

NETHER STOWEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Produced: April 2019

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1 Executive Summary: Vision, Objectives & Policies

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Nether Stowey Neighbourhood Plan provides a mechanism for residents to influence the future of the parish and the development of the area in the period up to 2032.

The neighbourhood plan was prepared by a Steering Group (of residents) set up by Nether Stowey Parish Council. The Steering Group was open to any local resident who was interested in helping prepare the plan.

The neighbourhood plan is in three parts:

1. This Executive Summary
2. An overview of what makes the parish community and its settlements so distinctive
3. The vision, objectives and planning policies for the future of the parish.

Our Vision Statement

Our vision is to maintain and develop Nether Stowey as an attractive, historic and thriving rural community with a sustainable economy and wide range of activities and opportunities for all ages.

Our Objectives and Policies

HOUSING:

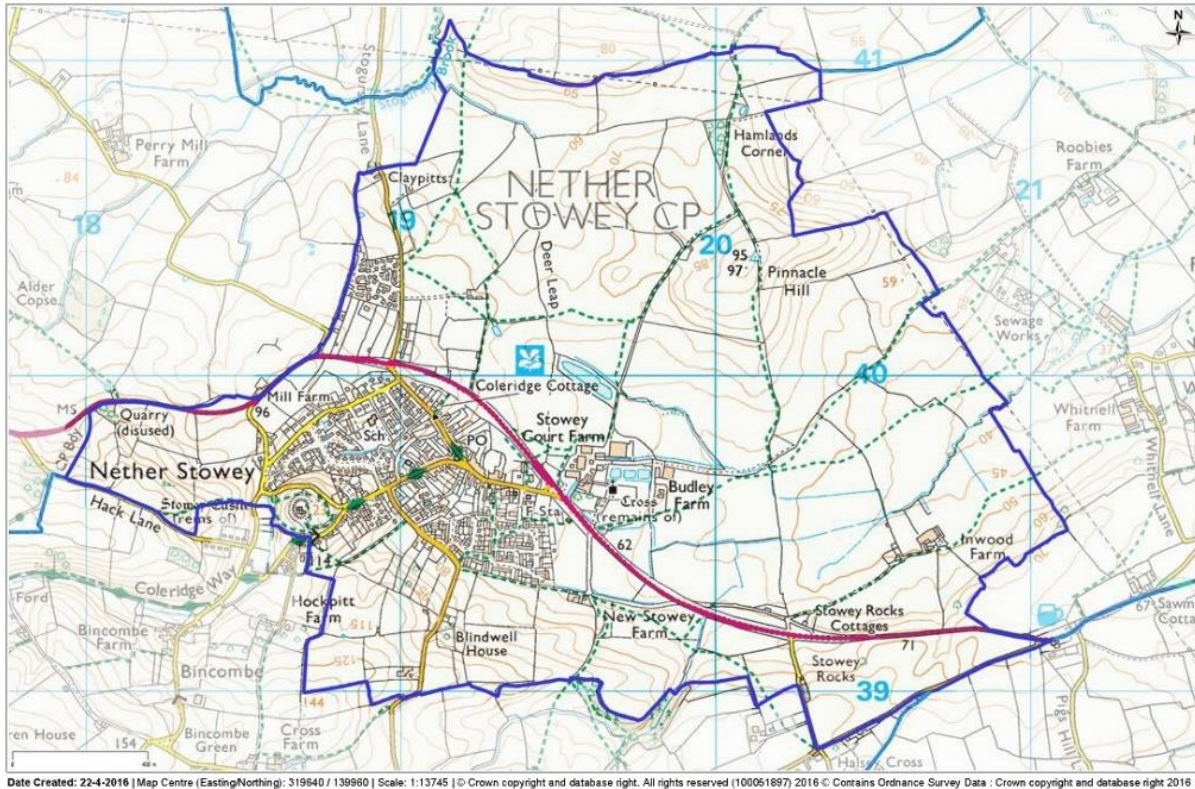
Objective: As a community we want to remain much as we are - whilst allowing for organic and incremental growth of housing that broadly reflects the past rate of growth and addresses our local needs for housing in the plan period to 2032. We want to ensure that this new or additional housing is of high-quality design, small in scale for small family homes, starter homes and people wishing to downsize, and preferably provided by infill development (but not infilling the gaps and local green spaces identified in this plan).

Policies: The first of the two housing policies sets out the level of housing that will be supported within the settlement boundary of the main village. No specific sites have been allocated, but the development boundary considers the opportunities for incremental growth in this location, some of which may well come forward during the plan period. The second policy makes clear that most of the housing that is developed should be for small, two- or three-bedrooms homes.

2 Introduction

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA: The Parish of Nether Stowey forms the boundary for the Nether Stowey Neighbourhood Plan (NS-NP). See Map 2 below. The parish lies within the Sedgemoor district of Somerset.

PURPOSE: This document has been prepared by the Nether Stowey Neighbourhood Plan (NS-NP)



Map 1 - Neighbourhood Area

Steering Group, consisting of volunteers from the parish, in association with the Nether Stowey Parish Council and with advice of Sedgemoor District Council

The Localism Act 2011 provides that planning policy developed by communities shall, if passed by an independent examination and a local referendum, be adopted by the Local Planning Authority. The policies of the NS-NP provide an important tool for residents to influence what is built in the parish in the Sedgemoor District Local Plan period to 2032.

The Nether Stowey Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared within the context set by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the Sedgemoor District Local Plan. Together these will provide the development plan for the parish. The neighbourhood plan policies will work alongside and in compliance with those of the District Local Plan and, where appropriate, replace policies in the Local Plan where they overlap.

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS: in preparing the Nether Stowey Neighbourhood Plan, the following information has also been compiled:

- **Consultation Statement** documenting the consultation process, the work of the Steering Group and the key conclusions emerging from the Parish Survey.
- **Facts and Figures** setting out the key information about the parish and evidence on which the NS-NP policies are based.

- **Basic Conditions Statement** appraising the extent to which the Neighbourhood Plan Policies conform with Basic Conditions, the rules against which the Neighbourhood Plan will be tested at Examination including; the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); the strategic policies of the Local Development Plan Sedgemoor District Plan and EU Guidance on Sustainability.
- **Sustainability Check** assessing the sustainability of the proposals in the plan and whether a more in-depth strategic environmental assessment is required.

POLICY PRIORITIES OF THE NETHER STOWEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS AND POLICIES

The policies in this Neighbourhood Plan, together with the Local Plan, should be read as a whole. Often several different policies will be applicable to a single development proposal. Just because a development proposal accords with one policy does not mean that it will be acceptable. In reaching decisions, all the relevant plan policies, together with other material considerations, must be considered. Where there is ambiguity between the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies, the decision should follow the policy contained in the most recently adopted plan.

This Neighbourhood Plan reflects the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area, as set out in the latest Sedgemoor Local Plan. In the context of this neighbourhood, which is particularly sensitive to change, the over-riding objective in the Local Plan is the protection and enhancement of the outstanding natural and built environment, including its landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity, and its local distinctiveness.

The Local Plan defines development boundaries around the main towns and larger villages. These centres will be the focus for growth at a scale appropriate to the size of the settlement. Outside of the development boundaries development will be more strictly controlled. Nether Stowey's agreed Development Boundary is shown in map 1 below.

As the Development Boundary is restricted to the village and does not include the surrounding countryside, there is limited opportunity for housing development within the boundary and it is for this reason that the Nether Stowey Neighbourhood Plan did not include a 'call for sites'.

The policies in this neighbourhood plan have been written to ensure that appropriate development is permitted in suitable locations, in terms of what is considered sustainable development for this area. The policies focus on supporting sustainable growth and protecting those features that are of particular national and local importance and should be read in that context.

3 Overview

3.1 Location and Description of the Nether Stowey Neighbourhood Plan area

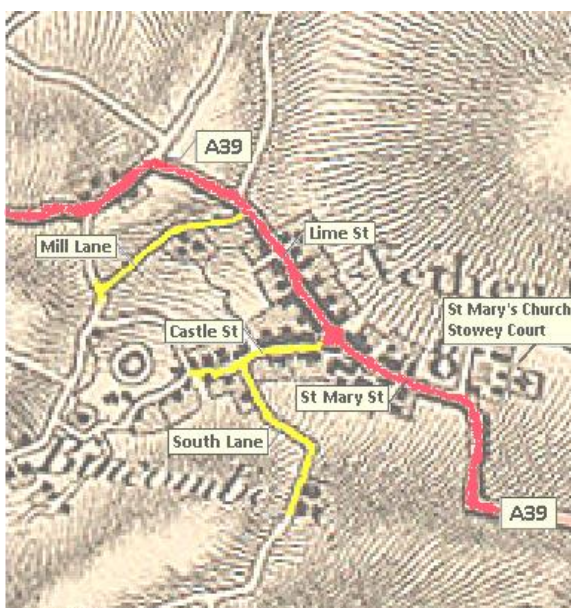
Nether Stowey is a medium-sized village of around 1450 inhabitants (2018 estimate). There is additionally an unknown (and probably fluctuating) number of Hinkley Point C workers lodging in the village or at the temporary caravan site at Inwood Farm. It lies adjacent to the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The village includes a Conservation Area at the centre, there is a second area around the Stowey Court/St Mary's Church complex and a third at The Mount which includes a Scheduled Monument.

3.2 History

The Castle Mount was a Norman motte-and-bailey castle, built in the 11th century. At some point a flour mill was built at (now) Mill Farm and Mill Lane developed, connecting to the castle site in one direction and to the top of Lime Street and thence the main road. There are several local stories regarding how Butchers Lane, running around the lower slope of the Castle Mound between Castle Street and the end of Mill Lane, became to be named. One story is that it accommodated suppliers to the castle but given that the castle was probably demolished c1500, this is likely to be factually incorrect and the other is that Thomas Poole (1765–1837) had cattle driven down from higher ground to his tannery via this route.

The layout of the village settled with the three main streets (St Mary Street and Castle Street, (connecting St Mary's Church and the Castle) and Lime Street). These three streets converge at "The Cross", originally the site of the market and still the main centre with most of the shops and pubs. South Lane was the main route to Taunton.

There are currently 23 listed houses in Nether Stowey plus Stowey Court and its associated buildings. Most of the houses date to the early 18th century to 19th Century but there are a few with older remains, including 32 Castle Street which is listed as dating to the Mediaeval period. Housing



Map 2 - Nether Stowey c. 1809

developed along the three main streets and at the top of South Lane (junction with Castle Street). There was a great deal of building (or rebuilding) at the end of the 18th Century (and most of St Mary Street has a generally "Georgian" look) but the pattern of the village remained largely the same until after the end of the Second World War as the 1809 map (Map 3 left) shows, with continuous infilling on the main streets.

