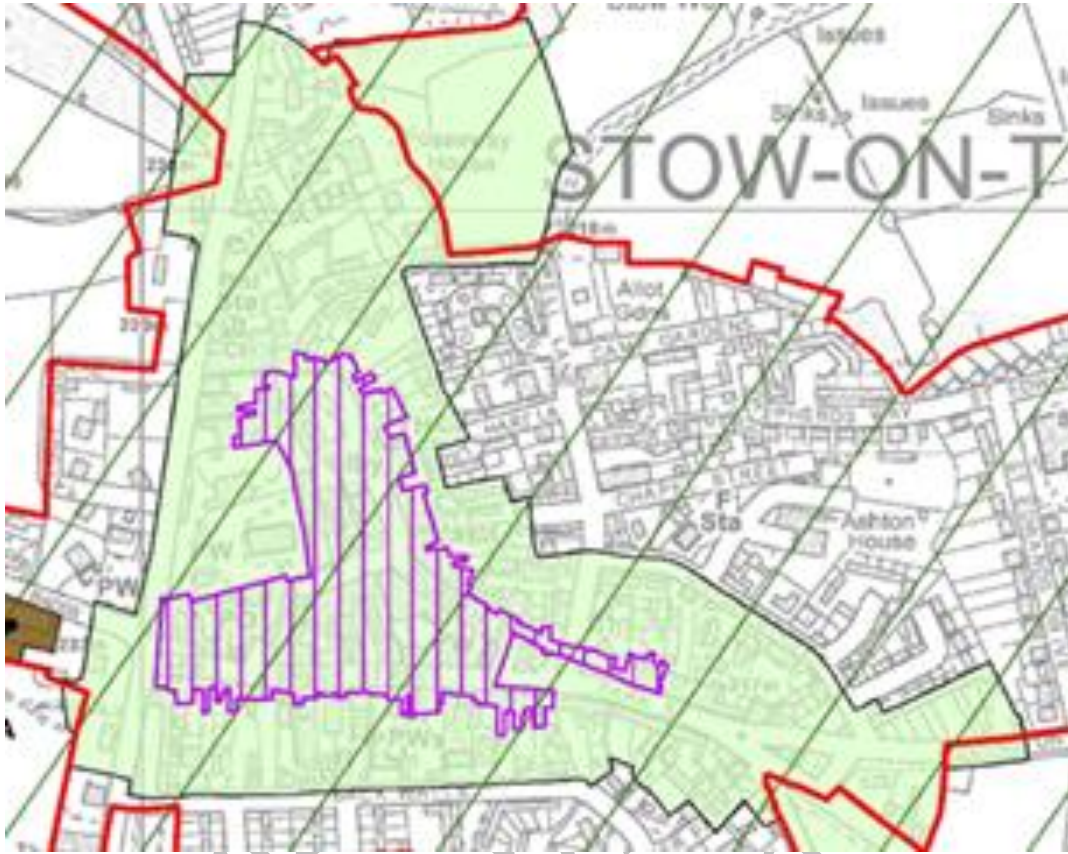
3.3 However, he issues a warning:

'The beauty of the area, coupled with royal patronage and relative closeness

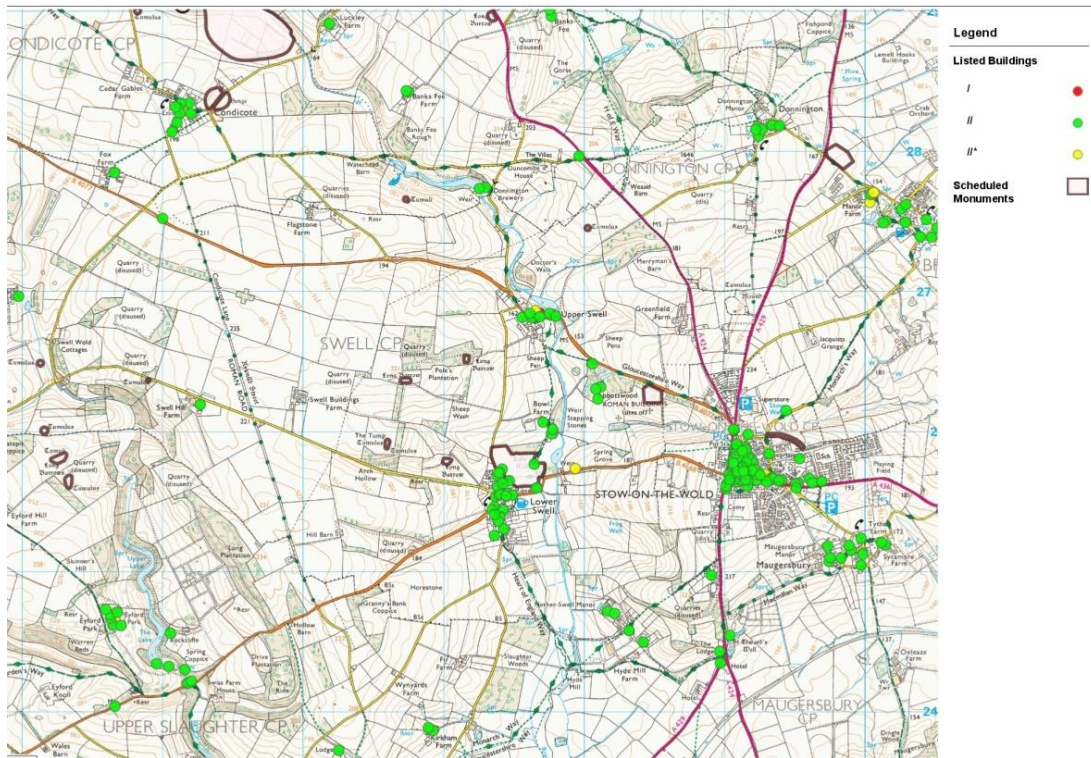
<sup>9</sup> Matthew Rice – 'Village Buildings of Britain' 1992

to London, has brought about development, conversion and renovation. Oblivious to the traditions of the area this trio blunders on having a fatal effect on the area - new houses

are built of bland reconstituted stone which does not have the subtle colour variations and liveliness of the native limestone'.



*Stow conservation area coloured light green  
Designated 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 1970 Reviewed 18<sup>th</sup> July 1989*



Listed buildings and scheduled monument in the Plan area

3.4 Stow Town Centre is famous for its elegant terraced houses made from honey-coloured Cotswold limestone. The Market Square and Sheep Street date from the 14th to the 17th centuries and the centre of the town is a Conservation Area - designated by Cotswold District Council in November 1970, almost half a century ago. The Plan area contains five Grade I, two Grade II\*, 159 Grade II listed buildings and one Scheduled Monument.

3.5 This acclaim has been warmly welcomed and appreciated by the local community which is intensely proud of the town’s architectural heritage and works hard to maintain and enhance it. The quality of the town’s environment is a major element in people’s desire to live there resulting in the high house prices that the town commands. It is also the main attraction for the many tourists who visit the town to the benefit of the local economy.

**The Local Plan and other strategies**

3.6 In the current Local Plan (2016) Cotswold District Council believes that, when considering the issues for the Natural and Historic Environment:

‘It is imperative that the character, appearance and diversity of the District is protected and wherever possible enhanced, especially within areas of high historic, landscape or nature conservation importance. It is also important to ensure that new development is well designed; respects biodiversity and green infrastructure; and does not lead to the coalescence of settlements. The District’s natural and historic environments are its greatest assets. The challenge is to harness these sensitive assets to economic advantage by managing tourism, agricultural diversification, minerals, waste and other changes to rural areas in a sustainable and non-intrusive

manner. Future housing, employment and other development will need to be suitably designed and located to minimise visual and other impacts on the sensitive Cotswold landscape and built heritage’.

3.7 ‘The Local Plan's ‘Vision’ supports the following priorities set out in the District Council's Corporate Strategy:

- Protect and enhance the local environment whilst supporting economic growth
- Champion issues which are important to local people

3.8 That Stow’s townscape is of national and international architectural importance is recognised in the Local Plan which states that

‘Stow-on-the-Wold is a compact market town, known both nationally and internationally as a tourist attraction...with its striking and unusually prominent hilltop setting, Stow sits high on the Wold, wholly within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The town, along with neighbouring Maugersbury, has many listed buildings.

‘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. Tourism and local tourist accommodation has a positive impact on the vibrancy of the town centre. Enhancing the town centre further (e.g. by reinstating the Market Square as the focal point of the town) is an important economic priority.

