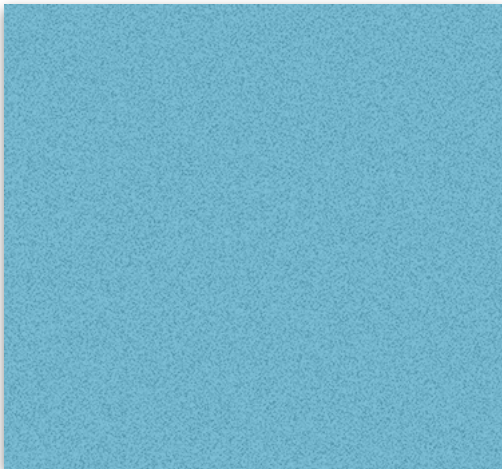


# Freshford & Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan 2014 - 2039





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## Section 1

# Introduction



## 1.0 Definition of the Plan

The Freshford and Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan (“the Plan”) has been drawn up under the Localism Act 2011 and embraces the parishes of Freshford in Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) and Limpley Stoke in Wiltshire (see Map 1, back cover). Freshford and Limpley Stoke was designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area on 30th October 2013.

### 1.1 Why develop the Plan?

Freshford and Limpley Stoke Parish Councils (The Qualifying Body) consider that a neighbourhood plan will give the local population a greater influence on land use planning in Freshford and Limpley Stoke. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Plan will allow residents of Freshford and Limpley Stoke to determine the scale, pace and location of new developments, which will ensure that Freshford and Limpley Stoke remain vibrant communities whilst protecting the unique rural environment which defines the character of this area.

The Freshford and Limpley Stoke Parish Councils believe their combined community requires a cohesive strategy for future development. The Plan has been prepared for and by the community and is locally specific. This is particularly important given the cross border nature of this community, which is not reflected in either Core Strategy.

Due account will be required to be taken of the contents of the Neighbourhood Plan by the local planning authorities in Wiltshire and B&NES in all

cases where the contents are relevant to the matter under consideration.

The Neighbourhood Plan is evidence-based and is aimed at bringing together the whole community with a single and coherent Plan. It will be used by the Parish Councils and other community groups, statutory agencies and utility providers to drive forward community projects and will help attract funding to enable their implementation.

### 1.2 Overview of the Neighbourhood Plan area

This Neighbourhood Plan covers the parishes of Limpley Stoke and Freshford which conjoin and are located about six miles south-east of the City of Bath (see Map 1, back cover). This area lies in the Limpley Stoke and Frome Valley and at the confluence of the River Frome with the River Avon. The steep valley sides provide part of the unique character of the villages. The whole area is within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CAONB) which classifies it as a “closed limestone valley” and characterises it as a rolling and settled agrarian landscape with a domestic and rural character. The underlying limestone characterises much of the building materials used in the two parishes.

The two parishes are over 1,000 years old and the distinctive county boundary between Freshford and Limpley Stoke is believed to reflect the tenth century Wessex shires. The remains of the pre-Roman settlement of Woodwick are located in fields near Peipards Farm in Freshford, and it is thought St Mary’s Church in Limpley Stoke was rebuilt in stone in 1001.

Freshford and Limpley Stoke are of roughly equal size with a combined population of around 1,100 residents living in 459 households (source: ONS 2011 Census). The two villages cover an area of 465ha.

The two parishes share many services, including a community shop, a primary school, a pre-school, a GP surgery, two village halls and two churches in the same united parish. They also share many social activities including the annual village fete. Together the two villages form a single, sustainable community, albeit divided by a county boundary - which is the rationale for a joint Neighbourhood Plan.