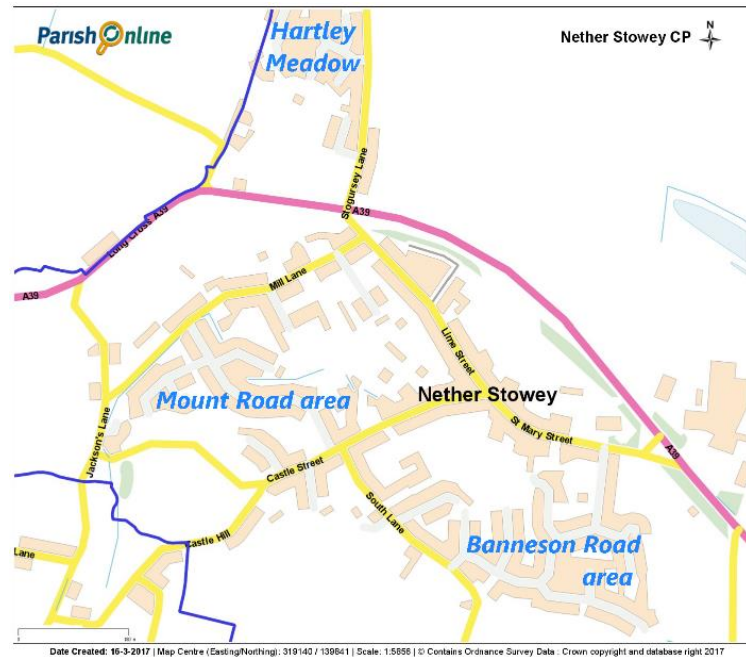
A bypass was built in 1968 removing the main A39 traffic flow from St Mary Street and Lime Street. Although the by-pass is generally perceived to have cut the church off from the village, as explained above and the map demonstrates, the church was always on the "other" side, though modern traffic makes crossing to it far more dangerous.

4 HOUSING Objective and Policies

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is

- a) to provide an overview of the historical development forming the residential areas,
- b) an overview of the present situation and
- c) to review the current difficulties and opportunities and the needs and aspirations of the community. These have been expressed through the Neighbourhood Plan initial consultation document carried out in May 2016, the Housing Needs Survey of September 2016 and through discussions carried during the preparation of this plan. They also include issues raised to the Parish Council over recent years.



4.2 Background

Nether Stowey has a reasonably sustainable community, with a variety of local services and facilities to meet most day-to-day needs and a range of activities and local organisations to contribute to the well-being of the community. We are keen to keep and enhance the Parish through sensible development that meets primarily the needs of local families to remain in Nether Stowey – specifically to assist young families who are being driven out by the ever increasing housing costs (either to rent or buy) and lack of suitable facilities and employment opportunities and also by encouraging the right housing, facilities to help older residents who are otherwise forced to leave to live in specialised accommodation or residential facilities.

The Parish Council has re-expressed their intention to ensure that Section 106 agreements for affordable housing on future developments will continue to prioritise local connections in accordance with Policy H3 in this document. The Parish is also keen to ensure that affordable housing is available for both purchase price and rent at below market values. The criteria for both purchase and rental conditions will be included in the relevant section 106 for new developments.



The Parish faces challenges: narrow roads, many with no pavements, and very limited parking (and no obvious space for more) close to main village centre shops and amenities. The difficulty is exacerbated in the centre by dense housing pattern with no off-road parking in this area. There is little employment within walking/cycling distance and unsafe routes for pedestrians/cyclists (and no public transport) to go further afield. An influx of workers at the new Hinkley Point C power station is already having an inflationary effect on local rents and house prices.



Developments since the 1050's has been concentrated mainly in three large areas, namely:

The **Mount Road** area, connecting South Lane to Mill Lane was first built up around the early 1960s with later additions. The houses were originally built as married quarters for the Doniford Camp. The houses were later handed over to the local

authority and many have since been sold under Right to Buy.

There are several small developments off the main roads, (Fir Tree Close, St Michaels Close etc) built at various times between the 1970s and 2000.

The **Bannesson Road** estate was built on the old Stowey Farm in the late 1970s / early 1980s comprising approximately 170 properties, mostly houses and bungalows, including some bungalows reserved for *Figure 2 recent larger developments* older people.

The next significant development was the **Hartley Meadow** site, north of the A39 on the site of a former chicken packing factory. The planning consent was fiercely contested, and the application went to appeal twice before it was finally given consent. There are 67 properties (2-4 bedroom) built in around 2007. Seven of these are low-cost housing that must be sold at 75% of market rate but the original caveat restricting sales to those in housing need no longer applies.

Number of dwellings built since 2008:

07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	Total / Av
a7 (a)	0	2	0	0	2	1	20 (b)	2	0	0	50 / 3

Add 17/18 to above table with 0

The main areas of development shown in the table above are:

Highbeer Close (a): A small development of 4 x 3-bedroom and 3 x 2-bedroom homes affordable (rental) homes was built in 2008 for Falcon Rural Housing. The development was strongly contested in principle and in respect of the design, which is not in keeping with the immediate vicinity or with the wider village. There have been complaints from tenants relating to build-quality, in particular damp and inadequate heating.

Harry Prowse Close (b): A further development of 20 homes was completed in 2014 (1 x 1-bedroom flats; 5 x 2-bedroom, 9 x 3-bedroom and 2 x 4-bedroom houses). Priority is given to those with a specified connection to Nether Stowey, and any available thereafter are offered to those with a connection to neighbouring villages. The site once again attracted a considerable amount of vociferous and unpleasant objections.

Other: Other properties included in the list above are either infill construction, the division of existing residential properties or the conversion of ancillary buildings of existing residential/disused commercial properties.

Development Commitments

Gullifords Garage is currently undergoing redevelopment to convert the garage buildings to create four new flats (2 x 1-bedroom, 2 x 2-bedroom) and to refurbish two existing 2-bedroom flats. It is understood that these are intended as holiday lets and will not therefore add to the residential housing stock.

Cricketer Farm: Outline planning permission for housing development on the former Cricketer Dairy site (a brownfield site) was given in December 2017. The outline consent is for up to 50 new properties with a further seven existing buildings to be converted. Of these, it was planned that 23 of these would be affordable homes with a likely split of 70% rented and 30% low-cost or shared ownership.

Although in the Neighbourhood Plan Survey questionnaire gave brownfield sites the highest priority (48% of 268 respondents, and 39% thought Cricketer Farm was the best site (15% thought it the worst), it is likely that this site will again attract considerable opposition, despite the inclusion of community benefits - major highways improvements including traffic lights and a much-demanded pedestrian safe crossing place and speed reduction on the A39 approaching the entrance to the village. At present the site is for sale (December 2018).

Other potential development sites

Jeanes Trust Land: There has also been interest in developing a greenfield site almost opposite the Cricketer Farm site and was identified in the 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as having potential for about 55 dwellings. The Parish Council did meet representatives of the developers in 2013 and 2014. As a rural exception site under Policy P4 of the then Local Plan, the developer was required to provide evidence of a local housing need. Sedgemoor District Council did not consider the Housing Needs Survey commissioned by the developer to be sufficiently robust, though the comments are illuminating. Comments made in the 2014 Housing Needs Survey suggest that this site would also attract considerable opposition. It is understood that the developer still has an interest in the site (July 2018).

In Section 3 of the Neighbourhood Plan Survey less than 4% gave greenfield sites the highest priority, while 23% thought this site was the best site and 23% the worst.

4.3 Housing Tenure and Affordability

Tenure - Households (QS405EW) 2011 census

	Nether Stowey	%	Sedgemoor	%	South West	%	England	%
All Households	640	100%	48,801	100%	2,264,641	100%	22,063,368	100%
Owned; Total	497	77.66%	34,802	71.31%	1,526,958	67.42%	13,975,024	63.34%
Owned Outright	308	48.13%	18,320	37.54%	801,786	35.40%	6,745,584	30.57%
Owned (with Mortgage or Loan)	189	29.53%	16,482	33.77%	725,172	32.02%	7,229,440	32.77%

NB "Owned" includes 7 low-cost houses (sold at 75% of market rate)

Shared Ownership	0	0.00%	273	0.56%	17,116	0.76%	173,760	0.79%
Social Rented; Total	72	11.25%	5,951	12.19%	301,520	13.32%	3,903,550	17.70%
Rented (Local Authority)	51	7.97%	3,670	7.52%	130,652	5.77%	2,079,778	9.43%
Other Social Rented	21	3.28%	2,281	4.67%	170,868	7.55%	1,823,772	8.27%
Private Rented; Total	54	8.44%	7,113	14.57%	387,134	17.09%	3,715,924	16.84%
Private Landlord or via Letting Agency	48	7.50%	6,380	13.07%	345,229	15.24%	3,401,675	15.42%
Employer of a Household Member	0	0.00%	93	0.19%	9,914	0.44%	55,211	0.25%
Relative or Friend of Household Member	6	0.94%	556	1.14%	24,206	1.07%	199,428	0.90%
Other	0	0.00%	84	0.17%	7,785	0.34%	59,610	0.27%
Living Rent Free	17	2.66%	662	1.36%	31,913	1.41%	295,110	1.34%

Tenure - Households, ONS 2011 (QS405EW), Mar 2011

Summary

A considerable majority of householders (nearly 78%) lived in homes they own. This is higher than the Sedgemoor average (71.3%) and quite a lot higher than the England average, possibly reflecting the number of people who retire to the area. Four houses have been added to the parish since 2011, believed to have been sold on the open market.

It is worth noting that 7 of the “owned” homes are low-cost homes, selling at 75% of the market rate. It is sad to relate that at least two of these have been purchased by a professional landlord for rental and are therefore “lost” to the “affordable” sector for the immediate future.

In the 2011 census 72 households (11%) lived in social rented homes, slightly under the Sedgemoor average. Of these, 32 of the 51 Local Authority homes were restricted for use by people over the age of 65. There were 21 housing association properties in the Parish. The census predates a small development of 20 social rented homes at Harry Prowse Close built in 2014.

8.4% live in private rentals, considerably below the Sedgemoor average (14.5%). Anecdotally it is understood that rental properties change hands very quickly through word-of-mouth, suggesting that there is greater demand than supply. Based on enquiries at the Parish office (who are co-located with an estate agency), it seems that demand is increasing – many enquiries are from employees of Hinkley Point C moving into the area). An unknown number of households are taking in lodgers from Hinkley Point C.

Sedgemoor District Council confirmed that, as at March 2017, there are 73 properties with no occupants registered and 14 registered as second homes.

Key conclusions from the above statistics:

In comparison to the remainder of Sedgemoor, Nether Stowey has:

- high levels of home ownership
- lower than average levels of private rental properties, possibly not reflecting demand
- considering the 20 social rented homes built in 2014, the average is on a par with Sedgemoor and South-West averages.