‘Options should be explored for improving the physical environment of the town centre’

3.9 The objectives for the Natural and Historic environment in the Local Plan are:

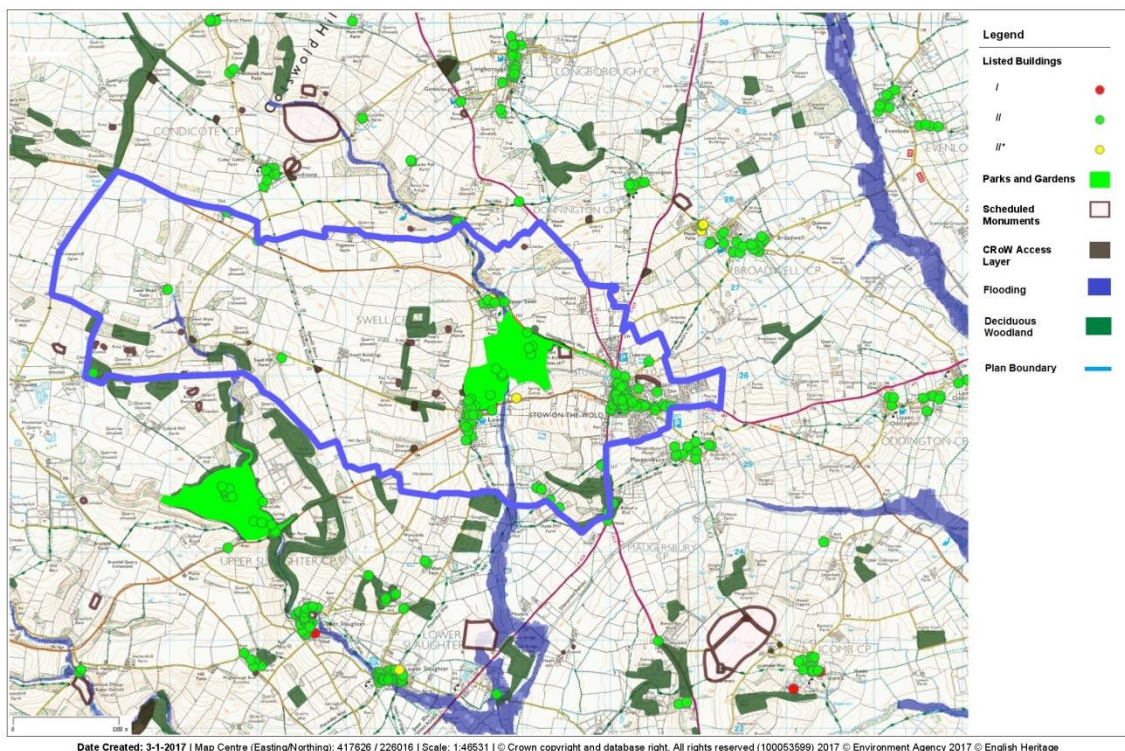
‘Through the use of appropriate planning policies in the development management process:

- a. Conserve and enhance the high quality, local distinctiveness and diversity of the natural and historic environment.
- b. Ensure that new development is of high quality and sustainable design, which reflects local character and distinctiveness, is appropriately sited, and provides attractive and inclusive environments.
- c. Protect the open countryside against sporadic development, while also avoiding coalescence of settlements.
- d. Support the creation of new green infrastructure to enhance environmental quality and provide health benefits’.

#### **The rural area of the plan**

3.10 The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Natural England’s ‘Natural Character Area Profile 107’ – The Cotswolds’, cover the entire Plan area. The use of land in the Plan area is predominantly for food production and should remain so. However, the Plan acknowledges that changes in food production and therefore the appearance of the cropped landscape will be influenced by world and national food markets.





**The Plan area constraints**

3.13 The AONB Board seeks to implement the ‘Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-18’, which sets out its aims and objectives over a five-year period. The two key purposes of the Board are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB
- To increase understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB, ensuring that these complement the conservation and enhancement of the area.

In fulfilling these roles, the board seeks to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities within the AONB.

3.14 The rural area of the Neighbourhood Plan is therefore well covered by policies and organisations with responsibility for securing its future. Nevertheless, just as national government policy appears to have been a major factor in determining some policies and proposals in the Local

Plan, concern was also expressed that development pressures in the rural part of the plan area might lead to inappropriate development which would have an adverse effect on the environment of this area.

*Environmental Impact Screening*

3.15 There are no instances of the following in the Plan area - Biosphere Reserves, Local Nature Reserves, RAMSAR sites (Wetlands), Special Areas of Conservation, SSSIs, Econet woodlands/grasslands, Natural Areas and Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

**Local Plan design policies for the Historic and Natural Environment**

3.16 The Local Plan states that Government attaches great importance to the design of the built and natural environment and expects local authorities to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and

wider area development schemes. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and addressing climate change, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people’.

3.17 The design quality achieved in Stow and other towns in the past was generally very high and local standards of traditional craftsmanship have been exceptional for hundreds of years.

3.18 The Local Plan includes a policy for design which states that:

‘Development will be permitted which accords with the Cotswold Design Code. Proposals should be of design quality that respects the character and distinctive appearance of the locality.’

3.19 This policy will be applied to all aspects of design – including architectural, landscape, ecological, urban and sustainable design - within developments of every scale, from conversions and small extensions to major residential sites and large employment facilities.

3.20 However, the Local Plan also points out that it is important to ensure that the local context is also fully considered, particularly areas such as Stow town centre renowned for the quality of its built and natural environment and in areas which have very sensitive locations such as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the numerous Conservation Areas.

3.21 To achieve this, the Local Plan contains a revised Cotswold Design Code which emphasises the requirement to design developments so that they either follow an authentic vernacular and traditional approach, in line with the local architectural character, or that they are

designed in a high quality contemporary and innovative manner, which reflects and respects local character. The decision whether to adopt a traditional or contemporary approach will depend on the type of development proposed, the site and its setting.

### **Community response**

3.22 The Community’s concerns are:

- A concern to ensure that the unique townscape and environment of the Town and Parish is conserved and enhanced and not spoilt by inappropriate development.
- In order to protect and enhance the historic and natural environment, developments need to be sympathetic to the environment and the community.
- Concern that any developments in the AONB do not adversely affect wildlife habitats.
- Because of Stow’s unique environment there is a need for a Community Design Statement specifically for the Plan area.

3.23 The community’s response to the historic and natural environment issues identified by the Plan team’s researches and through community consultation and the Local Plan proposals is that:

- Central government directives could override the townscape and environmental aims in the Local Plan and the wishes of the local community, leading to the development particularly of areas of new housing, which would have a negative effect on the Plan area, its environment and townscape.
- Although developments in the Plan area had been subject to the provisions of the conservation area, the AONB requirements and the

Cotswold Design Guide for some time, experience suggests that the fact that these policies and guidelines exist, may not guarantee that they will be rigorously implemented or that Cotswold District Council, responsible for the implementation of the guidelines, would have the special skills required to implement them.

- Despite a revised Cotswold Design Guide being part of the Local Plan, the uniqueness of Stow's townscape warranted a more detailed set of design requirements specifically relating to Stow, to ensure that all developments given planning consent would be of a quality of design and materials commensurate with what exists in the town and would be sensitive to the cultural context in which they would be being built, including the use of local materials and vernacular building styles.
- Stow's unique townscape is an important element in the town's prosperity which is a key factor in attracting tourists to the town. Proposals which would have a negative impact on the quality of Stow's townscape would affect its attraction to tourists, damaging the local economy.
- Land values in Stow, which are particularly high due to the popularity of the town as a place to live, could lead to developers trying to put as much development as possible on a particular site to compensate for the high land values.
- Stow has evolved into its present form in a slow, 'organic' way, and this form of development should be allowed to continue. While residents reluctantly accepted that

development in Stow was probably an inevitable part of the town's future, if housing developments were limited to a maximum of ten dwellings at any one time, it would give the town enough time to absorb the impact of new buildings and the increasing numbers of people living within its boundaries.

- There was a desire that appropriate controls would be put in place to secure the future of the existing green spaces in the town. This issue is taken up in the section on 'Green Infrastructure'.
- Concern was also expressed that provisions for off-street car parking for new developments contained in the Emerging Local Plan were not sufficiently stringent. Tighter controls are included in Stow and The Swells Community Design Statement.

3.24 These views represent a genuine concern by the Stow community, that while the community accepts the principle that Stow will continue to grow, if appropriate controls are not put in place and rigorously implemented, a precious, unique, historical and architectural asset could be damaged by inappropriate development.

## Housing issues

### The current situation

- 3.25 As elsewhere in the Cotswolds, the attractiveness of the Stow area has brought housing pressures which are driven in part by commuting to and from the West Midlands. The area has high property values, yet the median income of all employees in the Cotswold District is about £19,000<sup>10</sup>. Failure to provide an appropriate mix of housing, particularly affordable housing, has led to more economically-active people, particularly the young, being forced to look elsewhere for somewhere to live.
- 3.26 The availability of affordable housing would enable local young people and others to take up local employment opportunities and help provide sufficient accommodation for an economically active population to support existing services and facilities. The most acute issue is the high cost of property. First time buyers on average incomes are priced out of the housing market in Cotswold District and in Stow in particular. Home ownership rates among the 25 to 34 age group are amongst the lowest in the county. The cost of housing in Stow outstrips the average wage in the area.
- 3.27 The lack of affordable housing is a challenge for local businesses and public sector employers (e.g. health and education). Unless the issue of affordability is addressed, more people on middle and lower incomes, particularly the young, will be forced to leave the district in increasing numbers with serious economic and social consequences for the future of the district. However, it should be noted that the Stow-on-the-Wold Community Land Trust has been set up to help address this problem.
- 3.28 The Stow Business Survey<sup>11</sup> found that, of the businesses in Stow which recruit staff, 63% employ staff from within an 8km radius of Stow, 41% recruit within an 8-16km radius and 41% from further afield. 30% currently recruit *only* within an 8km radius of Stow and a third do *not* recruit from within an 8km radius. 39% of the 64 businesses interviewed blamed recruiting difficulties on high house prices, lack of public transport, high commuting costs and lack of parking.
- Stow Housing Needs Survey<sup>12</sup>**
- 3.29 In order to ascertain the need for affordable housing in Stow, the Town Council first commissioned Gloucestershire Rural Community Council in 2010 to undertake a Housing Needs Survey of the town. This was refined and updated over the years, culminating in a detailed Housing Needs Survey in December 2015. Questionnaires were sent to 1,156 households and 302 (31%) replies were returned to GRCC. Analysis of the data revealed that:
- 82% of respondents owned their own home, 10% rented from the local authority or a Housing Association, 7% were in private rented housing and less than 1% lived in low cost home ownership.
  - 28 respondents said a member of their family had moved away in the last 5 years because they could not

<sup>10</sup> Office of National Statistics – Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2014, [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

<sup>11</sup> Stow Business Survey 2003 – “Stow 2020”

<sup>12</sup> Stow Housing Needs Survey December 2015 – Gloucestershire Rural Community Council

afford the accommodation available locally.