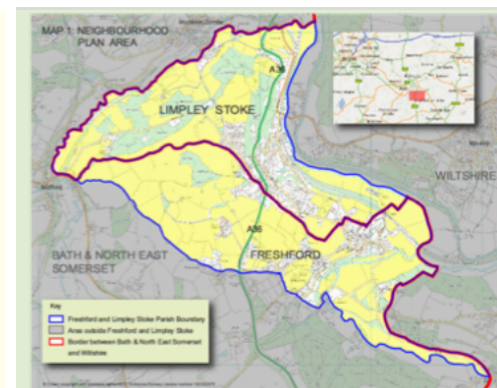
### 1.3 Timetable

The Plan supplements Wiltshire and B&NES' Core Strategies. The Wiltshire Core Strategy is intended to provide strategic planning policy until 2026 and the timetable for the B&NES Core Strategy is "for the next 20 years and beyond". This Neighbourhood Plan seeks to shape and influence future planning for Limpley Stoke and Freshford to 2039 and beyond. It will be reviewed every 5 years by the two Parish Councils.

### 1.4 Management structure

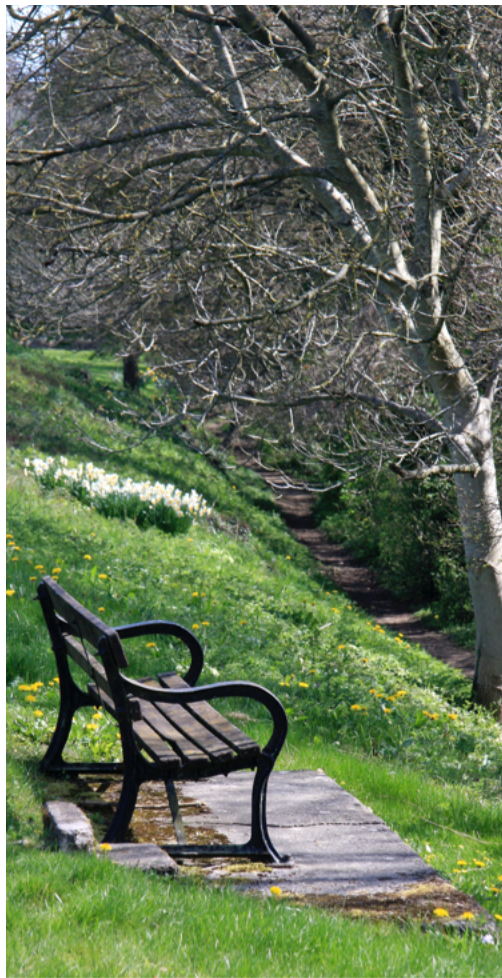
Freshford and Limpley Stoke Parish Councils ("the qualifying body") have the legal responsibility for the creation and implementation of the Plan and have been supported by the relevant local authorities. To progress the creation of the Plan, the following structure was set up:

- ◆ A Steering Committee comprising the Management Committee (see below) and planning policy officers of both relevant local authorities to oversee the overall process.
- ◆ A Management Committee of six Parish Councillors (three from each Parish Council and including the Chairs and Vice-Chairs) to organise and coordinate the day-to-day management of the Plan.
- ◆ A Clerk to the Management Committee responsible for administrative support and finances.
- ◆ Four Working Groups, which reported in to the Management Committee. They consisted of a Chairman and members of both communities to explore and advise on the main issues touching the community.
- ◆ A Communications Group formed to engage with the wider community.
- ◆ In addition, professional planning and design consultants have been employed to advise the Working Groups and the Management Committee and financed with the generous support of the Department of Communities & Local Government, the Prince's Foundation and CABE Design Council.



Plan Area map on back





### **1.5 Community consultation**

The development of this Neighbourhood Plan has been an evolutionary process and has been driven by extensive community consultation (see Appendix D). The key areas of concern and ideas for the plan area were first raised in well attended community meetings and workshops which kicked off the process in January 2012. These ideas were investigated more closely by the four Working Groups working in close collaboration with the Management Committee. This process was overseen by the Steering Committee which included representatives from the two relevant local authorities.

Further public opinion was sought through a number of village “surgeries” and newsletter updates to the community. A questionnaire was distributed to every household in early 2013, summarising the key ideas and this received a high and positive response rate. Over 57% of electors responded and all the outlined proposals were approved by a majority of respondents, many by an overwhelming majority (see Appendix section D5).