Affordability of Housing

The Housing Needs Survey undertaken in 2016 by Sedgemoor District Council offers a broad assessment of the affordability of housing across Sedgemoor and in Nether Stowey in 2016. An extract of the report is reproduced here as it is thought that the general situation has not changed significantly. However, prices have increased, possibly more than might have been expected, as there is increasing demand for properties from incoming workers at the Hinkley Point C site leading to – apocryphally – an inflationary effect on rents on both rentals and a knock-on effect on purchase process by buyers looking to rent to them. Further information, part of the analysis of the Housing Needs Assessment 2016 carried out by the Affordable Housing Unit, Sedgemoor DC, follows on the next page.

Housing need and the housing market

There is some feeling that there is still a need for housing for younger families who are unable to remain in/return to settle in the village. However, some comments in the two recent Housing Needs Surveys and the Neighbourhood Plan survey feel that enough has been done and that the focus should now switch to the needs of other groups, including younger families looking to buy or rent privately who do not qualify for, or do not wish to live in a Housing Association home. There has also been some animosity expressed about affordable housing such as "Rental: Why are all new build for council tenants? There are "Normal" renters out there!!" (comment on Housing Needs Survey 2014). This sums up some of the views stated at the consultation event and planning meeting held for the SHAL Housing affordable homes development in 2014, in the later Housing Needs Survey and in the free comments space in the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire.

Extract from HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY OCT 2016 (HNA 2016)

by Affordable Housing Unit, Sedgemoor DC

THE AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING

Across Sedgemoor, it is noticeable that a growing number of adult children are unable to get on the housing ladder and continue to live with parents or relatives. Many wishing to remain in rural communities, are priced out of the market or forced to leave the village due to a lack of “price” or “cost” of housing, a situation heightened by an influx of wealthy commuters, second home buyers, holiday lets and retirees moving to the area. Rural house prices tend to be well above the average, while local rural incomes are below. This affordability gap continues to grow and adds to the increasing loss of younger adults and families who often support and contribute to local rural communities; shops, schools and transport services can be affected as young people and families are forced to look for more affordable places to live.

Buying on the Open Market

SDC reviewed and investigated sales of homes over a two-year period in Nether Stowey from the property website Rightmove. Over the past two years, the average house sale price of a home in Nether Stowey was £232,436. This is appreciably higher than a comparable home in urban areas such as Bridgwater (£159,149). During the last year, sold prices in Nether Stowey were 8% up on the previous year. Local incomes are not keeping pace with this level of house price inflation.

By using “real house price data” and taking a conservative view on the current average price of houses in the parish, the price at which someone can buy a property (entry level at which it would be feasible to get onto the housing ladder) has been taken to be circa £93,000 for a 1-bed property, circa £136,000 for a 2-bed property and circa £235,000 for a 3-bed property. These are average figures and are only a guideline.

A comparison of house prices with neighbouring and broader market areas suggests Nether Stowey is a relatively expensive village. Prices are higher or in line with nearby villages and above the average in the SDC area. Data tends to be less robust for smaller areas as it contains fewer records. This particularly applies to one-bedroom properties in rural areas.

House Price	Deposit (assume 15% required)	Mortgage required	Annual income required based on 3.5 x income
£ 150,000	£ 22,500	£ 127,500	£ 36,429
£ 170,000	£ 25,500	£ 144,500	£ 41,286
£ 200,000	£ 30,000	£ 170,000	£ 48,571

Source Sedgemoor District Council, extract from Nether Stowey Housing Needs Survey report 2016

It should be remembered that a household’s ability to buy is also dependent on them having saved an appropriate deposit. The calculation presented in Table 1 assumes a mortgage to house value of 85%, i.e. the purchaser has saved a 15% deposit. It may be possible to secure a mortgage with a lower % deposit but this will require even higher income levels. Every household has its own set of circumstances; therefore the table above is an assumption and should be used as a guide only.

Table 2 Deposit, mortgage, rent & income for a shared ownership based on purchasing a 40% share. There are some assumptions about deposits and mortgages to enable the calculation of salaries to meet the mortgage requirement.

Property value	Deposit (assume 10% of 40% share)	Mortgage required (remaining equity in brackets)	Mortgage cost per cal month approx. (assuming rate of 5% for 25yrs)	Rental on remaining equity per calendar month	Annual income required based on 3.5x income
£120,000	£4,800	£43,200 (£72,000)	£253.00	£165.00	£12,343
£160,000	£6,400	£57,600 (£96,000)	£337.00	£220.00	£16,457
£200,000	£8,000	£72,000 (£120,000)	£421.00	£275.00	£20,571

Renting

Table 3 Market Rent, Affordable Rent, Social Rent & Local Housing Allowance (per week) compares the cost of Market Rent, Affordable Rent, Social Rent & current Local Housing Allowance.

Number of Bedrooms	Typical Market Rent (approx.)	Affordable Rent (approx.)	Social Rent (approx.)	Local Housing Allowance (April 2016-March 2017)
1	£110.00	£88.00	£71.50	£97.81
2	£146.00	£116.80	£94.90	£122.36
3	£162.00	£129.60	£105.30	£150.00

Following more specific data collection and analysis, the HNA concluded that, at October 2016, a need had been identified for 18 affordable dwellings for local people: 11 rented and 7 low cost or shared ownership. However it also suggested that the true need may be greater, if wider data and neighbouring parishes were taken into account:

From the HNA 2016 Part 5:

POSSIBLE RANGE AND SCALE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEED IN NETHER STOWEY

If we combine all the evidence gathered from the survey, CBL (Choice Based Letting scheme for those registered as being in housing need in Somerset) and surrounding villages it might suggest a possible housing need of circa fifty (50). Whilst acknowledging that being registered on the CBL system does not necessarily mean each applicant can be said to be in housing need, the figures are nevertheless useful to the potential scales of affordable housing demand in Nether Stowey and the surrounding villages. The totals below show the possible scale of affordable housing in Nether Stowey if combined.

Nether Stowey 2016 Housing Need Survey	18
Nether Stowey CBL applicants (not counted in survey)	21
Neighbouring parishes, CBL applicants	6
TOTAL	45

This scale of affordable housing need is small but significant. On-going consultation between Sedgemoor District Council and the Parish Council will help inform details of any scheme brought forward. Careful consideration should be given to the final scale and tenure mix of the scheme to ensure local occupancy is maximised.

Market Housing Provision in Nether Stowey

The 2016 HNA exercise has not offered any obvious insight into the future scale and nature of market housing requirements for Nether Stowey. Nevertheless, it would appear that Nether Stowey would benefit from the provision of additional smaller units for sale and rent.

4.4 Planning policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's overarching planning policies that must be considered both by Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. Its key principle is the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (Paragraph 11), which means in summary that local policy should promote a proactive stance towards meeting the development needs of an area, and development opportunities should be viewed positively unless they cause significant harm or are against the policies in the NPPF. For neighbourhood plans, this means that they should:

- develop plans that 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; and
- identify opportunities to use Neighbourhood Development Orders to enable developments that are consistent with their neighbourhood plan to proceed. (Paragraph 16)

Paragraph 184 requires that 'Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.'

Section 6 'Delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes' is the most relevant section of the NPPF for the topic of housing. This requires that Local Planning Authorities assess the housing needs of the district and identify enough development land to meet that need over the course of the plan period. In rural areas, they should 'be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs' (paragraph 54).

Neighbourhood plans may take a role in this process by assessing local needs and allocating housing sites where appropriate in order to meet that need. They may also set out locally appropriate criteria to guide the development of housing, including, for example, on design, the use of renewable energy, the size of gardens or the mix of tenures to meet local needs.

Sedgemoor District Local Plan

Under the 2019 Local Plan, Nether Stowey has been categorised as a Tier 2 settlement, defined as:

These rural settlements are considered to still have a good range of services that meet the needs of both the settlement itself but also close neighbouring smaller settlements. Compared to other rural settlements further down the hierarchy they are also relatively unconstrained by key environmental constraints, such as flood risk.

For Tier 2 settlements, the local plan states there will be

- A focus for housing and small-scale employment growth appropriate to the settlements scale and character;
- Retention of existing and provision of new key local services/facilities and retention of existing employment opportunities;
- Delivery of dwellings on existing committed sites with planning permission
- Maximising development opportunities within the existing settlement through appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities;
- New strategic greenfield allocation(s) adjacent to the settlement boundary (minimum of 570 dwellings across all 6 settlements), to be identified through subsequent site allocations
- Development Plan Document of Neighbourhood Plans;

Within Sedgemoor, the proposed minimum development number of 816 homes in the period to 2032 across the six Tier 2 villages. For Nether Stowey the minimum number to allocate is 50 new houses.

Nether Stowey Parish Council contested the Tier 2 designation, on the grounds that Nether Stowey has neither the employment nor the transport services to support such a level of additional housing following the loss of the only large employment site and the absence of any public transport from/to Nether Stowey.

4.5 Landscape Assessment Studies

There have also been a number of Landscape Assessments produced by a various organisation which detail the unique landscape and views in and around Nether Stowey.

- Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary produced by Sedgemoor District Council
<https://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/article/1216/Landscape-Assessment-and-Countryside-Design-Summary>
- Quantock Hills Landscape Character Assessment 2018 produce by Landscapes for Life (a part of the AONB family)
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/11909d_cf99294e2dd14b03b199ecb15d78e4ee.pdf
- Visual Landscape Study produce by Nether Stowey Parish Council.

Developers should ensure and evidence that these documents have been considered in the design of new developments.

4.6 Objectives and Policies

Objective 1: To reuse brownfield sites and where possible to renovate disused agricultural buildings

H1: Conversion of Redundant Farm and Other Buildings in the Countryside

Development proposals for the conversions of redundant agricultural and other buildings to dwellings within the countryside (outside of the Nether Stowey settlement boundary) will be supported providing:

- The proposals are consistent with protecting the character and landscape quality of the area.
- The design approach is appropriate and sympathetic to the building, the locality and immediate surroundings.
- The building is capable of conversion, rather than complete or substantial rebuild.
- That they are fully compliant with Sedgemoor District Council’s Planning Guidance Note on Conversion of Agricultural / Rural Buildings

Objective 2: To encourage the delivery of appropriate housing, including affordable housing, to meet the whole life needs of the local community of Nether Stowey Parish.

Policy H2: Affordable Housing

To help ensure that local residents or those with a connection to the parish can remain or move back to the village, all housing developments will be expected to deliver at least the minimum levels of affordable housing as detailed in the Sedgemoor District Local Plan.

For any new affordable housing unit in the Neighbourhood Plan area, initial priority (and subsequent future allocation of the affordable home) will be given to eligible households who are in housing need and who have the following local connection with the Nether Stowey neighbourhood plan area:

- i. Currently live in (and have done so for 5 years or more) the Nether Stowey neighbourhood plan area.
- ii. Previously lived for 5 years or more (within the previous 10 years) in the Nether Stowey neighbourhood plan area.
- iii. Work 16 hours or more a week in the Nether Stowey neighbourhood plan area.
- iv. Have immediate family (who currently live in, and have done so for 5 years or more) the Nether Stowey neighbourhood plan area - means grandparent(s), parent(s), child(ren) or sibling(s)
- v. Provides or receives care for immediate family in the Nether Stowey Parish (immediate family as defined above)

Should any affordable homes be left unallocated after exhausting the above list, the unallocated affordable homes will be allocated in accordance with the Homefindersomerset housing policy and rules (or any subsequent replacement)

Policy H3: Housing Type and Size

To help ensure a locally appropriate supply of dwelling types and sizes, development proposals must provide a design code which demonstrates compliance with best practices as described in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/design>).