- There are currently 27 households within the parish who have self-identified themselves as being in need of affordable housing, 19 of which require affordable rented accommodation, while 8 could afford intermediate housing e.g. shared ownership. The foregoing figures relate to replies from only 31% of the total households. The accurate requirement for truly affordable housing could therefore be much higher than 27.
- 62% of respondents were in favour of a small development of affordable homes for local people, 7% were against, 24% said 'maybe', and remainder gave no reply.

3.30 The housing stock in the Plan area comprises 1,390 dwellings. House prices in Stow-on-the-Wold are more than 18 times local median annual incomes. The median gross income for residents in Cotswold District was £18,642 in 2014 according to Government Office for National Statistics, whilst the average price of the 37 properties sold in Stow-on-the-Wold for the 12 months ending September 2015 was £350,432.

**Average House Prices in Stow-on-the-Wold Parish  
12 months to September 2015 (£)**

House Type	Price	Number of Sales
Detached	£417,182	11
Semi-detached	£301,111	9
Terraced	£329,333	12
Flats	£343,000	5
All	£350,432	37

3.31 The SHLAA 2014, including addenda up to December 2015, states that 91 dwellings have been built or granted permission in Stow since 2011. Subsequent to this report further permissions have been granted for 20 dwellings to be built on the site of Ashton House, 7 in White Hart Lane plus 5 single dwellings at various locations in the town. In addition, permission has been granted for a total of 179 places in two elderly care complexes in the town (48 dementia care, 37 close care and 94 assisted living or extra care). The two care villages are both on the A429 Fosse Way at sensitive entrance points to the town, one on land to the north of Tesco (The Orders of St John Care Trust/McCarthy & Stone site) and one on land adjacent to Bretton House to the south of the town (English Care Villages).

Households requiring affordable rented housing				
House type	Single people	Couples	Families	Total
1 bedroom ground floor (flat or bungalow)	1 aged 77	2 no details	-	3
1 bedroom house, flat, bungalow	8 aged 17, 17, 46, 61,	4 aged 24,78&61, 60&50	-	12
2 bedroom bungalow	-	-	1 family with son	1
2 bedroom house	-	-	3 (no details given; no details given; family with son aged 9 yrs;)	3
Total				19

Households requiring intermediate housing				
House Type	Single persons	Couples	Families	No
1 bedroom house or flat	1 aged 21	-	-	1
2 bedroom sheltered accommodation	1 aged 88	-	-	1
2 bedroom house	4 no details; aged 24; 24, 72	-	2 families no details	6
Total				8

3.32 There are 41 families who are seeking rehousing on the open market:

Households seeking rehousing on open market				
House Type	Single people	Couples	Other	No
1 bdrm sheltered	-	1 no details	-	1
2 bdrm sheltered	1 aged 72		1 family no details	
2 bdrm bungalow	-	3 aged 63 & 61; ages not given; both 84	-	3
1 bdrm house	4 – no details 29 ;19	-	-	4
2 bdrm house	4 - 33; 44, age not given; 66	8 - no details; 70,33,35 & 43	1 no details	13
3 bdrm house	2 no details	4 (aged 50 & 48, 53 & 52, 63 & 62, no details)	-	1 children 2 & 12 months
3 bdrm bungalow	1 aged 69	-	-	-
4+ bdrm house	-	1 no details	2 (family son 2; family son 1)	-
Total				41

### Care Housing

- 3.33 An imbalance in the residents' age demography for Stow already exists<sup>13</sup> - 30% of the population is over retirement age - and this percentage is increasing even before either of the two care villages is built and populated.

#### Resident Population<sup>14</sup>

##### Population over 65

- Stow – 616 (30%)
- Swells – 111 (28.5%)
- Cotswolds – 18,489 (22%)
- South West – 1,035,444 (19.5%)

- 3.34 When these care village developments for older people come to fruition the additional imbalance will place exceptional pressure on local hospitals, doctor's surgeries and community care facilities. There may be an unlimited and expanding market for care facilities but six similar organisations already exist in Stow, providing a range of services from nursing homes to sheltered housing. Whilst it can be argued that there is need for a specialist dementia care home now that Ashton House has been closed, the number of nursing homes/care villages for older people in the town needs to be controlled and no such developments other than truly affordable care housing for local older people should be granted permission before 2031.

### Home working

- 3.35 The economic situation on Stow is such that home working is a key element in providing employment in the town and in the rural area. In the Housing Needs Survey, 50 respondents replied that they worked from home - 18 for an employer and 32 had their own business. 21 respondents said that if the right facilities were available they would work from home.

#### Hours per week worked from home

Less than 10 hours per week	16
10 to 24 hours per week	15
25 to 40 hours per week	7
More than 40 hours per week	7
No reply	12
Total	57

#### Types of business run from home

Crafts/Arts	4
IT/ Knowledge based	4
Consultancy	13
Design	1
Agriculture / gardening	1
Other*	10
No reply	1
Total	34

Other\* includes: marketing services, accountancy, property maintenance, electrician, book seller, book keeping, counsellor, admin, antique retailer

#### Types of working space required for home working

Type of workspace	Need & already have	Need but do not have	Don't need	No reply
Desk only	20	7	7	56
Room shared with living space	15	3	8	64
Dedicated room for working use only	24	20	4	42

<sup>13</sup> ONS Census 2011

<sup>14</sup> Op Cit

External storage space e.g. shed or garage	14		10	54
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Communication facilities required				
Type of communication facility	Need & already have	Need but do not have	Don't need	No reply
Telephone landline	47	4	4	35
Mobile reception	45	7	3	35
Broadband	52	4	3	31

### Existing housing permissions

3.36 Four main sites in Stow already have planning permission for housing development:

- Brackley and McCarthy and Stone (land north of Tesco) – 44 extra care dwellings and 48 place dementia care home
  - Bretton House (land adjacent to) – 106 assisted living units and/or care units
  - Ashton House - 20 dwellings for sale
  - White Hart Lane – 7 dwellings for sale
- A further six sites have planning permission for one house each.

3.37 If developed as proposed these sites would deliver a total of 231 new dwellings, and while almost 85% of these houses are targeted at the elderly and/or infirm, none of the sites will provide affordable houses.

### The Local Plan

3.38 The housing objective in the Local Plan is that the Local Plan would:

‘Provide an adequate supply of quality housing, of appropriate types and tenures, to at least meet objectively assessed needs’.

3.39 To achieve this the Local Plan sets a target for Stow of ten new houses during the Local Plan period. The Local Plan states that to identify sufficient

sites to deliver housing in the first five years, the District Council drew on information from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and other relevant evidence.

3.40 The Local Plan also proposes that:

- All housing developments will be expected to provide a suitable mix and range of housing in terms of size, type and tenure to reflect local housing need and demand in both the market and affordable housing sectors, particularly the requirements of an ageing population and smaller more affordable open market homes to reflect local earnings.
- Developers will be expected to provide a range of types and sizes of market homes and demonstrate how the proposed mix of market housing provision will meet local demand with regard to household size and income, thereby reducing the need for affordable housing in the District.
- Any affordable accommodation with 2 or more bedrooms will be expected to be houses or bungalows unless there is a need for flats or specialist accommodation.
- On sites of more than 20 dwellings developers will be required to provide at least 5% of dwellings for sale as serviced self or custom build plots, having regard to the need identified on the Local Planning

Authority's Self Build and Custom Build Register.

3.41 For affordable housing, which the Plan defines as 'Social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market', the Local Plan states that:

- 'All housing developments that provide six or more new dwellings or comprise an area of 0.3 hectares or larger, will be expected to contribute towards affordable housing provision to meet the identified need in the District and address the Council's strategic objectives on affordable housing.
- Schemes providing 5 new dwellings or less, or on sites smaller than 0.3 hectares, will make a financial contribution by way of a commuted sum towards the District's affordable housing need subject to viability.
- The affordable housing requirement on all sites requiring a contribution, subject to viability is:
  - Up to 30% of new dwellings gross on brownfield sites; and
  - Up to 40% of new dwellings gross on all other sites.
- In exceptional circumstances, consideration may be given to accepting a financial contribution from the developer where it is justified that affordable housing cannot be delivered on-site, or that the District's need for affordable housing can be better satisfied through this route. A financial contribution will also be required for each partial number of affordable units calculated to be provided on site.

- The type, size and mix, including the tenure split, of affordable housing will be expected to address the identified and prioritised housing needs of the District. This should be proportionate in scale and mix, resulting in a balanced community of housing that is designed to be tenure blind and distributed in clusters. It will be expected that affordable housing will be provided on site as completed dwellings by the developer, unless an alternative contribution is agreed, such as serviced plots. Developers will be expected to agree the affordable housing provision and design at planning application stage.
- Where viability is questioned or a commuted sum is considered, an "open book" assessment will be required. The local planning authority will arrange for an external assessment which will be paid for by the developer.'

3.42 The Local Plan<sup>15</sup> proposes only one site for housing development:

- The former Stow Agricultural Services building which should deliver 10 dwellings.

3.43 When taken together with existing permissions, this would mean that a total of 241 housing units would be delivered in Stow during the life of the Local Plan, the vast majority of which would be for the elderly.

### **Community's response**

3.44 The community's concerns for housing were:

- Need for truly affordable housing specifically for local people as per the

<sup>15</sup> Local Plan Policy S13

Housing Needs Survey which might be developed by a community land trust or successor organisation and should be traditional housing developments, built to the highest design standards and limited to phases of no more than 10 dwellings.

- The development of too many assisted living/care units for older people.
- Preference should be given to developing on brownfield sites rather than in the AONB.