### **1.6 Proposed community projects and planning policies**

Through discussions with the relevant local authorities and planning consultants, the Management Committee has developed the ideas arising from the evolutionary process of community consultation into the proposed community planning policies and projects outlined in this Neighbourhood Plan.

### **1.7 Project implementation and financing**

The projects proposed in this Neighbourhood Plan will be supported by the Freshford and Limpley Stoke Parish Councils and implemented by local community groups and volunteers. This has been the successful pattern for recent projects in the community which include: the Galleries community shop; painted pavements; the Tynning; King George V play ground; Galleries’ solar panels; the cloakroom in St Mary’s Church; the Limpley Stoke telephone kiosk library, etc.

Over £400,000 has been raised by the community in the past five years to fund the projects listed above through grants and loans. The two Parish Councils are confident that the Plan will be a catalyst for accessing significant sources of grants and other financing to support the implementation of the projects listed in this Plan.

### **1.8 Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base**

As part of the preparation of the Plan, research has been undertaken to scrutinise the appropriateness of each policy and alternatives against sustainability, economic viability and consistency with national and local planning policies. This evidence base is presented in:

Appendix A: Strategic Environment Assessment - Policy Options

Appendix A1: Strategic Environment Assessment - analysis of policy options

Appendix B: Sustainability Appraisal

Appendix B1: Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening



## 2.0 Vision

The Plan seeks to ensure that Freshford and Limpley Stoke remain the unique and cherished villages that they are: vibrant, sustainable and forward-looking communities which are attractive places to live, work and visit. We wish to ensure that future generations will benefit from improved facilities whilst protecting the distinctive rural nature of the villages and their surrounding green fields and woodlands.

## 2.1 Plan objectives

Four key themes and objectives arose from the initial community meetings and associated workshops run by ESHA Architects. Four Working Groups were subsequently formed from community volunteers. These groups were tasked with the following objectives:

**Environment:** to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment within the Green Belt, Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Local Conservation Areas. At the same time we want to live in a vibrant community which provides for, and supports, people of all ages.

**Planning and development:** to drive and support sustainable development which delivers homes, businesses and infrastructure, helping our community to flourish as it meets present and future demands, while at the same time preserving and enhancing all that is best about the two communities.

**Facilities and services:** to improve health, social and cultural well being for all, to ensure facilities and services are in place to meet local needs.

**Walking, cycling and safer roads:** to create a safe environment for pedestrian movements, cyclists, accessible public transport and traffic on roads.

Building on these four objectives, in the sections that follow, the Plan addresses each of these in turn and applies them to each chapter. They are:

**Context:** Here are set out the relevant facts along with background information which together provide an overview of key considerations.

**Policy Objectives:** Describes the Policy Objectives that the Plan is seeking to implement through Adoption of the Policies. (See next.)

**Policy/ Policies and Reasons:** Describes the specific policies that the Plan seeks to implement together with the reasons underpinning their implementation. It is these Policies which are at the heart of the Inspection, Referendum and Adoption process. The Policies are highlighted for clarification.

**Other ongoing work and actions:** Here is set out a wide range of work, schemes, projects and ideas which although outside the scope of Planning Policy have been raised by residents during the course of the public consultation on the Plan. They are deserving of attention and the fact that they are not put forward as Policies does not mean they will pass unnoticed. Some will be pursued by the Parish Councils as a necessary part of their remit while others may be taken forward by the community as a whole or groups within the community depending on the circumstances. The community has a strong record of action and achievement. The Plan recognises this and seeks to build on it.

## Section 2

# Vision & Objectives





### Section 3

# Planning & Development



## 3.0 Context

The first core principle is that planning should empower *“local people to shape their surroundings with succinct local plans and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area.”* National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 17.

