

Appendix A: Policy Options

Each policy was scrutinised for its appropriateness and alternatives were debated and discarded for the reasons stated below:

Development framework

NP Policy 1: *In order to promote the quality of life of the villages in the Neighbourhood and to safeguard the Greenbelt and the landscape of the AONB, any new development within the neighbourhood plan area shall:*

(i) Be contained within the Village Envelopes of Freshford and Limpley Stoke, as defined in Map 2:

(ii) Protect and enhance the quality of the Local Green Spaces (see section 3.2) which provide a buffer zone between the two villages as defined on Map 2; and

(iii) Accord with the guidance set out in the Village Design Statement (see section 3.11).

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. ***As an alternative to envelopes, define Local Green Spaces around the villages where development would be precluded:***

Advice from our planning consultants and Wiltshire and Bath & North East Somerset policy planning officers suggested this policy would be perceived as “negative for development” and contrary to the principle of Neighbourhood Planning.

2. ***Include one large envelope around both settlements:***

Questionnaire results from residents expressed strong concerns over developments in green field sites which would undermine the rural nature of the community.

3. ***Use a Housing Development Boundary (HDB) instead of envelopes:***

Advice from Wiltshire planning policy officers indicated a different definition for HDBs in Wiltshire from Bath & North East Somerset. In Wiltshire, there is a presumption of development within an HDB which would not be supported by residents (see above). In addition, HDBs are only defined in large villages in Wiltshire’s Core Strategy and Limpley Stoke is defined as a “small village”.

4. ***Use an extended HDB in Freshford and an envelope in Limpley Stoke:***

The Management Committee decided against this approach which would have resulted in an inconsistent plan across the whole area. A number of the envelopes in Map 2 are cross-border reflecting the arbitrary nature of the parish boundaries.

5. ***Restrict Local Green Spaces to the two village greens:***

Questionnaire results indicated a strong preference from residents to ensure development does not result in a merger between and within the existing settlements in a process described, by some, as suburbanisation. It was decided to create a green buffer zone between the two villages to help preserve their unique rural character. This concept has the support of a clear majority of residents and adds a further layer of protection against any development of that land.

6. ***Not have a Village Design Statement***

Principles of good design are more likely to provide development that rests comfortably with the existing landscape. This will provide guidance and greater clarity for those seeking to develop whilst giving the local Parish Councils the flexibility for interpretation.

Housing policies

NP Policy 2: *Priority should be given both to the maintenance and the provision of 1-2 bedroom houses in the villages by:*

(i) Limiting any extension to existing properties to a maximum of 33% of their original floor space or their size in 1948, or justified through NP Policy 11; and

(ii) Providing an emphasis on new housing development to provide 1-2 bedroom accommodation.

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. ***Removing the 33% guideline floor space extension limit:***

The Management Committee reviewed the existing housing mix and the variation with which unofficial limitations on extensions have been applied by planning departments in Wiltshire and Bath & North East Somerset in the last 5-10 years. Unlimited extensions to existing housing will result in a further deterioration in the housing mix and increase the future need for affordable housing, for which there are limited sites available.

2. ***Removing the emphasis on the size of new housing***

Three needs surveys undertaken in the two villages indicated the need for more 1-2 bedroom houses for younger and older residents and smaller homes are significantly under-represented in the current housing mix. Without this policy, developers might favour larger houses since they can attract greater profits.

NP Policy 3: *New housing development will be limited to brown field or infill sites within the Village Envelopes. Potential sites for development include the Rentokil site and Freshford Mill. The Neighbourhood Plan supports the provision of up to eleven new affordable housing units up to 2033 through a rural Housing Association, together with a limited amount of market housing to help cross subsidise these developments. Any housing development that exceeds this level of provision will need to be justified in terms of its positive benefits to the character of, and community benefit to, the villages.*

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. ***Not defining the location for new housing***

Residents expressed strong concerns over green field developments and expressed a preference for new builds on brown field and infill sites.

2. ***Not defining the number of affordable housing units required***

Residents have expressed strong concerns over the scale of any future development. The needs surveys have defined the minimum need for eleven units and the existing brown field sites and potential infill sites can accommodate this number. Larger scale developments would undermine the rural nature of the community and, given the steep geographical relief of the land, potential sites would be difficult to find.

3. ***Using the 20% (for developments of 5-9 units) and 40% (for developments of over 10 units) ratios of affordable vs market houses used in the Lead Council core strategies***

The Housing Agency has confirmed these ratios are not required under the Rural Exceptions Site Policy. The expectation for any exception site is that it will be used for 100% affordable housing however, where there are financial viability issues, an open market element on exceptional sites will need to be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

Environmental policies

NP Policy 4: *All woodlands, as defined in Diagram B, shall be safeguarded and there should be no net loss of woods, trees and hedgerows overall.*

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. ***Not have this policy***

The Management Committee believed this policy is consistent with the CAONB Management Plan, protect the important ecology of the area and reflect the views of residents who are concerned not to lose the rural nature of the villages.

2. ***Include a safeguard over grasslands as well as the woodlands***

The Management Committee felt this would impede the livelihoods of the local farmers who farm this land.

NP Policy 5: *Additional and replacement street and footpath lighting will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances, and will be time controlled, and planned to meet safety needs, whilst minimising light pollution.*

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. ***Not have this policy***

Residents expressed a desire to improve the night skies and this policy is consistent with the CAONB Management Plan

2. ***Reduce existing street lighting***

Some residents have expressed valid concerns over safety of the streets at night. The ideal solution might be to have motion sensors on LED lighting which would illuminate when residents approached but affordable technology is probably decades away.