3.45 As with the Local Plan policies for the historic and natural environment, considerable efforts were made by the Neighbourhood Plan team in consultation with the community and the town council, to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan took the proposals and policies for housing in the latest iteration of the Local Plan into account.

3.46 While agreeing with the District Council's aspirations in the Local Plan that 'New land allocations need to be sensitive the environmental constraints and the need to ensure that the town's historic character is maintained and that 'the provision of affordable housing will enable young people to take up local employment opportunities, help provide sufficient accommodation for an economically active population to support the local economy and sustain existing services and facilities', the community's response was that:

- There is a critical need for 27 or more affordable housing units in the town. If the affordable housing were to be built as part of a private sector housing development rather than by a housing association, community land trust or successor organisation, based on the affordable housing percentages stipulated in the Local

Plan – namely 'Up to 40% of new dwellings gross on all other sites' should be affordable housing – a development of 68 houses would be required to satisfy the demand for 27 affordable housing units, which could require a substantial incursion into the AONB; this would be unacceptable.

- Due to restrictions on local government finance and the finance available to housing associations, affordable housing has to be created as part of private sector housing development projects and, although Cotswold District Council will only approve housing developers' plans if they include a proportion of affordable homes, the danger of making the provision of affordable housing part of such developments 'subject to viability', is that, given the high land values in Stow, it will be relatively easy for developers to 'prove' that providing affordable housing which meets the design criteria set out in the Cotswold Design Guide on a particular site in Stow is 'unviable', thus avoiding the need to provide affordable housing or reducing the quality of the housing to below what should be provided in a special situation such as Stow.
- Since the purpose of developing affordable housing is to make available suitable rented and affordable accommodation to local people, letting policies must reflect this. Experience suggests that there is no guarantee that this will happen. The community's concern was that rental properties would be allocated centrally, in Gloucester, on the basis of need, which would mean that available properties could be allocated to people from Gloucester or Cheltenham. The attraction of

being able to live in an attractive town in the Cotswolds would encourage those living outside Stow with no connection with the town to seek to rent in the town. If houses were let to tenants from outside Stow this would mean that an area of the AONB had been lost to no benefit to the town.

- A much better solution to satisfying the need for affordable housing for local people would be for developments of 10 or more properties and as part of any section 106 agreement made with the developer, the Local Authority would require that a part of the development site be donated to a Community Land Trust or other appropriate organisation to enable that Trust to build and manage one affordable house for every 10 properties on the site.
- If the sites were to be developed on publicly owned land by a community land trust or successor organisation, it would be possible to achieve their development in such a way as to provide a high architectural quality and secure the required amount of affordable housing.
- Housing developments should be limited to a maximum of ten dwellings at any one time. Adopting this form of 'organic' development would give the town enough time to absorb the impact of new buildings and the increasing numbers of people living within its boundaries.
- Concern that there is no policy to control the spread of care housing for older people.

## The economy

### Cotswold economy – the current situation<sup>16</sup>

- 3.47 Cotswold District's economy is healthy with fairly affluent communities and low unemployment rates. It has the highest rate of employed residents in senior professional and technical roles in Gloucestershire and 21% of the resident employed population is self-employed, the seventh highest level of home working in England.
- 3.48 The 2012 Employment Study<sup>17</sup> shows that the Cotswolds economy is likely to grow in several sectors, such as business services, education, health and social care, hotels and restaurants. Growth potential also exists within other services and the distribution sector. The Study identified that approximately 7,555 jobs will require new employment accommodation over the Local Plan period. The high cost of living in the Cotswolds means that many businesses face skills and labour shortages.
- 3.49 The service sector accounts for the largest proportion of local jobs in the District. There is also small scale business development within the rural areas. Declining sectors are likely to include manufacturing and agriculture although, compared with other areas of the country, agriculture is still important.
- 3.50 Tourism is a major and growing part of the local economy with the 'Cotswolds' an internationally recognised brand. Tourism generated an estimated total spend of £83m in 2010, and in 2013, there were 6,000 jobs in tourism-

<sup>16</sup> Cotswold District Local Plan 2016

<sup>17</sup> Part 2 of the Cotswold Economy Study PBA 2012/ Hewdon and POS Reports 2014

related sectors in the Cotswolds. The main categories of visitor expenditure are accommodation, shopping, food and drink, attractions, entertainment and travel. Cultural activity also has high economic value by attracting tourists, as does the agricultural landscape, sheep farming and famous beauty of its extensive, undulating geography.

- 3.51 Due to the district's environmental and heritage constraints, it can be difficult to find suitable sites for new employment land and there are few vacant employment sites and premises available. Nevertheless, with a highly skilled population and key business assets, the Cotswolds offer a unique business location with a high quality of life in an outstanding natural and historic environment.
- 3.52 Cotswold market towns and villages provide the day-to-day shopping and services for residents of the district.

However, the district is not self-contained. Larger cities and towns, especially Cheltenham, Gloucester and Swindon, draw expenditure out of the district and function as service and employment hubs for many Cotswold residents.

- 3.53 The Local Economic Partnership 'GFirst's' 2014 'Strategic Economic Plan'<sup>18</sup> sets out plans to accelerate economic growth in Gloucestershire by focusing on key drivers of productivity and supporting growth in high value sectors focusing on the major centres such as Cirencester and Cheltenham.

### Stow

- 3.54 Stow's economy is focussed on retail and tourism. It has no industrial estates or business parks and although it has substantial employment in managerial, and professional categories this may be due to people in those categories working outside the town in Cheltenham, Cirencester and Stratford, Cotswold Business Park, Fosseyway Industrial Estate, the Fire Services College at Moreton in Marsh, Bourton Industrial Estate, or Upper Rissington Business Park, all of which are within easy commuting distance. This is borne out by the distances that local residents commute to work outside the area.

Distance travelled to work				
Distance Travelled to Work	Stow		Swell	
	No	%	No	%
<b>Residents 16 -74 in employment</b>				
All People	964		195	
Works mainly at or from home	152	16	38	19
Less than 2km	269	28	48	25
2km to less than 5km	54	6	15	8
5km to less than 10km	113	12	20	10
10km to less than 20km	56	6	8	4

<sup>18</sup> GFirst Strategic Economic Plan 2014

20km to less than 30km	92	10	26	13
30km to less than 40km	55	6	5	3
40km to less than 60km	44	5	8	4
60km and over	43	4	18	9
No fixed place of work	86	9	9	5

Source: 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics

Method of Travel to Work				
Method of Travel to Work 2011	Stow		Swell	
Residents 16 -74 in employment	<b>984</b>	%	<b>215</b>	%
Driving a Car or Van	570	58	108	50
On Foot	200	20	32	15
Work Mainly at or From Home	111	11	48	22
Passenger in a Car or Van	47	5	9	4
Bus, Minibus or Coach	18	2	2	1
Train	16	2	10	5
Other Method of Travel to Work	9	1	4	2
Underground, Metro, Light Rail, Tram	3	0	0	0
Motorcycle, Scooter or Moped	6	1	1	0
Bicycle	3	0	1	0
Taxi	1	0	0	0

Source: 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics

3.55 Stow's built up area lies within a circle with a diameter of 2km, which means that no part of Stow is more than 1km from the town centre, where most of the jobs are. Outside this circle is open countryside with small villages. The lack of public transport means that anyone commuting to Stow from outside the town has to do so mainly by car, which puts considerable pressure on parking provision in the town.

3.56 Travel-to-work patterns of both the resident and daytime working populations confirm this being broadly similar, showing an overwhelming dependence on personal transport. This is hardly surprising given the limited availability of public transport. 87% of households had access to 1, 2 or 3 motor vehicles. According to the 2009 Housing Needs Survey carried out by Cotswold District Council only 10% of

Stow households do not have a car.

3.57 However, any modal significant change away from the car is unlikely given the fact that Stow is on the top of a hill, unlike Bourton on the Water or Moreton in Marsh, and the approach roads are either narrow or very heavily trafficked making them not conducive to safe, regular, bicycle usage. Hence the table above shows only 3 such movements out of 984. Indeed, in a traffic survey carried out in support of a planning application it was found that only 3 out of 10,000 movements on the Fosseway were by cycle on a working day.

#### *Employment*

3.58 Employment statistics<sup>19</sup> for the Plan area present a robust picture of the economy. Unemployment is 4.75% of the economically active population. Almost 30% of the economically active

<sup>19</sup> 2011 Census Office for National Statistics

population is self-employed – 28% in Stow and almost 40% in Swell. 22% are in part time employment.

Economically active employment					
Stow			Swell Parish		
Description	No	%	Description	No	%
All Usual Residents Age 16-74	1414		All Usual Residents Aged 16-74	311	
Total Economically Active	1042		Total Economically Active	220	
Employee; Part-Time	210	20	Employee; Part-Time	36	16
Employee; Full-Time	471	45	Employee; Full-Time	91	41
Self-Employed	279	27	Self-Employed with Employees; Part-Time	3	1
			Self-Employed with Employees; Full-Time	18	8
			Self-Employed Without Employees; Part-Time	31	14
			Self-Employed Without Employees; Full-Time	33	15
Full-Time Student	27	3	Full-Time Student	3	1
Unemployed	30	3	Unemployed	5	2
Unemployed; Age 16 to 24	4	0			
Unemployed; Age 50 to 74	9	1			
Unemployed; Never Worked	2	0			
Long-Term Unemployed	10	1			
Totals	1042	100		220	100

3.59 Four industries: wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles, accommodation and food service activities, construction and

manufacturing employ 50% of the workforce. Only 2% of the workforce is employed in agriculture.