**3.0.01** Freshford and Limpley Stoke include the hamlets of Sharpstone, Pipehouse, Midford Lane, Park Corner and Waterhouse. The topography and history of these communities have resulted in these hamlets being separated by green fields and woodlands, which account for their unique rural character.

**3.0.02** Freshford and Limpley Stoke are located in the Green Belt and are protected from urban sprawl by NPPF paras 79-92. These policies also aim to preserve the openness and permanence of the land surrounding and within the settlements.

**3.0.03** Both villages are also located in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CAONB) and are covered by the CAONB Management Plan 2013-2018. The CAONB Strategy and Guidelines for the area state: *“Sections of the enclosed limestone valleys are quiet and rural and retain a distinct secluded character with strong associations of peace, tranquillity and a sense of remoteness. Landscape character here is strong, and these sections of the valleys are highly sensitive to developments that may compromise these characteristics. Of similar sensitivity are the highly visible landscapes on the upper slopes of the valleys.”* See Appendix N.

**3.0.04** Freshford is a ‘small rural settlement’ (Policy R.3. B&NES Local Plan) within the Green Belt and already has a Housing Development Boundary (HDB) within which a limited amount of new, mostly infill, development could be permitted (see definition of the term Infill - see opposite). B&NES’s draft Core Strategy envisages 1100 houses being planned to be built in “rural areas” with a particular emphasis on larger (“RA1” and “RA2”) settlements outside the Green Belt with good local facilities and public transport.

**3.0.05** Limpley Stoke is defined as a “small village” in the draft Wiltshire Core Strategy and is within the Green Belt. As a “small village”, Limpley Stoke does not have a Housing Development Boundary and the whole area is covered by the Green Belt. Development is governed by Wiltshire Core Policy 51 with a particular objective to: “maintain the open character of undeveloped land adjacent to Bath, Trowbridge and Bradford on Avon and prevent the coalescence of Bradford on Avon with Trowbridge or the villages to the east of Bath”. The draft Wiltshire Core Strategy plans for at least 160 houses to be allocated between the three large and four small villages (including Limpley Stoke) around Bradford on Avon up until the year 2026.

**3.0.06** One house has been built in Freshford and Limpley Stoke in the past ten years. That is not to say that no development has taken place. In the same period there has been a steady flow of planning applications for extensions and alterations. In some cases the applications have resulted in almost total re-builds of existing homes while others have been on a more modest scale.



**3.0.07** The two villages reflect the social trends common throughout the country in that fewer people are accommodated within each house than was previously the case. For example, though Freshford's population is broadly the same as it was in 1891, then there were 148 houses. There are now 231 homes plus a further 80 households outside the strict boundaries of the Parish but who geographically feel themselves part of the community.

**3.0.08** The Freshford Mill dates back to the 17th Century and, until 1993, it was used by Peradins for the manufacture of rubber components for the car industry. A brownfield site, in 2005 detailed planning permission was granted to construct 21 units of housing on this site but the developers, Ypres Rose, went into administration in 2010. Since May 2014 the Mill was re-marketed at a value of £2,950,000. The Particulars of Sale make reference to the fact that a new planning application will be required before any further development can take place because there have been fundamental breaches of the planning conditions attached to the original Planning Permission. Concerns remain about the extent of the decontamination of this site and the current state of its flood defences. The Environment Agency have been consulted on the Neighbourhood Plan and their latest position on issues such as flood defences are incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal.

**3.0.09** The Pipehouse Nursery site commonly known as the Rentokil site is situated in Pipehouse Lane, Freshford, to the west of the A36. It is a brownfield site and is in the private ownership of a company, Belgravia Land. Early in 2014 the company invited residents to view on site its proposals for housing development comprising six units of market housing and four units of

Affordable Housing. This has resulted in the submission of a planning application for the erection of 10 housing units, which is under active consideration.