Village greens and play parks policy

NP Policy 6: *The two village greens, known as the Tynning and King George V Play Park, and the Freshford play park, are limited in size, are located in the heart of the community and are of particular importance to the community (see section 6). They shall be defined as Local Green Spaces and will be safeguarded from development other than in very special circumstances in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 77 of the NPPF.*

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. ***Not have this policy***

This might result in the loss of important green spaces in the heart of the two communities to development. This would contravene the Lead Council Core Strategies and the wishes of local residents.

2. ***Include Brown's Field in this policy***

Brown's Field is an important area for sport and recreation by the local children and adults. Whilst it is adjacent to residents in Freshford, it is located across the border in the parish of Hinton Charterhouse and is, therefore, outside the remit of this Neighbourhood Plan. We will however be recommending the protection of this land to the Hinton Charterhouse Parish Council.

Walking cycling and safer road policies

NP Policy 7: A 20 mph zone across both villages as set out on Diagram Z should be implemented.

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

Not have a 20mph zone policy

Reducing traffic speeds and making the roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists is one of the highest priorities for residents and increased walking around the villages has significant benefits for health and well being, the environment and car parking pressures. Some sections of roads throughout the two villages have no pavements and are shared between motorists and those on foot, on bike or on horseback.

1. ***Having a 30mph zone***

20mph limits are proven to significantly reduce traffic accidents and road deaths and the government has a plan to reduce road deaths by 33% by 2020. The 20's Plenty campaign in Limpley Stoke has been very well received by residents and has significantly increased the perception of pedestrian safety. The EU Transport Committee calls for 20mph limits in all residential areas.

2. ***Maintaining the existing 20mph and 30mph limits***

The current speed signage is confusing with speed limits changing within a few hundred yards and results in a clutter of signage on the roads. Village Gateways with a single speed zone through the community will result in greater clarity and less signage.

NP Policy 8: *Key village gateways and pedestrian routes (see Diagram E), especially those to the community hub (see NP Policy 10) and village schools, are required to improve the safety, amenity and sustainability of the Neighbourhood. The need for these to be safeguarded and enhanced shall be taken into account in the consideration of any development proposal.*

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. ***Not having a policy of safeguarding key pedestrian routes***

As stated above, reducing traffic speeds and increasing walking and cycling through the villages has significant benefits for the health and well being of residents and visitors. Walking to the village schools and the community hub are of particular importance to reduce traffic and parking pressures at key times of day. The key routes used by residents need protecting.

2. ***Not defining village gateways***

Village gateways impart to drivers that they are about to enter a different environment from the open road and that they should reduce their speeds. They are a proven and cost effective way of helping to reduce traffic speeds whilst reducing the need for signage.

Community facilities and assets policy

NP Policy 9: *To recognise that the area that includes the Galleries Shop and Freshford Memorial Hall is, de facto, the centre or hub of the combined community. Development in this area, compatible with its role as a centre of community service provision, will be permitted.*

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. Not having a policy recognising the community hub

The proposed community hub is not in the centre of either village, nor is it in the existing Freshford HDB. In recent discussions with planning departments, it has not therefore been recognised as the village hub. Given this location is a key meeting point for residents from both communities and where plans exist for new services (ie GP surgery) to be added, it should be recognised as the community hub to which key pedestrian routes need to be improved.

2. Not permitting exceptional development in the community hub

The proposed community hub is not located in the existing Freshford HDB, although it is within the proposed southerly envelope. The planning application to build the Galleries community shop was opposed by the Planning Officer and was therefore required to be considered by councillors of the Planning Committee who then permitted the application. Plans exist to redevelop the Freshford Memorial Hall for the benefit of the combined community and this needs to be recognised as integral to this Neighbourhood Plan.

NP Policy 10: *In order to help safeguard important privately owned local community facilities, the assets identified in Tables 4-5) will be included on a List of Assets of Community Value (as provided in the Localism Act 2011). The list will be reviewed every five years. There will be a presumption in favour of safeguarding them from any adverse proposal which would result in their loss.*

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. Not listing the pubs on the List of Assets of Community Value

Camra have estimated that 26 pubs are closing every week in the UK, an increase of 50%. The three pubs in the community occupy ancient and historic buildings and are key meeting places for the community. These buildings are privately owned and their value to a developer might be greater than as an ongoing business. In recent years the villages have lost two village shops, a restaurant and a hotel to residential use. The majority of residents are supportive of listing these assets.

2. Not including the Middle Stoke land on the List of Assets of Community Value

This land has been owned for many years by a local property developer. It has the protection of the green belt and, given the relief and presence of a stream, has been deemed unsuitable for affordable housing by a Housing Authority. This green field land is not maintained and is located in the heart of Limpley Stoke adjacent to the King George V play ground. The majority of residents would like to see it acquired and converted into an ecological reserve for the benefits of residents and visitors.

Business and technology policy

NP Policy 11: *Home adaptations or extensions will be supported which are demonstrably required to provide additional home working capacity for local residents.*

The following alternative options were considered and discarded for the following reasons:

1. Not encouraging home working

An increasing number of residents are working from home, supported by good internet, road and rail connections. Home working increases employment opportunities in this rural area and reduces daily car journeys. It also increases trade for local shops and retail outlets.

2. Not supporting extensions to support home working

Residents often require more space to accommodate home working. Not supporting such requests would counter the policy of supporting home working.