In addition, Developers are encouraged to provide dwelling types in the following approximate proportions across tenures to help deliver a balance in supply to meet local demand, where feasible and viable; and unless it can be demonstrated that other up-to-date evidence indicates alternative proportions:

- i. 5-10% single floor 1- or 2-bedroom dwellings;
- ii. 25-35% two floor 1- or 2-bedroom dwellings;
- iii. 45-55% 3-bedroom dwellings;
- iv. 10-15% 4+ bedroom dwellings.

Developers should also ensure that designs have taken into consideration the visually important assets of Nether Stowey as outlined in the Nether Stowey Parish Council Visual Landscape Study and Sedgemoor District Councils Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary 2003.

Developments are strongly discouraged from including housing of more than two stories.

Proposers of development are encouraged to engage with the local community and Parish Council at the earliest opportunity to help ensure that any proposals consider both this plan's aims and objectives and the views of the local community.

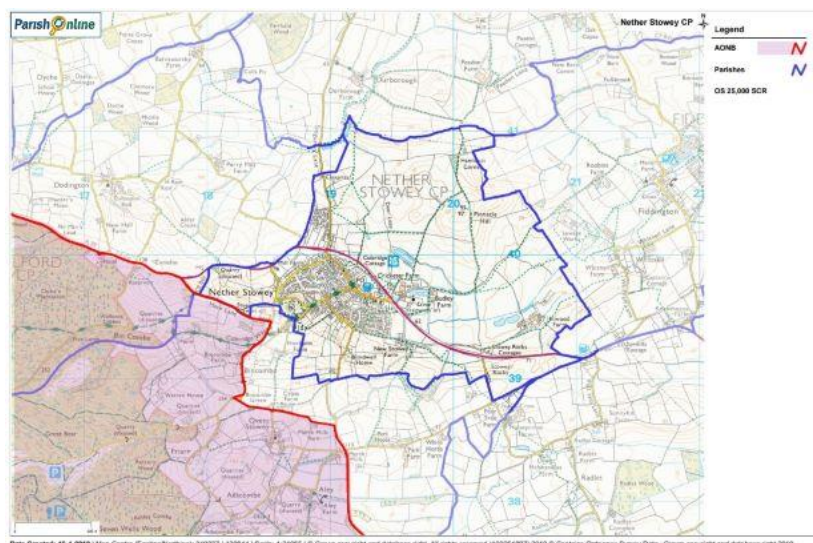
Policy H4: Ecological Development

All new residential developments should offer potential buyers the option of having Electric Vehicle charging points provided.

All houses should be provided with a water butt to receive rainwater from the roof.

5 ENVIRONMENT Objectives and Policies

This section of the Plan relates to the natural environment of the Parish of Nether Stowey and the immediate area. It is a busy village designated as a Tier 2 community. It has a bypass built in 1968 to remove traffic from the narrow village centre. It is just outside the AONB area of the Quantock Hills – the first to be designated in England. As such it is also considered to be



relatively unconstrained by key environmental problems such as flood risk (Sedgemoor District Council Local Plan) The Stowey brook which runs through the village does overtop in severe weather although this is often due to the failure of property owners to clear and maintain culverts etc. The area is considered flood free. From the responses to the Questionnaire it is clear that local people value the area's natural environment. A total of 96.27% of responders considered this aspect to be important or extremely important.

Chapter 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that “The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period”

Section 7.263 of the SDC Local Plan states that “Open and undeveloped areas within settlements can be an important element of the character and environmental quality of settlements by enhancing the setting of building groups, adding to a sense of place or identity, or helping to retain links with surrounding countryside. In some cases, areas which have cherished qualities are excluded from development boundaries, but Policy BE7 is intended to provide protection to those identified areas which lie within the developed areas of certain settlements.” This policy provides that proposed developments of sports and/or recreation facilities should be of greater benefit than the long-term recreational value of the open space that would be lost. This includes local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves.

Open green spaces survey

Applications for consideration as a Local Green Space are clearly laid out in SDC Local Plan Submission 2017. There are no current applications for Nether Stowey. The Neighbourhood Planning process and the Local Plan review process may be appropriate points in time to assess any future sites that are proposed by the community.

The Millennium Wood which was created out of a rough area in 2000 is now a pleasant area which links Nether Stowey and Halsey Cross via public footpaths. Unfortunately, it is not well signed and therefore not known to many villagers or visitors. A local group has been set up to encourage greater awareness and use of existing green spaces in and around the village. The surrounding natural environment is an important aspect of the life of Nether Stowey and is promoted as ‘the Gateway to the Quantocks’. The area is popular with walkers and tourists. It has recently achieved the ‘Walkers Are Welcome’ accreditation which will make it more available for visiting walkers. Tourism brings in more economic benefit to local shops and accommodation providers as well as for the pubs and food outlets. Nether Stowey is well placed for walks for all abilities, whether it is short walks/rambles or more challenging hill walks for the more ambitious. It is the start of the Coleridge Way long distance trail. There are planned walks (Walkers are Welcome) which cross the A39 which can be dangerous due to the speed with which drivers take that stretch of road. This may be alleviated at some time in the future if/when the new development takes place on the site of Cricketer Farm. On the outskirts of the village is the Recreation Ground which has a large recreation area with a MUGA installed which is well used and an important area for the village particularly popular with dog walkers. There are plans to relocate the Village Hall to this area to make it more of a focal point and increase its use and parking potential. The Recreation Ground is an inalienable community asset and therefore there can be no commercial development on this land. Sections of the England Coast Path, The Parrett Way, and the West Somerset Coast Path are also easily accessed from Nether Stowey. Further issues which came out of the questionnaire included the ‘tired’ nature of the approach to the village opposite Cricketer and the dearth of flowers etc. through the main streets.

5.1 Key Issues

The village of Nether Stowey is fortunate in both its natural and built environment and these could both be at risk in the face of unsympathetic development.

As it is on the edge of the Quantock Hills AONB and in its own Conservation Area it highlights the need for it to be sympathetic to the AONB ideals of allowing full access to all areas without compromising the integrity of the local countryside. Village presentation could be quickly addressed by sympathetic property holders and the entry roads to the village could be easily enhanced with perennial flowers and sponsorship.

From the questionnaire most complaints about the natural environment centred on dog fouling, particularly in the Recreation Ground area. This is not an issue which can be addressed through planning but is perhaps more a question of educating dog owners.

Signage for the Millennium Wood and the Coleridge Way are currently being addressed by the Public Rights of Way (PROW) department at Somerset County Council.

5.2 Local Policy Context

The Core Strategy 5-year review will review and amalgamate the Core Strategy and saved Local Plan policy in to one new Local Plan development document. Whilst exact policy wording may be amended as part of the review process it is proposed that the new Local Plan 2011 – 2032 will broadly continue with the current local protections that are in place for wildlife and open space, including:

Open Areas protected from development – villages (BE7)

“Open and undeveloped areas within settlements can be an important element of the character and environmental quality of settlements by enhancing the setting of building groups, adding to a sense of place or identity, or helping to retain links with surrounding countryside. In some case areas which have cherished qualities are excluded from development boundaries, but Policy BE7 below is intended to provide protection to those identified areas which lie within the developed areas of certain settlements.”

“BE7: The following areas of open land are considered to make an important contribution to environmental quality and sense of place in their respective settlements therefore development which would be harmful to their open character will not be permitted.”

Protection of Recreational Open Space (RLT1)

“Development which would result in the loss of recreational open space will not be permitted unless:

- i. the existing sports and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site; or
- ii. a replacement facility of equivalent sports and/or recreation benefit is made available; or
- iii. the proposed development provides sports and/or recreation facilities of greater benefit than the long-term recreational value of the open space that would be lost.

NOTE: The existing Recreation Ground is an inalienable community asset and therefore no commercial development is permissible on this land.

5.3 Objectives and Policies

Objective 4: To protect the rural character and qualities of the parish and of the identity of the village, seek to positively influence the design of new development in the parish and to encourage energy efficiency, adequate parking and appropriate garden size to ensure suitable housing density

Policy E1: Design and Character of Local Development

Development proposals will be supported where they have demonstrated that they are of high-quality design, complementing the local vernacular, will enhance visual amenity and minimise any adverse impacts on the built environment. Where a Design and Access Statement or a Travel Plan is required by the local planning authority, that document should demonstrate compliance with this policy.

The design of all new buildings should take into account, in particular, the Local Plan policies D2: Promoting High Quality and Inclusive Design and D26: Historic Environment, and particular attention should be paid to:

- i) ensuring that the size, height, density, scale and location of the development respect its setting and the character of the area. For housing proposals, to inform consideration of the appropriateness of the proposal's suitability in relation to the character of the built environment and the site's setting, applicants should provide an analysis of proposal's plot size(s), building footprint and private garden area(s) in relation to the existing dwellings in the surrounding area;
- ii) ensuring that materials and design of the development are sympathetic and complementary to its setting and character of the area;
- iii) ensuring that it is designed in such a way as to minimise its impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape, on views of the proposed development and on the natural environment and mitigating any adverse impact firstly through good design and appropriate setting in the landscape and then through the use of landscaping and planting appropriate to the local habitat and ecology where necessary;
- iv) opportunities to provide habitats for insects and bird nesting;
- v) opportunities for 'greening' the built environment through natural planting of hedgerows and trees appropriate to the local habitat and ecology;
- vi) preserving or enhancing the Conservation Area and heritage assets in the parish (including those on the "local list");
- vii) using Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise the impact of surface water flooding and wider flood risk. Where SuDS are introduced, a management plan should be put in place for future maintenance of the system;
- viii) with regard to new dwellings ensuring adequate private rear amenity space is provided.
- ix) ensuring that good connectivity is achieved adhering to policies T1, T2 and T3 and the road layout and widths are designed to ensure good and safe access to all dwellings for residents, visitors, delivery and service vehicles and the emergency services (exceeding local Highway Authority standards where viable); and,
- x) ensuring that adequate car parking is provided in accordance with the parking standards detailed within the Somerset County Council Parking Strategy (and exceed them where viable).

Proposers of development are encouraged to:

- i) apply the most up-to-date accessibility standards which are applicable to the type and location of development and to as many new dwellings as viability allows (and exceed those standards where possible)
- ii) engage with the local community about their proposals at the earliest opportunity.

Objective 5: To support the retention and enhancement of the existing Conservation Areas in Nether Stowey.