**3.0.10** Much of the existing housing stock has been extended to form larger homes. For example a search of planning applications for Freshford village centre made in the course of the last 10 years reveals 69 applications, 36 of which were granted for house extensions and/or alterations. Only 20% of the housing stock in both villages now comprises 1-2 bedroom houses, compared to 40% nationally, and over 40% of the housing stock comprises 4+ bedrooms, compared to less than 20% nationally (source: ONS 2011 Census).

**3.0.11** 23% of residents are over the age of 65. This figure as a proportion of the population is forecast to rise significantly in the next 20 years. There is little need-related evidence for housing specifically designed for the elderly and Avon Park retirement village, one mile away in Winsley, provides a range of independent, sheltered and nursing supported accommodation. Elderly residents might benefit from more 1-2 bedroom houses in the housing mix and their relocation to smaller and more manageable housing would free up larger housing for growing families.

**3.0.12** In respect of Affordable Housing, recent housing surveys indicate that a lack of smaller and more affordable homes has made it difficult for young families to remain in, or move into, the villages. Just over 10% of residents are aged between 21 and 40 compared to almost 30% nationally. Longer term, the lack of younger families will threaten the viability of key local services such as the Freshford Primary School and community shop. It is important to seek to enable young families to remain in the community.

### **Definition of an Infill Site**

*Infill is the filling of a gap normally capable of taking no more than two houses. Infill development must be consistent with the policies set out in the Plan and preserve the openness of the Green Belt.*

### **Definition of Brownfield Sites**

*Land that has been previously developed on (excluding agricultural or forestry building and gardens). E.g. Freshford Mill.*

## What is meant by ‘Village Settlements’?

*The three settlement boundaries define the main built areas of the two villages. They are shown on Map 2, page 11 as the Northern, Eastern and Southern Settlements.*

*A Neighbourhood Plan must contribute to sustainable development. Our Plan requires any such development to be on the brownfield sites at Freshford Mill and in Pipehouse and/or by infill within the three Village Settlements or the brownfield sites*

*This does not mean the guarantee of planning permission within the Settlements. Any proposed development will have to comply with planning law, Green Belt, AONB and, where appropriate, Conservation Area restrictions, and the tight definition of ‘infill’ – see page 9 as well as conforming to the Villages Design Statement.*

*The designation of Village Settlements and Local Green Spaces will help to protect the countryside setting of our villages.*

**3.0.13** The social housing stocks in Limpley Stoke and Freshford are owned and managed by Selwood Housing and Curo Trust. The current stock of nine properties includes one bungalow in Limpley Stoke and a mix of eight homes in Freshford.

**3.0.14** Two local housing needs assessments have been undertaken in the last 5 years in Limpley Stoke and Freshford (see Appendix J, J1, J2). The results of these have been widely published over the period.

**3.0.15** A joint parish housing needs assessment completed in August 2009 indicated the need for a minimum of eleven affordable houses in Freshford and Limpley Stoke between 2009-2012. These comprised seven 1-2 bedroom and four 2-3 bedroom houses with nine rental and two shared ownership homes.

**3.0.16** The most recent housing needs survey undertaken in Limpley Stoke in October 2011 indicated a need for a minimum of six affordable houses between 2011-2014. These comprised one 1-bedroom, three 2-bedroom and two 3-bedroom houses with four rental and two shared ownership homes. Wiltshire’s Housing Register in April 2013, which only covers rental homes, shows applications for five affordable houses and these numbers have been consistent over time.

**3.0.17** The two Parish Councils in cooperation with the two Local Authorities and English Rural Housing Association have over the course of the last six years worked together to identify sites for affordable housing within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Over that time more than 50 potential sites have been identified and approaches made to the relevant land owners. Despite