Employment by industry					
Area	Stow		Swell Parish		Plan Area
	No	%	No	%	No
All Usual Residents Aged 16 to 74 in Employment	984		215		1199
Wholesale/Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles & Motor Cycles	189	19.2	30	14	219
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	136	13.8	15	7	151
Construction	104	10.6	14	6.5	118
Manufacturing	97	9.9	14	6.5	111
Human Health and Social Work Activities	88	8.9	11	5.1	99
Education	62	6.3	17	7.9	79
R, S, T, U Other	62	6.3	28	13	90
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	58	5.9	29	13.5	87
Administrative and Support Service Activities	42	4.3	5	2.3	47
Transport and Storage	37	3.8	6	2.8	43
Information and Communication	30	3	7	3.3	37
Real Estate Activities	20	2	8	3.7	28
Financial and Insurance Activities	21	2.1	5	2.3	26
Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	17	1.7	5	2.3	22
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	9	0.9	19	8.8	28
Mining and Quarrying	7	0.7	0	0	7
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	4	0.4	0	0	4
Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation	1	0.1	2	0.9	3
Totals	984	100	215	100	1199

- 3.60 70% of the workforce works in managerial, professional, skilled or administrative occupations, 10% work in elementary occupations, 7% in sales and 4% in process, plant and machinery.

Occupations						
	Stow		Swell Parish		Plan Area	
<b>All Usual Residents Aged 16 to 74 in Employment</b>	984	%	215	%	1199	%
Skilled Trades Occupations	164	16.7	36	16.7	200	17
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	157	16	59	27.4	216	18
Elementary Occupations	116	11.8	9	4.2	125	10
Professional Occupations	115	11.7	39	18.1	154	13
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	105	10.7	28	13	133	11
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	104	10.6	16	7.4	120	10
Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	98	10	20	9.3	118	10
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	80	8.1	3	1.4	83	7
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	45	4.6	5	2.3	50	4

- 3.61 The high percentage of skilled workers and the self-employed means that the economy of the Plan area is well placed to take advantages of growth particularly in the service sector.
- on the support of local residents whose continuing custom is essential if they are to maintain their presence in the town.

#### *Home working*

- 3.62 71 respondents to the 2015 Housing Needs Survey worked from home – 27 for an employer and 49 have their own business. Because many of these types of businesses are not registered for VAT and for personal reasons may be unwilling to disclose what they do, it can be difficult to find out just how many operate in the town. Nevertheless, they represent an important opportunity for growing employment in the town.
- 3.64 There are approximately 200 businesses in Stow.
- More than half fall into one of the following categories: antiques shop/dealer, gift shop, hotel, restaurant, tea room/café, gallery and clothing
  - 54% have been established in Stow for at least 10 years and 13% for a year or less
  - Around half own their business premises and around half rent
  - Around half the premises contain living accommodation which is most commonly occupied by the business owner or staff of the business

#### *Tourism and retail*

- 3.63 The Stow economy relies for its income mainly on tourism and retail, mainly in small businesses. The employment rate is higher than the national average. Shops and other businesses rely heavily
- The average number of employees in each business (excluding Tesco 150 staff) is 5.5, with around half of these working full-time and half part-time
  - 18% of the businesses do not employ

any staff

- 22% of businesses said they have difficulty recruiting staff for other reasons, mainly high house prices and lack of transport
- 53% are concerned about the balance of businesses in Stow. The most common comments were that there were too many 'Scotts of Stow' shops and not enough practical/everyday shops such as an ironmonger and greengrocer.

3.65 Visitors make an important contribution to Stow's economy, coming to the town to enjoy its unique heritage and townscape, including the many historic buildings in the Market Square and Sheep Street. While there were concerns about the number of antique shops and tourist shops in the town, there was acknowledgement of the contribution that tourism makes to the town's economy, and a desire to ensure that these benefits are retained in the town. It was also acknowledged that the high quality of Stow's environment has been a crucial factor in the town's economic success. In order to sustain and grow Stow's economy, it was suggested that the environment of the town centre, particularly the Square and its approaches, could be enhanced. An overall traffic and parking policy should be developed to improve car and coach parking and also traffic circulation. When asked, what would help their business to develop, a common answer was better parking. However, concern was expressed about the balance between tourist shops and shops providing local services. With the Tesco store on the northern edge of town Stow is well served for local shopping.

#### *Retail*

3.66 Convenience retail provision is in line

with the national average, the majority of companies being small independent businesses such as bakeries, a butcher, delicatessens, specialist wine merchant and a newsagent. The town centre also benefits from a Co-op village store. Outside the town centre there is a Tesco supermarket which opens until midnight during the week, provides an internet shopping home delivery service and has a range of in-store services, including a delicatessen and fishmonger.

3.67 The town centre benefits from a range of other services such as a public library, hair salons, banks and estate agents and the proportion of comparison units within the town is significantly above the national average, largely because of the number of antique dealers and tourist focussed gift shops. Users of the town centre like its convenient location, its free parking, the choice of shops, and its attractive environment.

3.68 The number of national retailers in Stow is limited when compared to larger towns in the district. However, the individual nature of the shopping experience in Stow adds to its character, and contributes to the attraction of the centre as a tourist destination.

#### *Tourism*

3.69 Stow has one of the largest town centres in the Cotswolds after Cirencester. It is a well-known tourist destination, with a concentration of antique shops, galleries, cafés, tea shops, pubs, restaurants, hotels and a range of bed-and-breakfast and self-catering establishments. It is an established 'base' for visitors to the north Cotswolds and there is little doubt that the tourist trade helps to maintain a good level of shops and services for local people.

## Business accommodation

3.70 While there is a significant amount of employment in the many small businesses in the town, especially related to tourism, there is no specific location for new industries or businesses. There is a severe shortage of small scale B1 business accommodation in Stow. A recent internet trawl, even at a time when a number of properties is on the market, revealed that there was no B1 space available in the town, the only available properties being retail units which command a much higher rental than business use. There are also restraints on the availability of land for the development of a business park, and housing land values will price out business uses. The development of ten houses at the former Stow Agricultural Services building will only make a small addition to the housing stock in the town and a very small contribution to the amount of affordable housing. It would be of greater benefit to Stow for the Stow Agricultural Services building to be reserved for business use.

## Local Plan proposals

### Business accommodation

3.71 The Local Plan 'seeks to safeguard existing employment sites where they are attractive to the market, and secure high quality employment sites where there is an identified need for further development opportunities. The Strategy also supports small scale employment development appropriate to the rural area'

3.72 The Local Plan will deliver this by:

- Allocating land to meet the employment requirement for B-class

uses and which has the capacity to provide a range of unit sizes and premises, including for start-ups and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs);

- Wherever possible encouraging the growth and/or expansion of existing businesses in the District; safeguarding employment sites for employment use and maximising the potential of existing sites balanced against the environmental and heritage constraints of the District; and
- Implementing planning policies that positively guide development proposals for all types of employment-generating development, e.g. retail, tourism, etc.

3.73 To maintain and enhance the role of existing employment sites and to prevent changes to other uses. Development proposals must be in accordance with policies in the Local Plan:

- Within Development Boundaries - proposals for employment-generating uses on sites that are not currently in employment use will be permitted in principle
- Outside Development Boundaries, and outside established employment sites - proposals for small-scale employment development appropriate to the rural area will be permitted where they are justified by a business case demonstrating that the business is viable; do not entail residential use as a principal element of the business; and facilitate the retention or growth of a local employment opportunity
- Where an ancillary residential use is acceptable, the proposal may be classed as a 'live/work' unit but the residential floor space of the

live/work unit can only be occupied by the person solely, mainly or last employed in the business occupying that unit.

3.74 The Local Plan also allows for 'a suitable level of growth at key settlements such as Stow to strengthen their employment function. The provision of high quality workspace in rural locations will also continue to make an important contribution to the economy'.

3.75 A substantial proportion of jobs growth will occur in other sectors, including construction, retail, hotels, restaurants, transport, education and health. Provision for job growth in non B Class use sectors the economy is acceptable e.g.:

- *All types of employment generating uses which involve Agricultural Diversification*
- *Town centre uses, including retail*
- *Tourism facilities, attractions and accommodation.*
- *Within Development Boundaries*
- *Proposals for employment-generating uses on sites that are not currently in employment use will be permitted in principle where they facilitate the retention or growth of a local employment opportunity.*

#### **Town Centre Retail**

3.76 Cotswold market towns and villages provide the day-to-day shopping and services for residents of the district. The Local Plan aims to:

- strengthen the vitality and viability of key centres set out in a retail hierarchy
- maintain key local service provision
- reduce car journeys
- retain market share and prevent further expenditure leaving the district.

3.77 Main town centre uses will be permitted in the following centres which form the retail hierarchy for Cotswold District.

- Primary Town Centre - Cirencester
- Key Centres - Bourton-on-the-Water, Moreton-in-Marsh, Stow-on-the-Wold and Tetbury
- District Centres - Fairford and Lechlade
- Local Centres - Northleach and South Cerney

3.78 'Main town uses' include - retail development, leisure, entertainment facilities, intensive sport and recreation uses, offices and arts, culture and tourism development. Retail development will take place in accordance with the Retail Hierarchy. The five Key Centres, including Stow, have the widest variety of shops, facilities and services. The vitality and viability of the Key Centres will be promoted and enhanced as locations in the district for main 'town centre' uses.

3.79 The Local Plan states that:

'On upper floors, there will be support for a diverse range of uses such as residential and office space. The use of upper floors adds vitality to town centres without fragmenting the retail and services available on the ground floor. The Local Planning Authority will seek to ensure that local residents have access to a range and choice of A1 shops.