Policy E2: Heritage Assets and Character

To protect the historic character of Nether Stowey, Heritage Assets (listed buildings, scheduled monuments and those on the “local list”) and their setting will be protected from adverse impact arising from their development, alteration or refurbishment and from adverse impact of other development proposals by avoiding or mitigating such impacts. Where relevant, proposals affecting heritage assets and / or their settings:

- i) should take into account any relevant adopted Conservation Area Appraisal;
- ii) should take into account local authority guidance relating to development in Conservation Areas; and,
- iii) are encouraged to have regard to any available additional local evidence documenting local historic and heritage assets.

Development proposals that seriously harm heritage assets and their setting will not be supported.

Objective 6: To support and protect identified Village Assets.

Policy E3: Development Proposals

Development proposals will be assessed with regards to their potential impact on identified village assets or features of historic value and the contribution they make to the character and culture of Nether Stowey, including:

- Butchers Lane
- Coleridge Cottage
- Castle Hill / The Mount
- Library (former village School)
- Plot 173
- The Allotments
- Stowey Brook
- Millennium Wood
- Clock Tower and Old Goal
- Church
- Stowey Court

Schemes that will seriously adversely affect such assets will not be supported.

Objective 7: To protect the character of our valued landscape.

Policy E4: Protecting the Local Landscape

The landscape which physically and visually links the village of Nether Stowey with the surrounding open countryside, is a key part of the village's character and should be protected from any adverse impact of development.

In accordance with Sedgemoor District Council Local Plan, Policy D20, development proposals will only be supported where they:

- i) do not compromise the special landscape character around and setting of Nether Stowey village or any impacts are satisfactorily mitigated;
- ii) have demonstrated that there are no adverse impacts on prominent skylines viewed from Nether Stowey village
- iii) are of a size, height, density, and scale appropriate to their landscape setting.
- iv) Where mitigating measures are unavoidably required for development to be acceptable within its landscape setting, appropriate landscaping should be employed to mitigate the impact of the development, and such measures should include the use of native species of trees and hedges where planting is required.

Development proposals should also demonstrate, where relevant, that they have taken into account requirements / advice in the following guidance:

- i) i) Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary;
- ii) ii) Quantock Hills Landscape Character Assessment 2018; and,
- iii) iii) Nether Stowey Visual Landscape Study.

Objective 8: To protect our most valuable agricultural land from loss.

Policy E5: Protecting the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Development proposals that would result in the irreversible loss of Grade 1 agricultural land will only be supported where there is no practicable alternative site for the proposed development and the importance of the development outweighs the need to protect the best and most versatile land.

Objective 9: To protect and enhance wildlife habitats and biodiversity.

Policy E6: Protecting Wildlife and Habitats

Development proposals will be supported where they:

- i) do not cause direct or indirect harm to any site designated for its wildlife or habitat value; and
- ii) where necessary, includes proposals to protect or restore any existing habitat where protected or endangered species are present or mitigate where loss is unavoidable;
- iii) where mitigation is necessary and not possible on site, recreate habitat features in close proximity to the site;
- iv) where temporary alternative use is necessary on the site, restore the habitat to achieve net gain in biodiversity.
- v) create opportunities for green, blue and wildlife corridors linking to other areas of wildlife habitat

Particular consideration must be given to potential impact of development proposals on the colony of Barbastelle bats in Nether Stowey.

Objective 10: To protect existing and where possible increase the provision of public green space within the village

Policy E7: Local Green Space

Community green spaces are to be protected from development. The following areas are designated as Local Green Space:

- i) Recreation Ground
- ii) The Allotments
- iii) Millennium Wood
- iv) Plot 173

Development proposals on or likely to have an adverse impact on sites will only be supported where they:

- i) maintain or enhance the existing use and amenity value of the site;
- ii) enhance the access to and use of the site where also used for recreational purposes;
- iii) have no adverse impact on the recreational use or environmental value of the site or (where unavoidable) satisfactorily mitigate such impact, for example, through replacement of the space (of the same or greater size) at a location easily accessible to the original space's users and / or the site's wildlife habitat; and,
- iv) do not change the purpose for which the space is valued and the reason for designation;
- v) do not result in the loss of the majority of the Local Green Space; and,
- vi) do not cause significant cumulative environmental effects or such impact can be satisfactorily mitigated.

Proposers of development are encouraged to engage with the local community and Parish Council at the earliest opportunity to help ensure that any proposals for change take into account both this plan's aims and objectives and the views of the local community.

Open views towards the countryside or across open spaces will be maintained if possible. An assessment of views to and from the development should accompany a planning application wherever relevant.

Development that damages or results in the loss of ancient trees or trees or hedgerows of arboriculture and amenity value will not be supported. Development proposals must be designed to retain ancient trees or trees or hedgerows of good arboriculture and amenity value. A minimum buffer of at least 15 metres in width should be maintained between ancient woodland and any development boundary;

6 TRANSPORT Objective and Policies

This section seeks to outline the transport situation in Nether Stowey and the immediate area with respect to its current, anticipated and future requirements. This will include all related aspects including cycling and walking.

The nature of the main village streets which are based on a mediaeval street system means that the principal central village roads are narrow with parked cars and delivery vehicles adding extra pressure at most times of the day. (Copies of Nether Stowey Street map and public footpath network attached.) There are currently no cycle lanes within the area. The A39 where it passes through the village is considered too dangerous for walkers or cyclists at the present time. The public footpath network is mostly in good condition and accessible for fit walkers. Improvements could be made by replacing some stiles with kissing gates to provide access for the less able, but finance prevents this at this time. It is expected that Sedgemoor District Council would provide the materials and Sedgemoor Ramblers can provide the labour. Very little of the network is suitable for wheelchair users or buggies. At the time of writing this paper one diversion and one permissive path are planned.

National planning policies (2012) require the encouragement of a shift to more sustainable transport usage where reasonable to do so. Given the time scale this will need to be re-visited when the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is issued in Spring 2018. The Local Plan includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development as contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed SDC Local Plan will require transport issues to take account of current and changing requirements with reference to new housing developments. In this context a major feature would be the provision of a safe pedestrian crossing of the A39 in the area of the proposed housing development of the Cricketer Farm site.

Any policies will need to demonstrate that benefits outweigh adverse impacts and that these do not conflict with the NPPF. Wherever highways improvements are proposed, the County, District and Parish Councils would seek to ensure that these take account of relevant guidance on best practice, such as that published by the Department for Transport (DfT) and Cycling England. There is nothing so far in the SDC infrastructure Delivery Strategy which relates to Nether Stowey although this needs to be monitored for future planning developments.

Transport issues featured heavily in the responses to the initial questionnaire circulated to all households in the village. The most prominent of these was parking in the shopping area in the centre of the village and, to a more limited extent in the residential areas. Other factors include the construction of Hinkley C power station and the extra pressure this will put on already narrow and winding lanes. The back road leading to Taunton is also likely to become more used by commuters to and from the Point. Commuters mostly go by car very few cycles, probably due to the danger of cycling on both the A39 and the narrow back roads. The questionnaire revealed that while the majority of households (46.62%) have only one vehicle and 7.89% have none, the rest to 100% have 2 to 4.

6.1 Key Issues

The key issues identified from the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire and the discussions with local groups, e.g. the elderly, the younger group and business community largely relate to traffic flow, parking and the lack of pavements. One-way traffic areas have frequently been suggested but as yet no suitable route has been identified. One of the main problems regards the most often suggested route via Castle Street, Mount Street, Mill Lane and Lime Street. Problems arise in Mill Lane concerning safety issues around the school particularly when children are arriving/departing. Parking problems are constant given the nature of the roads and pinch points at the junction of St Mary Street/Castle Street and Lime Street.

Although these issues are important to responders, it is important to note that there are limitations on what can and can't be achieved through the Neighbourhood plan. It can influence new developments in terms of adequate parking and road safety issues. It can require money from new development to go towards additional traffic calming measures. Any major improvements to crossings and roundabouts, for example at Cricketer site/A39, can only be funded in partnership with the developer.

All Developments should, as a minimum, comply and demonstrate compliance with the car parking standards set out in the Somerset County Council Parking Strategy September 2013 (www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/strategies/transport-strategy).

The loss of public transport also isolates the elderly population and non-car owners that depended on it. The move to community transport will help but it still creates its own problems with regard to volunteer drivers and scheduling.

Pedestrian access to the Cross, the heart of the village where most shops, pubs and cafes can be found is mixed. Castle Street has a wide pavement for most of its length culminating in a narrow pinch point near the well-used Post Office. Lime Street has narrow pavements on both sides making it more difficult to travel. St Mary Street has a range of issues from cobble to barricaded pavement meaning pedestrians have to step out on to the road.

This is in contrast to Sedgemoor Local Plan Section 7.24 that states that "Development should be accessible to all users using a range of transport modes including walking and cycling and be integrated into existing patterns of movement that connect to networks of parks, open spaces and other facilities that people need to use in a legible and permeable way"

Sedgemoor Local Plan section 7.18 states the following “encourage walking/cycling” and “improve access to public transport”.

Both these aims are challenged in the current situation as the village has hardly any transport links and the nature and condition of the pavements discourage safe negotiation for the elderly population.

The bus service has been served two major blows. There were two main service providers, Webber’s and First Bus. The former has ceased trading and the latter has severely reduced its provision. At present there is one service operating between the village and Bridgwater and runs in the morning and late afternoon primarily to serve the student population. There is now a second service running from Nether Stowey to Taunton. Sainsbury also run a free bus service on Thursdays only from Minehead to Bridgwater calling at Nether Stowey (the bus stop on the A39), on the way. In addition, there are three EDF buses a day running between Bridgwater and Minehead and including Nether Stowey. In the first instance it has been set up for 1 year only.

First Bus claims that its scheduled service was not supported by the village which is borne out by Questionnaire results: -

Q – Do you use any of the following: -

Bus	Blank	1	2	3	4	5
service	6.74%	51.31%	19.10%	14.23%	1.87%	6.74%

- The scores from left to right go from “never” to “very frequently”. From the table columns 1 and 2 add up to 70% which suggests a significant majority rarely or never use the bus service
- Local residents who use the current morning bus have been told by the driver that their bus passes are invalid for use on this bus. It is mainly intended for use by tertiary college students.

The lack of a bus service has wider implications for local business as accommodation providers find that some of their customers who come to walk in the area have no recourse but to take taxis thus incurring extra expense and inconvenience. This is especially true when arriving by train in Bridgwater or Taunton.

6.2 Objectives and Policies

Objective 11: Ensure that any new development does not make existing road safety issues worse, and where possible improves road safety for all users.

Policy T1: Safe and Easy Access to Nether Stowey Village

Development proposals should, where feasible and appropriate, take opportunities to improve road safety, minimise local traffic generation and ensure safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders between the development and Nether Stowey village.

New connections to the village will, where feasible and appropriate, be integrated with the existing network of rural lanes, bridleways.