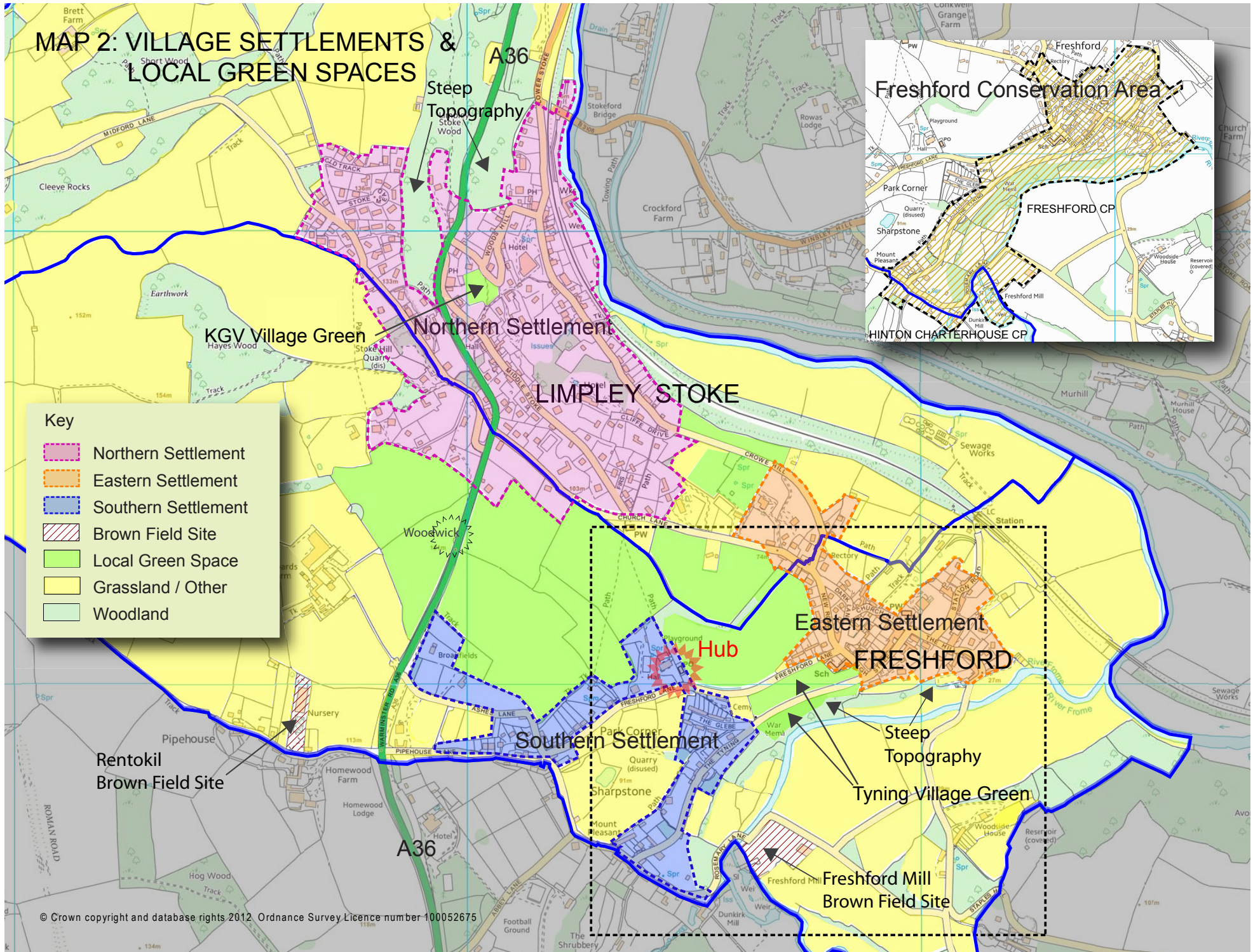
these extensive enquiries no land has come forward for development for Affordable Housing.

**3.0.18** An average of the above housing needs surveys undertaken in the past 5 years, together with a review of the up-to-date Needs Register, shows demonstrable need for six to eight affordable homes for people with a local connection. These are people who wish to remain in, or return to, the locality but cannot afford to buy at market rates. This number has been confirmed by Development Officers from Wiltshire and B&NES. It is also consistent with the housing needs set out in the Wiltshire and B&NES draft Core Strategies, particularly in the context of the environmental and physical constraints of the area.