'The loss of an active retail use cannot be prevented and changes of use to other uses can make the centre less attractive and convenient. The Local Planning Authority considers that a robust marketing exercise is the most transparent way of demonstrating that retail facilities are no longer viable. To demonstrate that the marketing activity is proportionate and effective it should

be undertaken continually for at least a twelve month period. All details of marketing activity and enquiries should be provided to the LPA together with full reasons why any offers have not progressed.

'It is important to define the boundaries of the Centres identified in the Retail Hierarchy as the primary location of retail development, maintaining a concentration of Class A1 uses which are important to the attractiveness of the centres. These are designated as Primary / Key / District and Local Centres on the Policies Map. Within these boundaries, proposals for ground floor non-retail uses will only be permitted if the development does not harm the retail focus on these frontages.'

3.80 Small local shops and services, including public houses, post offices and surgeries in rural settlements are recognised as important economic assets but also as a focus for wider social and community activities. Proposals which would result in the loss of services and facilities should be avoided where this would damage the viability of a settlement or increase car travel by local residents.

3.81 Proposals for main town centre uses should:

- *be of a size, scale, function and intensity appropriate to the position of the Centre in the Retail Hierarchy*
- *be consistent with the strategy for the settlement;*
- *help maintain an appropriate mix of uses in the Centre;*
- *contribute to the quality, attractiveness and character of the settlement, including the Centre, and the street frontage within which the site is located; and*
- *be consistent with floor space provision requirements for the Centre*

*identified in the latest evidence.*

3.82 The importance of parking as a key issue in town centres is dealt with under 'Infrastructure'.

### **Tourism**

3.83 Tourism is a major and growing part of the local economy with the 'Cotswolds' as an internationally recognised brand. The Local Plan supports the appropriate development of new or extended tourist facilities and visitor attractions whilst protecting the heritage and environmental assets that make the Cotswolds attractive to tourists in the first place. Development that has a low environmental impact, which also addresses an identified weakness or gap in the tourism economy, will be encouraged. The Local Plan supports the appropriate development of new or extended tourist facilities and visitor attractions whilst protecting the heritage and environmental assets that make the Cotswolds attractive to tourists in the first place.

3.84 The Destination Management Plan for Tourism Across the Cotswolds, April 2014 vision is 'To ensure that the Cotswolds is a vibrant year-round destination where visitors enjoy high quality, authentic experiences and tourism makes an increasing contribution to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the local economy.' A SWOT analysis in the above Plan for Tourism highlights a significant range of challenges and opportunities that the Local Plan could help to address. Opportunities include: converting day visits to staying visits by product development; increasing the range of outdoor activities; supporting local and independent shops. Weaknesses include: lack of low cost

accommodation; poor road signage; limited conference facilities; concentration of tourism in honeypot destinations with little to offer younger people and families; and limited parking.

- 3.85 The Local Plan seeks to ensure that new tourism development will be effectively and appropriately controlled to protect the high quality natural and built environment of the district, especially in the AONB. Attractions for which there is no special justification for their location in that particular area, will not normally be permitted.
- 3.86 Generally, hotel accommodation in the district is considered to be adequate, but with scope for the upgrading of existing facilities and further development of conference facilities. Hotels and other serviced accommodation will normally be acceptable within settlements as well as extensions to existing facilities.

### **Development in the rural area of the plan**

- 3.87 Agriculture and other land-based sectors, including energy, tourism and recreation, underpin the rural economy of the Cotswolds and support a considerable number of ancillary businesses. Changes in agriculture have made diversification increasingly important to the economic viability of farm units. The Local Plan encourages the positive development of small rural employment premises in appropriate locations to help sustain the rural economy and create local employment opportunities.
- 3.88 Continued demand for rural workspace driven by lifestyle choices, a strong tourism sector, and the footloose

nature of small enterprises is expected. Self-employment in the Cotswolds is significantly higher than the national average and opportunities for home working need to be strengthened. Flexible working practices, such as the integration of residential and commercial uses within the same unit, are therefore an important planning tool to support the local economy. Proposals outside Development Boundaries that have residential use as the principal element of the business will not be acceptable.

- 3.89 If suitable buildings become available on a holding, it is important that these are used in preference to new-build development. It is important to ensure that new uses are sympathetic to the rural character of the area, respecting local building styles and materials, in keeping with their surroundings, without creating adverse environmental effects due to, for example, nuisance or traffic generation.

### **Community response**

- 3.90 The Neighbourhood Plan supports the following Local Plan policies:
- Business Accommodation
    - Small-scale development/expansion for B1 employment uses in the town centre
    - Allocation of land to meet the employment requirement for B Class start-ups and small and medium sized enterprises
    - Encouraging the growth and/or expansion of existing businesses
    - Safeguarding existing employment sites for employment use
    - Implementing planning policies that positively guide development proposals for all types of

- employment-generating development including retail and tourism
    - Provision of Live/Work units which are ancillary to residential use
    - Proposals for employment-generation where they facilitate the retention or growth of a local employment opportunity.
  - Town Centre retail:
    - Strengthening the vitality and viability of key centres such as Stow
    - Maintaining A1 retail use in town centre retail frontages
    - Ensuring that local residents have access to a range and choice of A1 shops
    - Maintaining key local service provision
    - Retaining retail market share to prevent further expenditure leaving the district
    - Supporting a diverse range of uses on upper floors in the town centre
    - Refusing proposals which would result in the loss of services and facilities
    - Ensuring that proposals for town centres are of an appropriate size, scale, function and intensity maintain an appropriate mix of uses; contribute to the quality, attractiveness and character of the settlement, the centre, and the street frontage and consistent with floor space provision requirements for the town centre based on the latest evidence
    - Supporting improved parking provision for town centres.
  - Tourism
    - Supporting the appropriate development of new or extended tourist facilities and visitor attractions
  - Ensuring that new tourism development will be effectively and appropriately controlled to protect the high quality natural and built environment of the district, especially in the AONB.
  - Supporting provision of an indoor tourist attraction, such as a town museum or heritage centre
  - Improving the physical environment of the town centre and easing congestion.
  - Rural businesses
    - Encouraging development of small rural employment premises in appropriate locations to help sustain the rural economy and create local employment opportunities.
    - Supporting flexible working practices, such as the integration of residential and commercial uses within the same unit as in live/work units
    - Supporting the reuse of redundant buildings
    - Ensuring that new uses are sympathetic to the rural character of the area, respecting local building styles and materials and in keeping with their surroundings
    - Supporting proposals for small-scale employment development appropriate to the rural area where they are justified by a business case
    - Supporting employment generating uses which involve agricultural diversification
- 3.91 There is concern over the failure of the Local Plan to make specific provision for the development of B1 business space in the town centre.

## Infrastructure issues

### Current situation

#### *Parking*

- 3.92 Stow has been recognised as suffering from traffic capacity and parking problems which if unresolved may stifle economic growth<sup>20</sup>.
- 3.93 In the Market Square and surrounding streets, within 250m of the town centre, Stow has a total of about 302 free, public, on-street parking spaces. Of these 141 are unrestricted and 161 are restricted to 2 hours.
- 3.94 Additional off-street public car parks are also available in the town:
- Town car park at Tesco (490m from town centre) – 100 free spaces
  - Maugersbury Road car park (600m from town centre) – 65 pay and display spaces plus 5 free coach parking spaces.
- 3.95 Although there is additional on-street and off-street parking elsewhere in the town, the area where most visitors and shoppers wish to park and which is under most pressure, is the Market Square which is restricted to short term parking during the day. This restriction is to facilitate parking for short term visitors to shops and offices, plus visiting tourists. It also acts as a deterrent for longer term temporary users including business people who commute to Stow to staff the shops and offices. But for the deterrent to be successful the time restriction needs constant policing. These daily commuters vie with local residents for spaces on roads surrounding the market square and town car parks, taking up spaces that could be used by visitors to the town.
- 3.96 As a “Key Town Centre” in the district’s retail hierarchy, serving both local area domestic service and retail and also tourist/visitor requirements, Stow attracts a great deal of traffic most of which is motorised.
- 3.97 In 2011 there were 966 households in Stow with a population of 2,042 people and ownership of 1262 vehicles. These figures may be an understatement of the actual local parking requirement. Many older buildings have no off-road parking, while others are located in narrow roads with double yellow lining restrictions to ensure traffic flow. There are many households that do not, and cannot, have on-site parking facilities or adjacent to kerbside parking.
- 3.98 Over the last 30 years, infill development has reduced off-street parking, and changes of use to create office or shop space with an associated increase of staff numbers, and increased tourist accommodation without sufficient parking for the guests have also created a further parking requirement.
- 3.99 Stow-on-the-Wold has unique local circumstances, and a blanket approach to providing and controlling parking may not resolve its problems. Special arrangements for controlling parking and the provision of parking spaces within the town should be devised and applied by the controlling authorities.
- 3.100 There is high dependence on car travel because of a paucity of buses servicing

<sup>20</sup> Comments concerning CDC Local Plan Reg 18 Consultation – Dec 2015

the local area. Cars are the preferred means of reaching the local railway stations which enable travel to Worcester, London and beyond but do not connect with many local towns such as Cheltenham.

3.101 To help solve the parking issue in Stow there is an urgent local need to:

- Ensure that any new build or conversion that would entail further vehicle parking numbers must not be permitted unless there is an associated indigenous provision for parking of such vehicles as set out in the town Community Design Statement.
- Any further rental accommodation (hotel, guest house, holiday let and similar) is not approved or developed without adequate parking.
- Identify and provide further off-street parking for both residents and business users.
- Ensure greater compliance with parking time limits to free up prime location short term parking locations for business and tourist visitors.