Policy T2: Development North of the A39

Development proposals north of the A39 will only be supported where they introduce measures to ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist (controlled) crossing of the A39.

Objective 12: To work with the Highway Authority and Local Planning Authority to ensure that transport and movement within the Parish is appropriate, improve road safety, and to retain, promote and improve the network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.

Policy T3: Protecting and Enhancing Pedestrian, Cyclist and Horse Rider Routes Across the Parish

Where relevant, development proposals must protect the character, use and amenity of existing footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes.

Development proposals which enhance routes for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists will be supported.

Objective 13: To secure the provision of a cycle lane to Cannington

Policy T4: Safe Cycle Route to Cannington

Development proposals which provide or enable a safe cycling route from Nether Stowey village to Cannington will be supported.

Objective 14: To improve car parking facilities and capability throughout the village

Policy T5: Improvement to Car parking facilities

Development proposals which seek to improve parking capacity and facilities within Nether Stowey village settlement boundary will be supported

Policy T6: Transport Statements

Development proposals must be supported by a Transport Statement that sets out an assessment of the impact of the proposed development identifying the realistic level of traffic it is likely to generate. It must assess the potential impact of this traffic on pedestrians, cyclists, road safety, parking and congestion within the parish and include where appropriate a Travel Plan that sets out measures to mitigate any impacts. Development that would give rise to unacceptable impacts will not be permitted

7 COMMUNITY Objective and Policies

Community Assets are essential to the vibrancy of the village and provide the social and economic backbone to village life.

In the Local Plan 2011-2032 - Adoption Version, Nether Stowey is a designated Tier 2 settlement and, by definition, one of the sustainable rural settlements that provide a range of services both locally and for the surrounding area.

The loss of any of these assets will reduce the ability of the village to function as a cohesive unit and providing the range of services expected in a Tier 2 settlement. One only has to note the facilities that are increasingly being lost in village communities, including our own – Post Office, Public Houses, Retail Stores, even Churches and Schools - to see how such loss impacts on rural life.

Although described as Community Assets, few are actually owned, or leased by, or are in trust to the Community whilst others are owned or subject to an interest by what might be termed corporate bodies. The following lists our Community Assets, categorised by such ownership.

7.1 Community assets: Community Services

- Church
- Church Centre
- Fire Station
- Library
- Public Toilets
- Village Hall
- School / Children's Centre

7.2 Community assets: Recreation

- Allotments
- Millennium Wood
- Recreation Ground
- The Mount
- The built environment of St Mary Street, Castle Street and Lime Street
- Plot 173

7.3 Community assets: Retail, Business and Tourism

- Accommodation Providers
- Coleridge Cottage
- Post Office
- Public Houses
- Retail Stores
- Medical Centre

7.4 Details of Community Assets

Allotments

As a result of local demand for allotments a piece of land beside the A39 bypass was made available by a local farming family in 1983. The site is within walking distance for the local villagers and is close to the Millennium Wood.

An allotment association was formed, and the Nether Stowey Allotments became active and have remained so ever since. The original agreement states that the plots are available to the public at large not just the residents of the village and there are plot holders from as far as Comwich and Bridgwater.

It seems that the demand came about due to the new housing developments had small gardens that were not sufficient for families to grow their own vegetables as well as the older properties with no garden or just a small yard.

Several of the plot holders have held plots from the beginning and there has been a regular



turnover of people who take on a plot for many different reasons. Such reasons range from having somewhere to have a year-round hobby outside in the fresh air getting exercise, a place where people living on their own can meet other likeminded individuals, growing vegetables for and with the family, growing flowers and vegetables for show or simply somewhere to go for some peace and quiet to unwind after a stressful day at work.

The site has only twenty-two plots of which 4 have been split into half plots for those not able to cope with a full plot. Recently a full plot has been taken over as a community plot by the local surgery to encourage individuals to get out and get some exercise together with others and reap the rewards of their group endeavours.

Allotment holders from other parts of the UK often visit the site and a couple from Birmingham visit every year. It is also a 'stop and look' position for walking groups and gardeners.

The site attracts regular wild life visitors as well as residents such as rabbits, field mice, moles, bank voles, squirrels, an occasional stoat, buzzards regularly hunt as well as owls. A representative visited the site for a national plant survey and found and reported a number of endangered plants found in and around the plots.

Church

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin is detached from the body of the village, to the East, probably because the Christian site once served the adjacent settlement of Budley, (Bodesleghe), further to the East, before Budley was abandoned and the settlement of Nether Stowey as we know it was created. A nineteenth century re-building, with the exception of the medieval tower, the church provides the centre for worship of the village's Anglican community. It is also the centre of the Quantock Benefice, which incorporates 5 other parishes. The Parish is a 'Royal Peculiar' and owes allegiance to the dean and canons of Windsor.



Church Centre



Opened in 1992, the Centre provides a facility for Parish activities, and is in use throughout the week by other village activity groups – badminton, table tennis, art group, quilting group, short mat bowls, and for meetings and functions. Periodic use includes three visits per year by the NHS Blood Donation Service.

Coleridge Cottage

Owned by the National Trust, the former home of the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge is the central visitor attraction of the village. Hugely successful since a substantial 'makeover' in 2011, visitor numbers average over 60 per day and totalled 11000 during the last year.

The Cottage is a place of pilgrimage for devotees of the Romantic Poets and provides the starting point for the 51-mile Coleridge Way. The economic benefit to the village provided by these visitors is clearly significant.

Fire Station

Constructed in 1969, the Fire Station is manned by 14 Retained Firefighters.

Library

Situated in the original village school building in Castle Street, built by Tom Poole in 1812. Following the review of county library services by Somerset County Council, the Library, 'The Thomas Poole Library Nether Stowey', is now run and operated by a group of local volunteers,



Housed in the original village school building in Castle Street, built by Tom Poole in 1812, the Library took over the building when the new school was built in 1975. However, it was announced in October 2018 that the Library would close from April 2019. At the time of writing a group of volunteers are setting up a Charitable Trust with a view running a Community-run library, with some County support.

Medical Centre

The Medical Centre was established in 1970, replacing Surgeries that had been held in other parts of the village, including the Toll House. In addition to the provision of GP services it houses a Pharmacy and treatment rooms with excellent Nursing Staff.

Millennium Wood

As its name suggests, the Wood, situated to the West of New Stowey Farm, was established in 2000 as a community asset, the land being made available through the grant of a licence from the County Council. It has been extended since the initial planting and now covers an area of approximately 2 acres.

The site is valuable to the community as a recreational asset for walkers and families as well as being an access to Stowey Wood in neighbouring Over Stowey, giving further access to via the Rights of Way network to Halsey and other local villages. It is accessible at all times of year and has a variety of flora and fauna. It is regularly used by families as a safe area for play and exploration, by the local Walking for Health group and dog walkers. In the other direction it provides a pleasant woodland and field walk to Paisley's Restaurant and Farm shop at Inwood Farm, thereby supporting a valued local business. This then connects with the Rights of Way network to Fiddington and beyond.

The site is held by Nether Stowey Parish Council under licence from Somerset County Council and is mostly maintained by Stowey Green Spaces Group which is a local voluntary organisation.

The Millennium Wood meets the NPPF 2012 and the NFPA "Six Acre Standard"

Post Office

Situated in the centre of the village, in the Quantock Store and Tearoom, the Post Office provides all of the expected service.

Public Houses

The village contains 3 public houses – The Ancient Mariner, The George and the Rose and Crown.

Public Toilets

The Parish Council took over the ownership of the Public Toilets in Castle Street in 2013, having previously managed and funded them on behalf of Sedgemoor District Council since 2007. They are an essential facility for the large number of tourists, particularly walkers following the Coleridge Way, visiting the area.

Recreation Ground

On the Western edge of the village, next to old A39 (Grid Reference ST 19550 39450), the Recreation Ground contains two football pitches, one Senior and one Junior. The Recreation Ground, together with the Village Hall, are owned and managed by a village-run Charitable Trust (Registered Charity number 1176413). The Recreation Ground is close to the community, only a 5-minute walk from The Cross in the centre of the village. The Recreation Ground consists of:



- football pitches, junior and senior (matches, training and coaching - currently in excess of 100 minis/juniors in regular coaching sessions);
- two floodlit multi-use games areas allow the well-being benefits of participation in active play to be enjoyed whatever the weather and support tennis, basketball, netball, five-a-side football and hockey - users range from primary school age to retirees;
- a fenced Play Area for children includes a good range of equipment suitable from baby to teenager;
- a floodlit half-pipe for skateboarders;
- outdoor benches and a covered shelter for sitting and watching life go by;
- the site is popular with walkers, and their dogs and is linked via footpaths to other green spaces in the community
- the border areas around the 6.6 acres site, including a stream, are maintained to maximise conservation of flora and fauna
- is the site of the annual community Party in the Park
- volunteers participate in the running and maintenance of the space;
- changing pavilion and portacabin, both with water and power allow 'special events'.

Retail Stores

These comprise 3 general grocery stores, one incorporating a tea-room, and a butcher's shop. Although not primarily a store, Paisley's Farm Shop and Café at Inwood Farm provides an extensive range of cheeses, bread and local produce.

School

The current Nether Stowey CE VC Primary School was opened in Mill Close in 1975. It replaced the original school building in Castle Street, now the Library, built and paid by Tom Poole in 1812 as the second free school in the County. As at the time of production of this Neighbourhood Plan, the school is at full capacity in terms of pupil numbers even after its catchment area has been considerably reduced. In addition, the location of the school gives rise to considerable traffic issues during the twice-daily 'school run' and especially in Mill Lane. The adjacent Children's Centre also houses the preschool, which is open daily but at different hours to the school which further exacerbates the traffic problems. Any future developments in or around the village will need to ensure that suitable expansion of the school's capacity is considered and addressed. Given the current location of the school, physical expansion will be very limited. Consideration could be given to re-locating and expanding the school, perhaps using money raised from the sale of the current ground(s). If this were to occur, building of bungalows on the current location, for elderly residents of the village to 'down-size' would allow them to remain within the community, would also deliver some of the housing types described in Policy H3 bullet I and thereby potentially 'free up' larger housing stock and would greatly reduce the traffic congestion in both Mill Close, Mill Lane and within the village generally.

The Mount

The site of a motte and bailey castle, The Mount, as it is known, is privately owned but is crossed by a public footpath. The views from the top of the motte are spectacular, taking in a panorama from the East of Somerset, the Mendip Hills, the Bristol Channel and the coast of South Wales.

It is valuable not only for its views, variety of flora and fauna but also for its historical significance for the original development of Nether Stowey going back to the Norman period. It is the site of a yearly Easter celebration featuring the three crosses of Calvary and a religious service by St Mary's Church and neighbouring parishes. It is in constant use by the local community for general walks, family outings/picnics and by the local Walking for Health Group. It is also on the route of several longer walks, notably the Coleridge Way long distance trail used by locals and tourists.