**3.0.19** For the purpose of this Plan, a local connection is defined as people aged sixteen years and above who meet one of more of the following criteria:

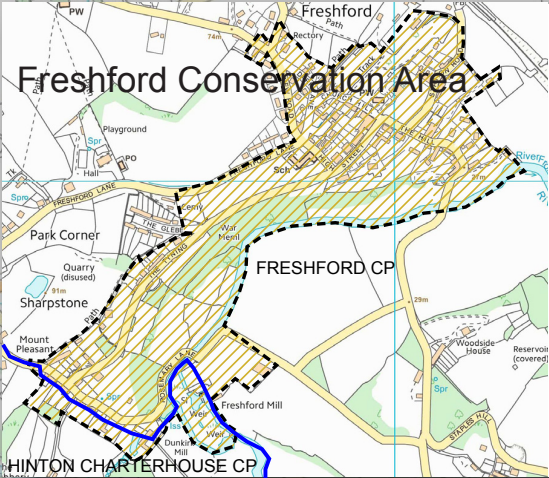
- The person was born in Freshford or Limpley Stoke Parishes and lived in the area for at least 10 years up to the age of sixteen and/or
- The person normally resides in the parish and has done so for at least three years; and/or
- The person has family who are currently resident in the Freshford or Limpley Stoke Parishes and have been so for at least fifteen years; and/or
- the Freshford or Limpley Stoke Parishes are the person’s permanent place of work for at least three years.

# MAP 2: VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS & LOCAL GREEN SPACES



**Key**

- Northern Settlement
- Eastern Settlement
- Southern Settlement
- Brown Field Site
- Local Green Space
- Grassland / Other
- Woodland



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### 3.1 Policy Objectives

To have in place, throughout the NP area, planning and development policies which are consistent and unifying and which promote the sustainability of this community.

To introduce a Villages Design Statement

To define as Village Settlement Areas the main built areas within the NP area.

To allow for additional housing on infill sites within the Village Settlement Areas

To pursue the objective of seeking to find an appropriate site or sites within the NP Area for Affordable Housing.

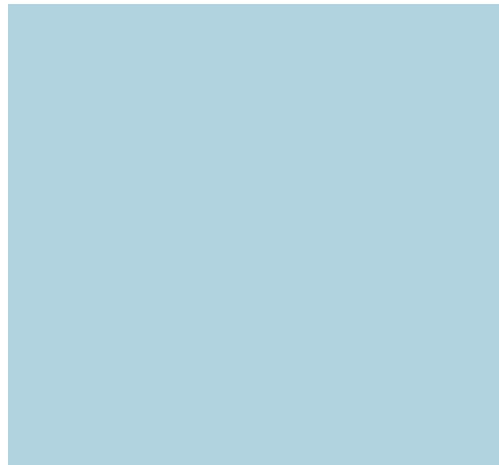
### 3.2 Policies

The following policies shall be used to promote and manage new development within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Alternative policy options, which have been discarded, are

detailed in Appendix A. The fulfilment of one of these policies does not over-ride the need to meet the requirements of any other policy.

### 3.3 Villages Design Statement Rationale

The Villages Design Statement seeks to apply a consistent approach throughout the Neighbourhood Plan Area in order to preserve and/or improve the physical qualities of the built environment by promoting sustainability, good quality architectural and landscape design. For this Policy to work well it is necessary that the onus is placed on applicants to show to the relevant Parish Councils how their plans conform to the Statement.



## Planning and Development Policy

(a) Any development within the Neighbourhood Plan area should reflect the Guidance contained in the Villages Design Statement.

(b) Applicants must demonstrate to the relevant Parish Council how any planning application conforms to that Statement.

(c) Villages Design Statement

*New developments:* New developments must be mindful of and sensitive to the physical and environmental context of the site and its location. This includes the need for any development to be proportionate both to its site and in relation to its immediate neighbours.

*Design:* The design, contemporary or traditional, must be a positive addition to the rural environment reflecting the character of its setting and acknowledging the local built heritage. It must sit well in the landscape and not dominate it.