#### *Health*

3.102 In Cotswold District a higher proportion of residents have good general health compared with the rest of the county and life expectancy continues to rise. There is a variety of local groups providing health promotion activities, community and end-of-life care, and volunteer drivers offer a valued transport service. A strategy is needed for the future support of older people. Health and care services are increasingly centralised, making access difficult for patients in the Stow area without transport. Poor emergency response times have caused concern - the First Responder Scheme is in part a solution.

3.103 The rate of growth in patient numbers at the present medical practice requires the provision of a new medical centre which would comprise not only a surgery but also accommodation for district nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and chiropody/podiatry provision for day care for the elderly and for those with learning disabilities and a drop-in centre for the younger patients.

#### *Sport and Leisure*

3.104 Stow-on-the-Wold has 16 – 18 individual clubs who meet in the Masonic Rooms, the Church Rooms or St.Edward’s Hall. These premises are frequently fully booked and, when a large number is expected at a meeting, St Edward’s Church has to be the fallback venue. There is therefore a need for additional community space. Residents in King George’s and the Park Street areas tend to use the Social Club (ex Royal British Legion Club) for socialising. Young people have only the Youth Club which may need to relocate in the future.

#### *Road traffic congestion*

3.105 Stow on the Wold, at the top of a hill, is a nodal point for eight roads in the North Cotswolds. Running north/south is the A429 (Fosseway) primary route. Just south of the town, at the bottom of a hill, the A424 from Burford joins the A429, at the top of the hill, in the town, the A436 from the east intersects at the Unicorn crossroads, this road having been joined down the hill on the eastern side by the B4450 from Bledington and Kingham (main access route to/from Kingham Railway Station). To the west at this Unicorn crossroads is the B4068, a steep decline to Lower Swell, Naunton and Andoversford. This point, where the A429 road only has one lane each way, is the first major traffic pinch and

congestion point, which is recognised as such in the Gloucestershire Local Traffic Plan (LTP), and is the most heavily used section of road in North Gloucestershire, carrying 20,000 movements per day. Slightly further north up the A429, to the east, there is the main entry road (High Street) to the Stow on the Wold town square which takes all the visiting heavy traffic, including many tourist coaches, and a major proportion of the light traffic entering the town centre. Shortly afterwards on the A429 is the junction with the B4077 (another steep decline) to Upper Swell and Tewkesbury to the west, together with the A424 (Evesham Road) to the North West to join the A44 at Troopers Lodge. This combination of roads is the second major pinch point. Frequently, due to the convergence of all of these roads, plus resultant compression of traffic onto this short section of the A429, the roadway between the two pinch points is almost constantly congested, resulting in tailbacks on all of the town approaches. During peak hours, and in the holiday seasons, these tailbacks can extend for a considerable distance. Indeed, during a recent road resurfacing operation involving this second pinch point whereby the road was closed considerable traffic disruption was caused in this part of the North Cotswolds.

3.106 The A429 is the major north/south road in east Gloucestershire and carries a very high proportion of transient traffic, travelling through these two pinch points. Furthermore, the A44, the main road from London to Aberystwyth, which routes through Oxford in the east and Evesham/Worcester in the west has been “tweaked” to eliminate most HGVs entering Chipping Norton

(Oxfordshire), by an agreement apparently between Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire Highways for such traffic to alternatively route Oxford to Northleach on the A40, then north on the A429 Fosseway to Stow on the Wold, through Stow on the Wold and then north west on the A424 to rejoin the A44 at Troopers Lodge and vice versa. Whilst this action reduced the HGV traffic through Chipping Norton, Moreton in Marsh and Bourton on the Hill, it has increased this HGV traffic flow over the A40, and in particular the A429 through Stow, with associated increased air pollution, and without any compensating road upgrades, or planned measures to alleviate the major Cotswold pinch points on the A429 at Stow on the Wold. Furthermore, current proposals to downgrade the A44 through Chipping Norton, and associated air pollution in that town, should be treated with caution as, if implemented, they will further exacerbate the problems on the A429 at Stow and increase the air pollution levels in an area close to residential accommodation.

3.107 The congestion problems on the A429 at Stow on the Wold blight travel into and out of the town, especially at peak holiday times and weekends, constrict both business and tourism expansion of the town, and hinder normal movement by residents; it is a stranglehold that urgently needs to be resolved. This has been recognised for some time and it has been noted that the traffic levels have increased significantly over the last 20 years without any compensatory improvement to the road. To raise awareness of this issue Stow Town Council detailed the problems in its letter TPJBL0002 dated 15 August 2014 to GCC (Commissioning Director –

Communities & Infrastructure), copy to the MP, CDC and neighbouring towns. As part of the follow up staff action GCC Highways Authority formed the A429 Fosse Way Task Group study in early 2016 and its report was considered by GCC in November 2016. This report noted the pinch point congestion in both Stow on the Wold and Moreton in Marsh, the need to improve traffic flow by road widening, further passing places, plus consider the need for by-passes in the future for these two towns. It noted that, unlike other inter county main roads in Gloucestershire which were maintained by Highways England, this was the only road not classified as a trunk road and as such was maintained by GCC. (This road was part of a GCC submission to DfT in November 2016 for inclusion in the Major Road Network (MRN) review). Indeed, this non trunk status was a factor in allowing at appeal additional direct traffic access at the proposed care home site next to Bretton House south of Stow. In addition to these traffic flow problems, the lack of parking close to Stow Town Centre continues to cause issues for business users, residents and visitors.

### Local Plan Proposals

- 3.108 Community-led planning documents and surveys have identified a number of projects to address issues raised. These include the provision of an indoor-based tourist attraction such as a town museum, leisure facilities and car parking. Specifically, this includes:
- Options should be explored for improving the physical environment of the town centre, including moving some car parking provision from the Market Square to a suitable location

within easy reach of the town centre, thus making the town centre more pedestrian friendly. 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.

- Development of a town museum to enhance the attraction of Stow to visitors.
- Any new developments should take account of parking and congestion issues in the centre of the town and the need for improvements to the pedestrian environment to enhance the centre.
- A new community facility, incorporating sports and leisure provision.
- New health services, being provided on a suitable site.
- Once contributions to delivery of infrastructure required in the North Cotswolds Sub Area (Policy SA3) have been made, development proposals will, subject to viability, be expected to help deliver or make appropriate contributions towards these proposals.

### Community response

3.109 The Neighbourhood Plan endorses the aforementioned proposals and the following sites are proposed to satisfy the additional parking provision:

- White Hart Lane – 30 spaces (but currently there is extant planning permission for 7 houses)
- Site behind Majestic Wines – 17 spaces
- Stow Town Council Allotments – 15 spaces
- Parson's Corner – 15 spaces
- Back Walls – 7 spaces
- Mangersbury Road Car Park – not

additional parking but rather there is an aspiration for Stow Town Council to manage the existing car park. (It is currently under the auspices of Cotswold District Council.)

*Green infrastructure*

3.110 Although the Local Plan encourages the development of a green network within communities, it is silent as far as Stow is concerned. The following sites are identified as requiring designation as green spaces to afford them the

protection such designation would confer:

- QE2 Jubilee Field/Cricket Ground
- King George V Field and extension
- Fountain Green
- The Stocks Green
- The Shrubbery
- The triangular green at the junction of The Park with Back Walls
- The green in front of and to the west of The Bell Inn
- The Wells
- The green at the junction of King George V Road with Oddington Road

Revision 12  
Adopted by Stow  
Town Council  
28/9/17

## 4 Vision and key goals for the Neighbourhood Development Plan

infrastructure.

### 4.1 The vision for Stow that the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to achieve is:

‘The town will continue to be a working community that recognises the distinctiveness of the people that live, work in, or visit the area. The Plan aims to conserve Stow’s beautiful, attractive environment and heritage whilst providing jobs, accessibility and activities for all.’

### Key goals to achieve the vision

### 4.2 Based on the issues identified during the Plan consultations, the existing material available and the various surveys undertaken, the Plan sets out four goals to achieve this vision:

**Goal 1:** To ensure that the unique townscape and environment of the town and the surrounding parish is conserved and enhanced.

**Goal 2:** To ensure that the community has an adequate supply of affordable housing to meet its needs.

**Goal 3:** To secure and develop the town’s economy.

**Goal 4:** To ensure that the community has appropriate infrastructure in terms of health services, community facilities, traffic and parking, public transport, and its green

- 4.3 These goals are in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and the objectives in Cotswold District Council's Local Plan 2011-2016. The Neighbourhood Plan includes a range of policies which should help to achieve these goals.

Revision 12  
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## 5 The policies to achieve the Plan's goals

### 5.1 This part of the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Briefly states the objectives and policies in the Local Plan which seek to address the Neighbourhood Plan goals and which the Neighbourhood Plan supports. Further details of these policies can be found in the Local Plan<sup>21</sup>.
- Sets out the Neighbourhood Plan Policies which seek either to amend or augment the Local Plan policies. The objective of each Neighbourhood Plan policy is stated at the start of the policy – this is followed by the policy itself.

### Historic and natural environment

**Goal 1: To ensure that the unique townscape and environment of the town and the surrounding parish is conserved and enhanced**

#### Local Plan

### 5.2 The Neighbourhood Plan supports the following objectives and policies in the Local Plan:

- New land allocations need to be sensitive to the environmental constraints and the need to ensure that the town's historic character is maintained.
- New development is of a high quality and sustainable design, which reflects local character and distinctiveness, is appropriately sited, and provides attractive and inclusive environments.

- Protect the open countryside against sporadic development, while also avoiding coalescence of settlements.
- Support the creation of new green infrastructure to enhance environmental quality and provide health benefits.

5.3 Although the Emerging Local Plan mentions a requirement for public library facilities in Stow, this need has now been satisfied and a permanent site has been agreed in St Edward's Hall.