Village Hall



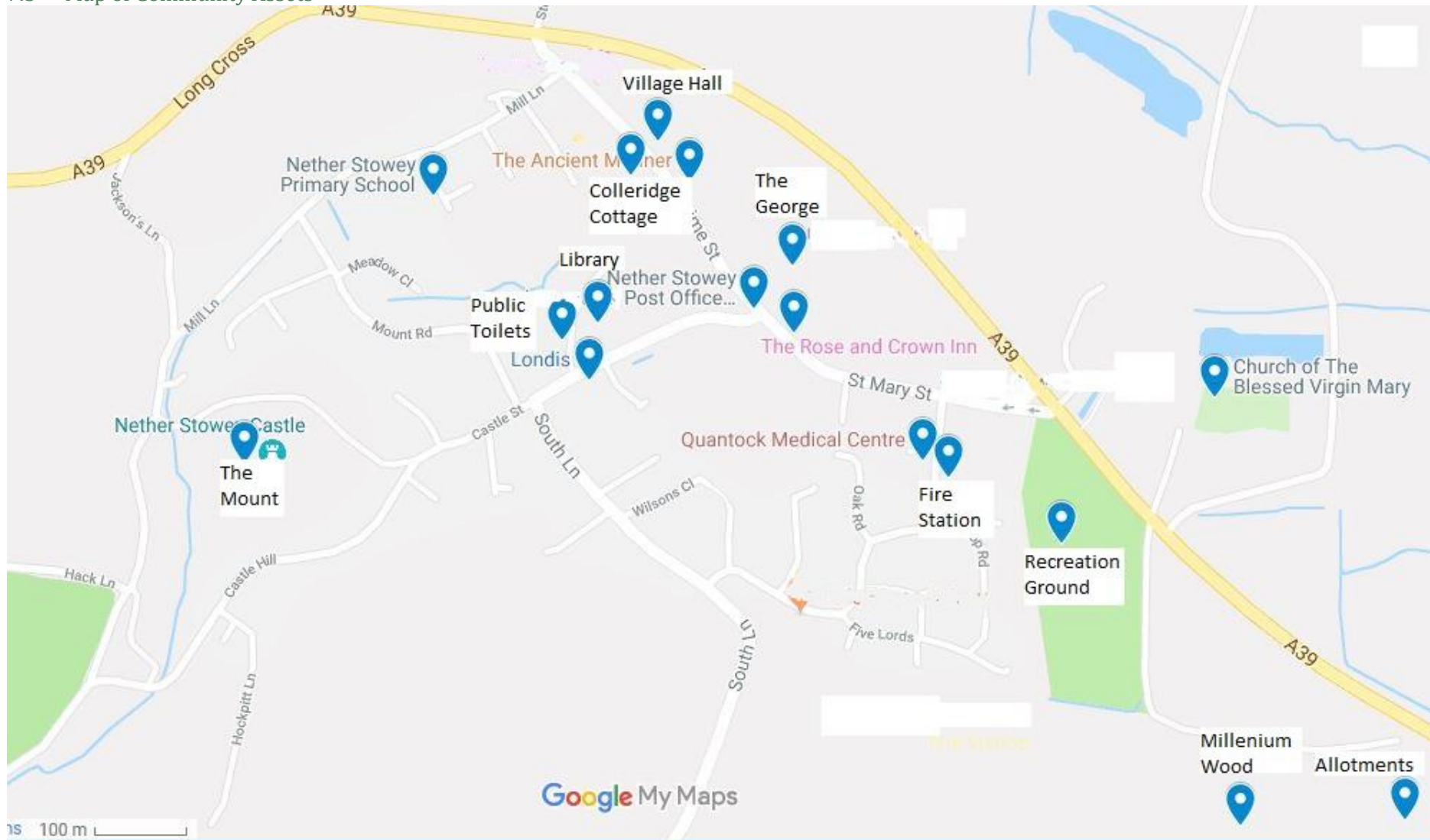
The Village Hall was opened in 1927 and has been used for that purpose ever since. Various organisations use it on a regular basis throughout the week, and it hosts the village Flower Show in August and a Pantomime and Christmas Craft Fair in December. In addition, there are dances, public consultations and one-off bookings.

Plot 173

The ownership of this small enclosed plot at the rear of the Banneson Road estate is unclear. It is a valued quiet space used by all ages within the community. For families it is a safe play area and for older/less able people it is a place to sit out in a pleasant space to observe the wildlife and to meet other people. As it is within the developed area of the village it is accessible to people with mobility problems and to people using mobility scooters and parents with pushchairs.

It meets the NPPF 2012 and the NFPA "Six Acre Standard"

7.5 Map of Community Assets



7.6 Clubs, Societies and Other Organisations

- 1st Nether Stowey Brownies
- Allotment Association
- Active Living Group
- Friends of Coleridge
- Friends of Nether Stowey Library
- Friends of Nether Stowey School
- Nether Stowey Football Club
- Nether Stowey Recreation Ground and Village Hall CIO
- Nether Stowey Short Mat Bowls
- Nether Stowey Twinning Association
- Nether Stowey United Charity
- Nether Stowey Women's Institute
- Nether Stowey Green Spaces Group
- Quantock Beekeepers Association
- Quantock Quilters
- Royal British legion
- The Quantock Flower Club
- The Quantock Musical Theatre Co.
- Stowey Bears
- Stowey Book Club
- Stowey Gardeners
- Urban Saints Juniors and Seniors
- Walkers are Welcome
- Wednesday Day centre

The wide range of groups attest to the vibrancy of village life. They cater for all age groups and a variety of interests. The majority support a specific interest, whilst a few have a more general mandate to help fellow citizens. In the case of the Parish Council, which is essential to the 'running' of the village, it receives further support from the Community Council for Somerset, Somerset County Council and its District Councillors.

If there are gaps in provision, or groups that exist in similar communities and might find a place in our village, they may be listed as follows:

- Bell ringers
- Choir
- Drama group
- Musical appreciation
- Young Farmers

There are certainly villagers who participate in these activities outside of the village, and it may be that at least some of these outside organisations are best placed to cater for such interests; Bridgwater Choral Society, for example. There are, nevertheless, other interests for which provision could be made, given appropriate leadership.

7.7 Objectives and Policies

Objective 15: To support the preservation of existing community facilities whether in public or private ownership

Policy C1: Protecting Community Buildings and Amenities

Existing built community facilities will be protected for such use and their loss will not normally be supported.

Our particularly locally valued built community facilities are identified on the map in section 'Map of Community Assets' and are:

- i) The Church;
- ii) The Recreation Ground equipped play area; and,
- iii) The Library.

Development proposals for new, replacement, extended and/or improved community facilities will be supported where:

- i) the proposal would not have significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents; and,
- ii) the proposal would not have significant adverse impacts on the surrounding local environment (with regard to biodiversity, wildlife habitat and landscape character); and,
- iii) the proposal would not have unacceptable impacts on the local road network (with regard to additional traffic volume / congestion, demand for parking, and pollution levels); and,
- iv) the proposed use will be dedicated to community use in perpetuity and easily accessible to residents.

Proposers of development are encouraged to engage with the local community and Parish Council at the earliest opportunity to help ensure that any proposals take into account both this plan's aims and objectives, the needs of users and the views of the local community

Proposals for the redevelopment or change of use these facilities should demonstrate that:

- i) There is no need for a similar replacement facility;
- ii) There is no reasonable prospect of a viable continued use of the existing building or facility which will benefit the local community;
- iii) There is a need for the proposed development

To demonstrate that a business is no longer financially viable, evidence must be submitted to the planning authority in line with Local Plan requirements

"

Objective 16: To support the continued success of the school

Policy C2: School Relocation

Development proposals which seek to or result in the expansion, enhancement or relocation of the school to meet demand will be supported

Objective 17: To protect from loss and support the improvement of existing facilities for children, including the Recreation Ground play area and to

- i) maximise its use by encouraging the school to use it for formal and informal use
- ii) to familiarise and introduce school aged children to the recreational and leisure opportunities available at the Recreation Ground so as to generate a more healthy and fit future population
- iii) to promote greater opportunities for school aged children to explore, experience and enjoy fitness and healthy lifestyles through both formal and informal leisure opportunities using the Recreation Ground

Policy C3: Recreation Ground

Support will be given to project seeking to enhance the facilities at the Recreation Ground. In addition, developers are encouraged to enhance and expand the existing facilities at the Recreation Ground rather than create new facilities within the village except small children’s play facilities (LAP)

8 BUSINESS Objective and Policies

8.1 Introduction

A good business and employment future for Nether Stowey would seem to rest on the village retaining Tier 2 status, enabling it to maintain employment in the school and medical centre as well as further developing its tourism and leisure businesses. Planning applications for business development, such as the work units established at Inwood Farm, need encouragement and support. There seems a clear need with the aging population and available local workforce for care home provision in a Tier 2 settlement.

It is therefore suggested that the Parish Council may be able to take action in the form of a business and employment commitment to the community, maintain pressure on the relevant bodies to improve broadband reception and continue pressure with regard to bus services. Further action would be welcomed by the tourism businesses for improved signage and tourist information.

8.2 Sedgemoor Policies¹

District Wide

Sustainable employment proposals will include the provision of managed workspace, business incubation units and opportunities for home working with particular reference to higher skills². Schemes for farm diversification, which contribute to the long-term operation and viability of the farm holding, and proposals for the conversion and re-use of appropriate existing buildings that encourage rural enterprise and provide new employment space will be encouraged.

Although brownfield sites are prioritised for development³, in Nether Stowey the Cricketer Farm site is now rejected for future employment land potential⁴ and planning permission granted for a mixed-use scheme comprising the change of use of storage building (use class B8) to light industrial use (use class B1⁵) as well as units of accommodation.

¹ Core Strategy P6: Place Making Policies, Countryside

² Core Strategy May 2013 5.141

³ Core Strategy Policy D11

⁴ Employment_Land_Review_2016.pdf (This is an Evidence Base document headed ‘Evidence Base - Sedgemoor Employment Land Review’) See <https://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/article/1256/Evidence-Base-documents>

⁵ [http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/planning_online/\(S\(1c4e0nov0lsjc1azvr1mhvua\)\)/Details.aspx?App=36/16/00030](http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/planning_online/(S(1c4e0nov0lsjc1azvr1mhvua))/Details.aspx?App=36/16/00030)

Tier 2

Nether Stowey is designated a Tier 2 settlement, previously identified as a Key Rural Settlement, that because of its location and facilities is considered able to offer supporting and vital services to its own community and to the scattered surrounding settlements⁶. Existing employment opportunities should be maintained and small-scale employment growth, appropriate to the village's scale and character, is anticipated together with the retention of existing and provision of new key local services and facilities⁷.

Nether Stowey – matrix forming basis of settlement's Tier Two hierarchy, tiers are regularly reviewed and moved in accordance

8.3 Retail⁸

Retail activities should meet the local and tourism needs and in so doing should preserve and enhance the character and vitality of the village. In the countryside, specialist retail such as farm shops may be allowed⁹.