*Detailing:* The detailing of new development and changes to existing buildings must reflect the quality of craftsmanship and materials both of the area and of the specific location. Where possible, local and durable materials should be used which improve appearance with age. Materials used must not aggravate existing problems, e.g. drains being blocked by silt and gravel. Any exterior lighting must minimise light pollution.

*Sustainability:* new dwellings will be encouraged to be zero carbon and water efficient and meet the Code for Sustainable Homes level 5 and above. See: <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Organisations/Technology/Free-resources-for-housing-professionals/New-build/The-Code-for-Sustainable-Homes>.

*Car Parking:* any development, whether for extensions or new housing, must provide for sufficient off-road car parking to avoid worsening on-road parking and congestion.

*Heritage:* The historic fabric of buildings should be preserved and repaired wherever possible (where buildings are 'listed' specialist advice should be sought.)





## Housing Policy

**a) The three Village Settlement Areas define the main built areas of the villages of Freshford and Limpley Stoke and are described as the Northern, Eastern and Southern settlements.**

**b) Development will be limited to infill sites within the Village Settlement Areas which are shown on Map 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan').**

**c) Infill is the filling of a gap normally capable of taking no more than two houses. Infill development must be consistent with the policies set out in the Plan and preserve the openness of the Green Belt.**

### 3.4 Housing Policy Rationale

**3.4.01** Three Village Settlements have been drawn (see Map 2) defining the main built areas within which a limited amount of infill housing may be developed. These have been defined using the following criteria:

- They use the existing curtilage, or built area, of the community, as defined by this Neighbourhood Plan. They focus on access to existing services and ignore the existing village boundaries between Limpley Stoke and Freshford.
- They avoid environmentally sensitive areas such as green fields, woodlands, flood plains and areas of steep topography.
- They exclude brownfield sites which are treated differently for planning purposes.
- They exclude the spaces put forward for designation as Local Green Spaces in accordance with the provisions of NPPF para 77.

**3.4.02** Proposals for limited infill development within the Village Settlements will be in compliance with the Villages Design Statement and subject to the controls and restrictions of national planning guidance and Local Plans and the considerations of access and road safety submitted by the relevant Highways Departments of the Local Authorities. The restrictions which apply to Conservation Areas within the Village Settlements will also need to be met. The Plan does not imply that all land within the Village Settlement Areas is necessarily appropriate for development.

**3.4.03** Given the existing imbalance of the housing stock and the stated housing need, the Plan contemplates that the proposed planning and development policies will bring forward modest sustainable development which is responsive to local need and sufficiently flexible to offer a range of housing accommodation.

## Affordable Housing Policy

To meet the needs of people with local connections, development of 6 -8 new units of affordable housing (or such different number as is evidenced by demonstrable need at the time of development) will be pursued:

a) By the conversion of existing buildings and/or

b) By the construction of new houses either on brownfield sites within the NP area and/or on infill sites within the Village Settlement Areas



### 3.5 Affordable Housing Policy Rationale

In the absence of any site or sites being identified for affordable housing, this Policy pursues the objective of seeking to find an appropriate site or sites within the NP Area. It recognises also that the Rural Exceptions Site Policy specified in the National Planning Policy Framework continues to provide a potential and realistic option to satisfy the need for such housing.

### 3.6 Other ongoing work and actions

**3.6.01** Freshford Parish Council will continue to maintain contact with the Administrators of the Freshford Mill site and will engage with potential developers to encourage the appropriate completion of the development, which is currently an eye-sore

with the partially completed buildings deteriorating since the abandonment of the building work in 2010.

**3.6.02** The Parish Councils support the need to make existing homes more energy efficient, affordable to run and comfortable to live in and see it as part of their remit to continue to inform residents of current advice and channels of support. The forthcoming B&NES Listed Building Guidance sets out how this can also enhance the character of historic buildings, as do the English Heritage guidelines.

