

**From:** [Planning \(WODC\)](#)  
**To:** [Planning Policy \(WODC\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: A further response to the draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan - at consultations stage.  
**Date:** 06 March 2026 08:43:00  
**Attachments:** [image954040.png](#)

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 05 March 2026 18:05  
**To:** Planning (WODC) <planning@westoxon.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** A further response to the draft Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan - at consultations stage.

Dear Planning,

I am sending this additional reply to the draft SNP which is at the consultations stage for three reasons – As a former villager (the first 20 years of my life were spent in Stonesfield my home village, I have been back almost every year since), a seasoned planning profession with interests in Stonesfield (55 years in planning and still working), I am concerned that the draft SNP has serious flaws, but like many I do not have the tie and resources to examine each and every part of it.

I also say a thank you to the hard work done by those in the team prepping the draft SNP, it's just that my impression is they understand some of the village characteristics but are not aware of how much need for new homes mainly for social reasons, there truly is in their village right now.

The following are just a few items that via a swift review, I have found and wish to comment on:

1. Under "Overview" the text states ***"Stonesfield's primary school has in recent years catered for about 100 children, although a combination of factors in 2024-25 led to the school roll falling significantly."*** This gives the impression there's an issue, but it doesn't sound dramatic. I disagree – The Stonesfield Primary School has capacity for an intake of 20 at reception level – In September 2025, the figure was 6, this I believe is a record low. It indicates a serious drop in numbers, that if it happens in subsequent years, may question the future of the school in its present form. Not enough young families staying or coming into the village?
2. The draft SNP talks about it "enabling appropriate development under the present

planning regime". The current Local Plan is failing to deliver the numbers of new homes for the district mandated by government (known as delivering housing land supply - HLS). WODC acknowledges this, though a recent assessment I can present to the council concludes that the accepted 5 year HLS is not simply not being achieved, a figure of half that (2.5 years) is likely to be the current situation. WODC have also indicated that the new housing delivery figures are likely to be lower in the short term. In other words, linking the draft SNP is flawed, as it is underachieving, it should be looking to future aims and figures that need to be addressed in the draft SNP. On this point alone, surely the draft SNP needs to be re-assessed before being offered for consideration by an Inspector. Of course this is only my view, but it is based on figures that WODC has in its possession.

3. The draft SNP has its own HNA – This differ from the assessments over many years now by WODC, which one is correct? The district council has consistently indicated over a long period that there is a significant unmet need for social housing in Stonesfield. Unless the team behind the draft SNP can successfully counter what the district council say is the unmet need, then I see no reason to accept the draft SNP HNA as a valid picture at this time.
4. SECTION 1 – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES. The reference to the 2023 village survey is an interesting point – if one looks at Question 31 of the survey, 563 villagers replied. to the question, do you agree, disagree or neither, only 64 disagreed with the statement “the granting of planning permission for development otherwise consistent with the Development Plan which can demonstrate that it is supported by the necessary infrastructure, e.g. sewerage.” In other words, most would accept permission based on the Local Plan. Yes objections are raised to any proposal over 9 dwellings? (The draft SNP appears to object to any “major” housing scheme – i.e. 10 or more) This doesn’t work in times of an acute housing crisis. You can’t follow village opinion as stated in the answer to Question 31, and also object if the WODC were to accept “major” schemes in Stonesfield – looking at the plans with the draft SNP, there is a contradiction here and in my view it means once again the current version of the SNP isn’t workable.
5. Aim 3 on page 10 – states: To ensure that housing development in Stonesfield meets the specific needs of the village, and those of the District as far as required by national or district policy, and is sustainable – the first 5 “Objectives” are laudable, but can only be achieved if sites for exception housing to achieve social need, and in sufficient numbers, can be found. The draft SNP team have t my knowledge, according to a question I posed to one of the team in Summer 2024, had already been looking for such a site without success for several months. That was more than 18 months ago, and I am not aware they have found such a site. Possibly the only way to find such a site with sufficient numbers to unlock some of the housing need backlog in Stonesfield, is to consider larger schemes that contain a mix of housing. But the approach in the draft plan of objecting to all “major” schemes (10 dwellings or above), works against the very objectives stated in the plan. So again I can’t see how this policy can work in what appears to me to be a growth restricting draft plan.
6. 5.2 Housing objectives – The “Objectives” in this section, similar to above, are laudable - but how can they be achieved without growth beyond the 9 limit, which this draft document suggests. I may have read this wrong in which case I apologies, but I don’t think so – You can have polices for social housing that can’t be implemented because of another part pf the same document, it just doesn’t work.
7. Page 87 show existing spaces that the draft SNP seeks to retain as they are. Space 3 received approval for one dwelling on appeal, by a decision dated 5<sup>th</sup> December, despite it

being outside the village edge, on a relatively exposed escarpment edge, above the Evenlode Valley. Thus the draft SNP is already contested by the government in terms of this one open space. I have a professional interest in space 2. The various arrow views infer the site can be seen from several points, yet there are no photos to back that up so far as I could tell in my brief reading. I'm not surprised – its concealed for much of the year by a mature tree belt, and it is a private space that is not currently within public view (though it may become so and so thereby benefit the village, should permission on a small part of that space be approved.) My point is that the open space designations are too restrictive, and do not allow for the possibility of certain spaces accommodating modest schemes if by doing so they achieve a list of key planning, environmental and social benefits. The open space allocation is too restrictive as I see it.

Once again, I am sure the creators of the draft SNP genuinely feel they are serving the village, but my overall view is that they aren't allowing for the needs of those in the village that need the very social and other forms of low cost housing, that the draft SNP states it is in favour of.

I hope that was clear, and ask that these points can be added to those already made. It is great we can comment, I would add that the majority of the public will not be aware of this, and so the low level of response should not infer there are few dissenting voices, I feel sure the number is far greater than we all realise.

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**your address book accordingly**

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