8.4 Tourism¹⁰

The tourism objectives¹¹ are to improve the quality and diversity of the offer, developing higher quality job opportunities and extending the tourism season as well as benefitting the local community through access to facilities and also increasing access by sustainable modes of transport. The season is limited in an area where the sustainable activity that can stimulate accommodation, retail and food and drink activities largely focus on walking, cycling and horse riding. Nether Stowey benefits from the Quantocks Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the National Trust's Coleridge Cottage in the village and the Coleridge Way Walk.

Sedgemoor is concerned that Hinkley Point C accommodation should not significantly divert existing tourism accommodation away from its original purpose¹².

Within the village, involved businesses commented that tourism for leisure and pleasure risks being adversely affected by overdevelopment. Craft courses bring visitors to the village, directly and indirectly. Walking groups are being encouraged to visit the parish and there are signs of this increasing over time, but facilities are required for those visitors such as parking and places to eat in order to make this a success¹³. There are several small family-run businesses offering accommodation and these also provide some limited employment to locals as well as additional business for the pubs and shops. Tourism is a part of the offering by the village and does support some of the businesses operating here. Coleridge Cottage is run mainly by volunteers and it does bring in many visitors to the village who then spend some of their money in local establishments, although the attraction is usually for less than an hour or so.

⁶ Core Strategy Policy P4: Key Rural Settlements

⁷ Sedgemoor Local Plan Table 4.6 and Core Strategy Policy D11: Economic Prosperity

⁸ Core Strategy Policy D13: Retail Hierarchy, P4: Key Rural Settlements and P5: Other Sustainable Settlements

⁹ Sedgemoor Local Plan Policy T14: Countryside Retail Uses

¹⁰ Core Strategy Section 5, Policy D12

¹¹ Core Strategy Policy D12

¹² Core Strategy Policies D12, P5

¹³ <https://www.stoweywalking.co.uk>

It should also be noted that given the lack of public transport in the village, visitors to the village also certainly need personal transport, an issue for 'eco-tourists, and which also adds to the existing parking challenges.

8.5 Care homes, specialist accommodation and health care facilities

In meeting the needs of the local area attention should be paid to the demographic of an aging population and attention to health inequalities. To this end Sedgemoor favours the provision of care homes and health care facilities, accessible by sustainable modes of transport¹⁴.

Suitably located development proposals, including in partnership with the Council, to provide additional, extended or enhanced health care provision addressing existing health inequalities and accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes will be supported. New development that creates a need for additional health care that cannot be met through existing facilities will be expected to meet any identified shortfall.

8.6 Hinkley Point C

Hinkley Point C offers opportunity in the parish for small scale specialist business development as well as direct employment opportunities and training and skills¹⁵. Nether Stowey already includes a farm diversification Park and Ride scheme¹⁶ for Hinkley Point, with the associated link to employment opportunities.

Local study of the Mitigation and Compensation policies that cover economic benefits for the community, cultural, leisure and recreation facilities and emergency service resources investigation could lead to improved employment opportunities in the village.

8.7 Parish Council Policies

Nether Stowey Parish Council will use the Neighbourhood Plan, when adopted, to develop its policies.

However, in March 2017 the Council believed that Nether Stowey did not meet the criteria for Tier Two settlements and should therefore be re-designated as a Tier Three. The Council commented accordingly on the Proposed Submission Local Plan 2011-2032 (Regulation 19 consultation), citing lack of public transport, infrastructure limitations, reducing local employment opportunities, poor telephone exchange capacity with restricted broadband services and restricted mobile coverage.

8.8 Nether Stowey Data

ONS statistics are taken from the 2011 Census, seven years ago, when the school leaving age, now 18, was 16 years and Cricketer Cheese was a going concern.

The population of Nether Stowey was 1373 - 1153 aged 16 and over, 220 children.

¹⁴ Sedgemoor Local Plan

¹⁵ Sedgemoor Local Plan Policy MIP2: Hinkley Point Associated and Ancillary Development and Policy MIP3: Hinkley Point C Mitigation and Compensation

¹⁶ Core Strategy 4.18

The past forty years has seen a decline in the number and availability of full-time jobs within the parish of Nether Stowey as places of employment have closed down and the premises used for residential development. Activities associated with the countryside such as those of the farrier and saddler no longer operate in the centre of the village and work associated with land management has declined. The Quantock Poultry packing station, laid off some 150-local people in November 1985 and the brownfield site is now a substantial housing estate. A number of years ago the Cricketer Cheese factory, referred to above, closed with loss of 90, including specialist jobs. The future of both the post office and the library are in doubt.

With loss of work opportunities, the self-sustainability of the settlement has consequently also seen a decline with loss of Lloyds Bank, Ellis's General Store, Hubbard's Bakery, Stafford's Pharmacy and several specialist shops and facilities. All these premises are now living accommodation and have recently been followed by conversion of Gulliford's Garage to several accommodation units. Nether Stowey has increasingly become a dormitory settlement. Over 80% of the 592 employed persons travel to work by car or van¹⁷.

Work opportunities within the parish range from professional through skilled to semi- and unskilled and include the school, health centre, shops, tourist accommodation, pubs, fire service, electrical and plumbing trades, gardening, maintenance and building. Over one third of all residents in the village have no or minimal qualifications (Table 3)¹⁸.

The 'economically active' residents are mainly in full or part time employment with 120 recorded as being self-employed. More than a third of those in full-time employment are recorded as being in Management / Professional occupations (Table 4).

The 2011 census¹⁹ returns show that just over one third of residents between 16 and 74 years are 'economically inactive', three quarters of which are recorded as 'retired'. The rest consist of home makers, carers, sick, students etc.

Closer examination²⁰ of those who are self-employed include a proportion of creative and artistic individuals who have chosen to live in Nether Stowey because of the character of the Parish and its attractions for their customers.

At present, the population of older people in the District is relatively high when compared with other areas (particularly when compared nationally), Table 5. Over the plan period the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 67%, with a higher (115%) increase in the number of people aged 85 and over.

¹⁷ ONS Census 2011 QS701EW

¹⁸ Level 1 – GCSE grades D-G; 2 – GCSE A*-C; 3 – AS and A levels; 4 – tertiary education and qualifications beyond

¹⁹ ONS Economic Activity QS601EW Mar-11

²⁰ Business Questionnaire

8.9 Consultation

Village questionnaire

The neighbourhood plan questionnaire asked for responses for varying types of businesses and employment opportunities that are or could be accommodated within the parish. The sectors include retail, education, care and disability, leisure and tourism. Strong opinions were expressed in favour of the shops, post office, school, support services for the elderly, the library, pubs, and also very much in favour of improving the attraction of the village to tourists. Respondents indicated that they made substantial use of the shops, post office and medical centre. Less use was admitted for the hairdressers, veterinary service and pubs; they may, however, attract business from the surrounding villages. Well-supported aims for the Neighbourhood Plan are improved services for the elderly particularly and increased job and business opportunities generally. Importance was given to future business development in home-based businesses, activities/care for the young, care services and agriculture.

The lack of mobile phone coverage was much criticised.

The questionnaire does not cover the business and employment opportunities that may exist or be created by the hub that Nether Stowey provides for outlying villages.

Business questionnaire

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the 27 businesses that responded of the 49 contacted (69 businesses originally identified) up to 5 February 2017.

Responses to the questionnaire indicate the attractions or barriers to business, and consequently the associated employment opportunities, in Nether Stowey. There were more critical than positive responses. Mobile reception was by far the greatest issue, followed by lack of both parking and public transport as well as high speed broadband (Table 6). Village businesses are positive about the benefits of working with one another. Issues of staffing and social media arose in the course of the interviews.

Key issues arising

There are challenges for existing businesses to develop and expand due to poor broadband and mobile phone coverage being patchy around the area. The demise of bus services has led to more residents using their own vehicles to travel to work and also to travel out of the village to do their shopping reducing still further the spend in the parish. More residents are now using the supermarkets to deliver their groceries which further reduce the visits to the local shops.

It is difficult to see how business and employment opportunities can be improved in the parish as businesses continue to close in favour of accommodation.

8.10 Objectives and Policies

Objective 18: To provide local employment and to encourage the growth of existing businesses.

Policy B1: New Businesses

Development proposals will be supported where they:

- i. Improve/expand existing business premises
- ii. Create new business premises
- iii. Will lead to increased local employment opportunities
- iv. Maintain a balance of businesses and services for both residents and visitors
- v. Address the needs of a changing demographic (i.e. retirement home)
- vi. Improve the visual aspect of the village (i.e. parking)
- vii. Address the requirements of a Tier 2 settlement
- viii. Facilitate increased tourism

9 Actions

In addition to the Objectives and Policies detailed in the above sections, a number of other items were identified during the development of this Neighbourhood Plan which the Working Group have labelled as 'actions' which are items that do not qualify as either an Objective or a Policy but completion of which, it is believed, will deliver benefit(s) to the community.

Action Detail	Suggested Owner / Deliverer
Highways to be pressured to provide a traffic-light-controlled crossing at the entrance to the village opposite Cricketer Farm / Stowey Court. This is to provide safe pedestrian access to the Church and, in the event of housing development at Cricketer Farm, to what will be a new part of the village	Somerset County Council Highways Division.
Pressure to be put on relevant bodies and authorities for the restoration of the Number 14, or similar, bus service	Somerset County Council
Install signage to the Millennium Wood and markers at the start of the Coleridge Way	Nether Stowey Parish Council
To seek sites or existing buildings for small business units and for office premises to support existing businesses	
Pressure to be applied to Somerset County Council to provide funds for the improvement of Broadband services in rural areas	Somerset County Council
To pressure the relevant authorities for inclusion of the Quantock Hills on the motorway sign approaching Junction 23 of the M5	Somerset County Council, Highways Division

10 Monitoring and Review

This neighbourhood plan is intended to provide a clear planning policy basis for decisions for the period up to 2027. However as other factors (such as national planning policy and the strategic policies of the local plan) may change over this period, and development take place, the Parish Council should keep the plan under review to help ensure that the neighbourhood plan policies remain appropriate and effective.

It is therefore proposed that an UPDATE REPORT be made annually and published on the Parish Council's website to:

- • make sure the context of the neighbourhood plan is still relevant
- identify trends
- • identify the need to re-assess/review the neighbourhood plan's objectives and policies

The Parish Council will keep a record of concerns raised of potential traffic issues and bring these to the attention of the relevant highways authority. This will raise their awareness and enable them to take this into consideration in responding to future planning applications and allow them to devise potential traffic solutions if appropriate. The issues raised and any responses from the highways authority will be included in the annual report.

The Parish Council will liaise with local environmental organisations such as the AONB with regard to projects and common issues associated with the landscape character and heritage of the area. A summary of these points will be included in the annual report.

The Parish Council will also include information it has on any progress made on PROJECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE PARISH PLAN