#### Neighbourhood Plan

5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework - 'Requiring Good Design' - states that 'permission should be refused for developments of poor design which fail to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions'. However, despite the existence of the 'Cotswold Design Code' and Stow's conservation area status, all too often in recent years the design, materials and detailing of new buildings in Stow has fallen far short of these criteria – and been detrimental to the overall appearance of the town.

5.5 Because the urban environment of Stow is precious and unique, Stow requires a Community Design Statement which is specific to the needs of the town to ensure that new developments match the existing vernacular buildings in terms of design and materials, while addressing current needs in the provision of car parking and the layout of roads and dwellings, as well as changing lifestyles.

**Policy ENV1:  
Stow and the Swells Community**

<sup>21</sup> Cotswold District Council Local Plan 2016

**Design Statement**

To ensure that all new developments will conserve and enhance the unique character of Stow town and parish, applications for new development will only be granted which:

- maintain the character of the existing town and parish environment
- will not adversely affect the character of the town
- conform to the Cotswold Design Code
- conform to the Stow Community Design Statement
- conform to the AONB, Conservation Area and Character Area Guidelines.

**Policy ENV2:****Stow and the Swells Community Design Statement**

To ensure that all new developments will conserve and enhance the unique character of Stow town and Swell parish, Stow Town Council and Swell Parish Council will seek to have the Community Design Statement adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance as specified in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework.

**Policy ENV3:****Advisory Design Group**

To ensure that all developments proposed for the Plan area are rigorously tested against the criteria in ENV1, Stow Town Council will set up an advisory group with suitable expertise, which will monitor the process by which developments are assessed, liaising with the District Council, and advising Stow Town Council on its response to planning applications as a statutory consultee.

5.6 The NPPF states that 'Supplementary planning documents should be used where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery, and should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development'<sup>22</sup>. However, because of the way property developments are appraised by developers, a detailed Community Design Statement is a benefit and does not 'add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development'. This also applies to the restoration of listed buildings.

5.7 While residents accepted that development in Stow was an inevitable part of the town's development, the town has evolved into its present form in a slow, 'organic' way, and this form of development should be allowed to continue in future. It was felt that adopting this form of 'organic' development, where housing developments are limited to a maximum of ten dwellings at any one

<sup>22</sup> NPPF Section 153

time, would give the town enough time to absorb the impact of new buildings and the increasing numbers of people living within its boundaries. This should not prevent the delivery of the housing proposed in the Plan over the Plan period.

**Policy ENV4:  
Organic development**

To ensure that the fabric of the town has enough time to absorb the impact of new housing developments and the increasing numbers of people living within its boundaries, new housing developments will be limited to a maximum of ten dwellings at any one time.

## Housing - including Affordable Housing

**Goal 2: To ensure that the community has an adequate supply of good quality affordable housing**

### Local Plan

5.8 The Neighbourhood Plan endorses the following objectives and policies in the Local Plan:

- Proposals for housing mix and the percentage of affordable housing to be provided in any new development.
- Support for live/work housing.
- The requirement that any new developments should follow the Cotswold Design Code and should reflect the environment into which they area placed.

### Neighbourhood Plan policies

5.9 There is a proven need for a minimum

of twenty-seven affordable housing units. It is felt that this is the responsibility of the community or the Town Council because, if any affordable housing has to be built as part of a private sector housing development, based on the percentage requirement for affordable housing in the Local Plan, a development of 68 houses would be required to satisfy the demand for affordable housing. Since the town is already built up to its development boundary, a development of this size would have to take place in the AONB, which would be unacceptable. A much better solution to satisfy the objectively assessed need for affordable housing in Stow and to ensure that local people benefitted, would be for the Stow council allotments, the Youth Club, the Fire Station and the Bartlett's Park site to be developed and let by a community land trust or successor organisation without the need for substantial incursion into the AONB and developing around 30 affordable dwellings. (Stow Town Council wishes to make it clear that it wishes for both the Fire and Police stations to remain operational as long as possible and only be given consideration should the properties come onto the market.)

**Policy H1:**

To satisfy the objectively assessed demand for at least twenty-seven affordable houses in Stow in a way that meets townscape and AONB guidelines and ensures that any affordable housing created will be sold or let through a community land trust or successor organisation, and to ensure affordable housing of local people in perpetuity, thus minimizing the incursion into the AONB, the Plan supports the development of the

following sites for affordable housing by a community land trust or successor organisation:

- Stow Town Council allotments – 5 to 7 affordable/self-build houses
- Youth Club – 2 to 3 affordable flats/ houses
- Bartlett’s Park – 2 to 4 affordable houses.

#### Policy H2:

To ensure that any new affordable housing is made available to local people, priority in the letting or sale of these houses will be given to people in need of affordable housing who can also demonstrate a local connection on first and subsequent occupation.

#### Policy H3:

To ensure that new housing developments provide adequate parking, proposals for new residential development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that off-street parking provision complies with that specified in the Community Design Statement and is adequate to meet likely future needs.

#### Policy H4:

New housing developments must provide an appropriate contribution towards community infrastructure. Development proposals must demonstrate that these issues have been resolved before planning permission is granted.

#### Policy H5

To ensure that new housing development makes best use of previously developed land and existing buildings, support will be given to development proposals that bring previously developed land and existing buildings into use provided the proposals confirm to the conditions in Policy ENV1.

#### Policy H6:

To ensure that the development of additional care home accommodation for older people does not place an undue burden on the community’s resources and result in an unbalanced population, permission for new care home development for older people will only be granted where the developer can demonstrate clearly that the development will provide accommodation for people already living in Stow and will not place an additional burden on the local health and social infrastructure. In any case no such developments other than truly affordable care housing for local older people should be granted permission before 2031.

**Economy**

**Goal 3: To secure and develop the town’s economy, particularly the Town Centre**

**Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

**Policy EC1:  
Business Accommodation**

To provide suitable accommodation for small businesses and to ensure that Stow benefits from the expansion of existing businesses, the creation of new businesses and any inward investing businesses, the Plan identifies the former Stow Agricultural Services site to be reserved for B1 business use which may include a centre for craftsmen.

**Policy EC2:  
Live/Work Units**

To create new employment by building on the large number of home workers already living and working in Stow, new housing developments which include live/work units where small-scale businesses can be set up at the place where the business owner lives will be supported.

**Policy EC3:  
Stow Town Museum / Heritage Centre**

To build on Stow’s attraction for tourists, to generate additional turnover and create additional employment, a town museum/heritage centre, craft shops and town council offices located in the former Magistrates Court and Police Station is supported.

5.10 Development of the internet has increased the opportunity for home working and a percentage of dwellings in new developments could include the provision of integral workspace. This type of accommodation would appeal to skilled tradesmen, retailers, creatives and others, and encourage people to set up in business, avoiding the costs of separate premises. No specific location is envisaged but a percentage of such units could be incorporated into new housing developments. Provision of a number of small workshops in this way would help sustain the strong Cotswold craft tradition and encourage the creation of small local ventures.

5.11 Stow Town Council wishes to make it clear that it wishes for both the Fire and Police stations to remain operational as long as possible and only be given consideration should the properties come onto the market.

## Infrastructure Policies

**Goal 4 – Infrastructure:** To ensure that the community has appropriate infrastructure in terms of health services, traffic, parking, public transport, and its green infrastructure.

### Local Plan Policies

5.12 The Neighbourhood Plan supports the following Local Plan policies

- Viable and economic solutions to traffic, parking and access to be developed which preserve the sensitive, historic central area of the town.
- The development of a new medical centre.
- Improving the streetscape and promoting traffic management improvements in Stow town centre.
- Provision of a network of multi-functional green spaces.
- Development of a new community facility incorporating sports, leisure and Youth Club facilities.

### Neighbourhood Plan Policies

5.13 In order that the Stow community has proper facilities the following sites are allocated for health, sports, leisure and community uses:

#### Health

##### Policy INF1:

To ensure that the community has appropriate medical facilities a new Medical Centre to be located at Tall Trees Paddock is supported.

## Sport leisure and community

##### Policy INF2:

To ensure that the community has appropriate sports facilities a new sports and community facility to be located on King George V and/or QEII playing fields is supported.

## Parking and traffic

##### Policy INF3:

To ensure that Stow has a local parking policy that matches its unique requirements, Stow Town Council will work with the Planning and Roads Authorities to create a parking policy specific to Stow's needs.

##### Policy INF4:

To reduce traffic flows in the town and enhance the environment and improve pedestrian safety, investigation of the possibility of the construction of a town bypass is supported.

##### Policy INF5:

#### Additional parking sites

In order to ensure that there is adequate parking adjacent to the town centre, the Plan allocates the following additional sites for parking:

- White Hart Lane
- Site behind Majestic Wines
- Stow Town Council allotments
- Parson's Corner
- Back Walls
- Although outside the Plan area part of the Rugby Club car park is proposed as a possible new 'Park and Ride' facility.

### Green infrastructure

- 5.14 The National Planning Policy Framework defines green infrastructure as ‘A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities’. This is to ensure that individual assets and the integrity and connectivity of the green infrastructure network are planned, created, protected and enhanced, whilst recognising that the network extends beyond the district.

#### Policy INF6:

##### Green spaces network

To ensure that existing local green spaces are maintained, protected and enhanced, and to create a green space network on the town, the Town Council will seek to have the following sites designated as ‘green spaces’:

- QEII Jubilee Field/Cricket Ground
- King George V Field and extension
- Wragg’s Row
- Fountain Green
- The Stocks Green
- The Shrubbery
- The triangular green at the junction of The Park with Back Walls
- The green in front of and to the west of The Bell Inn
- The Wells
- The green at the junction of King George V Road with Oddington Road.

## 6 Land use projects and other actions

See separate documents

Revision 12  
Adopted by Stow  
Town Council  
28/9/17