

**Comments & Feedback on the**  
**Draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan**  
**from**  
**Stonesfield Community Trust**

March 2026

## **I. Stonesfield Community Trust**

Stonesfield Community (Land) Trust, hereby called the Trust, is a registered charity (Charity Number 288308) that was established in 1983 to provide affordable housing for local people. The Trust has a similar purpose to other Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in Oxfordshire including Chipping Norton and Hook Norton.

The Trust's objectives, as per its governing document, are the relief of poverty, the advancement of education, and the provision of charitable recreational facilities with the object of improving the conditions of life of the inhabitants of Stonesfield, Oxfordshire.

The Trust currently has fifteen properties providing homes to twenty-six people, these include essential workers like teachers and council employees.

The Trust's Trustees have considered the Draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan and would ask for the following comments and feedback to be considered.

## **2. Summary**

The Draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan fails to meet the affordable housing needs of the village because it minimises need, avoids specific allocations, and provides no delivery mechanisms. A plan that recognises a problem but fails to address it cannot be considered sound, robust, or fit for adoption.

### **3. Comments & Feedback**

#### **The Draft Neighbourhood Plan fails to meet Stonesfield's affordable housing needs**

The Draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan does **not** meet the affordable housing needs of the community because it systematically understates demand, misinterprets evidence, and avoids taking any practical steps to secure genuinely affordable homes for local people. The result is a document that acknowledges the problem but doesn't act upon it.

#### **The Draft Neighbourhood Plan relies on a narrow and unrealistic definition of "need"**

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan repeatedly claims that Stonesfield has "no further current need" for additional housing beyond a possible "Small rural exception site." This conclusion is drawn from a restrictive interpretation of planning policy that counts only those households already on formal lists, or live within the parish boundary. It appears to exclude:

- Individuals priced-out and forced to move away
- Concealed households living with their family
- Former residents wishing to return
- Key workers who cannot afford to live locally
- Housing waiting list data from the Housing Authority (West Oxfordshire District Council)
- Future demographic change in a village with an ageing population

By defining need so narrowly, the Draft Neighbourhood Plan manufactures the illusion that demand is low. This is not an evidence-based assessment of real community need and suppresses it.

### **The Draft Neighbourhood Plan openly acknowledges a severe imbalance in Stonesfield's housing stock, but proposes no remedy**

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan itself records that Stonesfield's housing is dominated by large, expensive, owner-occupied homes, with a far lower proportion of rented or affordable homes than district or national averages. It also notes that 83% of new homes built since 2011 have been owner-occupied, entrenching this imbalance.

Yet despite recognising this structural problem, the Draft Neighbourhood Plan proposes **no allocations, no targets, and no enforceable policies** to correct it. A plan that identifies a problem but refuses to address it cannot credibly claim to meet local housing need.

### **The Draft Neighbourhood Plan admits more affordable homes may be required but offers no mechanism to deliver them**

The document concedes that “There may be a case to deliver more social/affordable homes for people with a local connection.” This is a clear acknowledgement of unmet need. But instead of planning for delivery, the Draft Neighbourhood Plan defers entirely to the hypothetical possibility of a small rural exception site—something that is neither identified nor guaranteed. A Neighbourhood Plan that relies on speculative, unallocated sites is not planning; it is avoiding responsibility.

### **The Draft Neighbourhood Plan’s approach undermines its own stated aims:**

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan claims to support a balanced, sustainable community and to help younger and working-age residents remain in the village. Yet its housing policies do nothing to achieve this. Without proactive affordable housing delivery, Stonesfield will continue to lose younger households, key workers, and families—accelerating demographic imbalance and weakening the long-term resilience of the community. There is already evidence of this with low number of students that joined Stonesfield Primary School in 2025. Oxfordshire County Council data published in 2025 shows that the school had twenty published (or agreed) admission number places available but only six were taken up. This data was not used in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

### **The Draft Neighbourhood Plan fails the basic purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan:**

A Neighbourhood Plan is meant to shape development positively in the interests of the community. This draft instead uses policy constraints as an excuse for inaction. It does not plan for affordable housing; it plans to avoid it. It does not meet identified need; it defines need out of existence. It does not support a sustainable future; it locks in the unsustainable patterns of the past decade.

### **Acknowledgement that Stonesfield has a need for affordable houses:**

The Trust doesn’t agree that there is a “very small shortfall in the next five years.” Or “There may be a shortfall of four to five additional social/affordable houses, which could be met by a small rural exception site.” which is misleading. In 2025, West Oxfordshire District Council confirmed in an email that forty-two individuals were seeking a social rented home in Stonesfield, with thirty-six requiring one or two-bed properties. The Trust has over thirty people on its waiting list, many of whom grew up in Stonesfield but have been forced to

move away because the Trust doesn't have any vacancies; there is very limited available social housing and very high demand evidenced by West Oxfordshire District Council's Homeseeker Plus data. In September 2025, the Trust was contacted by an individual who has lived as a private tenant in Stonesfield for many years. Due to his landlord selling the property he was made homeless. He bid for a bungalow in another village close to Stonesfield that is owned by a Registered Social Landlord on the West Oxfordshire District Council Homeseeker Plus website ([www.homeseekerplus.co.uk](http://www.homeseekerplus.co.uk)) along with forty eight other people but was unsuccessful. This individual has now been housed by the Local Authority in Witney, seven miles away from Stonesfield.

**The Housing Needs assessment (SNP - HNA Final version not watermarked)**

The Housing Needs Assessment states "Consultation to gather feedback on the draft report was undertaken between January and March 2024. The report was discussed at the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on 29 January 2024, with members of the Parish Council and Community Trust in attendance. The draft report was circulated to Parish Council members during February and March. Feedback enabled this final version to be produced." The views of the Trust that were made at the meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024 are not reflected in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and the draft report was not shared with the Trust to comment on, despite that fact that Section 4.4 is about "Stonesfield Community Trust". As a result, there are several factual inaccuracies.