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# STEVENTON PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022 – 2030

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## Foreword

1. In April 2012, the Localism Act 2011 amended the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (the Act) introducing new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development in their community by preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan which can establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood. This document is a Neighbourhood Plan as defined in the Act.

2. The principal purpose of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is to derive policies that will be used in making planning decisions about the future of the area up to 2031, the Plan period. Once the plan has been formally submitted to the District Council, they will consult on the draft plan for a minimum six weeks. All comments will be collated and passed to the Examiner for consideration as part of the examination process. The examiner will consider if the plan meets the basic conditions and recommend modifications where necessary. Following this, the District Council will consider the examiner's recommendations and determine if the plan should proceed to a referendum. If the plan is endorsed by a simple majority of those who vote at the referendum, and the plan will become part of the Statutory Development Plan. The policies developed must all be relevant to planning, and therefore can only relate to the development and use of land.

3. The process followed is illustrated below.



4. Writing of the Neighbourhood Plan started in 2014. Residents have responded to 3 questionnaires over this time period (2015, 2017 and 2020) and this Neighbourhood Plan reflects community-wide comments, observations, and concerns about its future, bringing them together with census information, strategic and statistical evidence into a document that mirrors the communities overwhelming

desire to make Steventon an even better place to live and work, both now and for future generations, whilst retaining its heritage.

5. This Plan 2031 was written to provide the strategy, policies, and development objectives through which to meet our goal to protect and enhance the rural identity and heritage of our village whilst ensuring its future sustainability.

6. The plan has been produced by a Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group including Parish Council members, resident volunteers, and with the help of the VWHDC.

7. Once the Plan has been 'made', following a favourable local referendum, the Steventon Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the VWHDC development plan and become, with the VWHDC Local Plan Part 1 and Local Plan 2 (Local Plan) the starting point for deciding where development should take place and the type quantity and quality of that development.

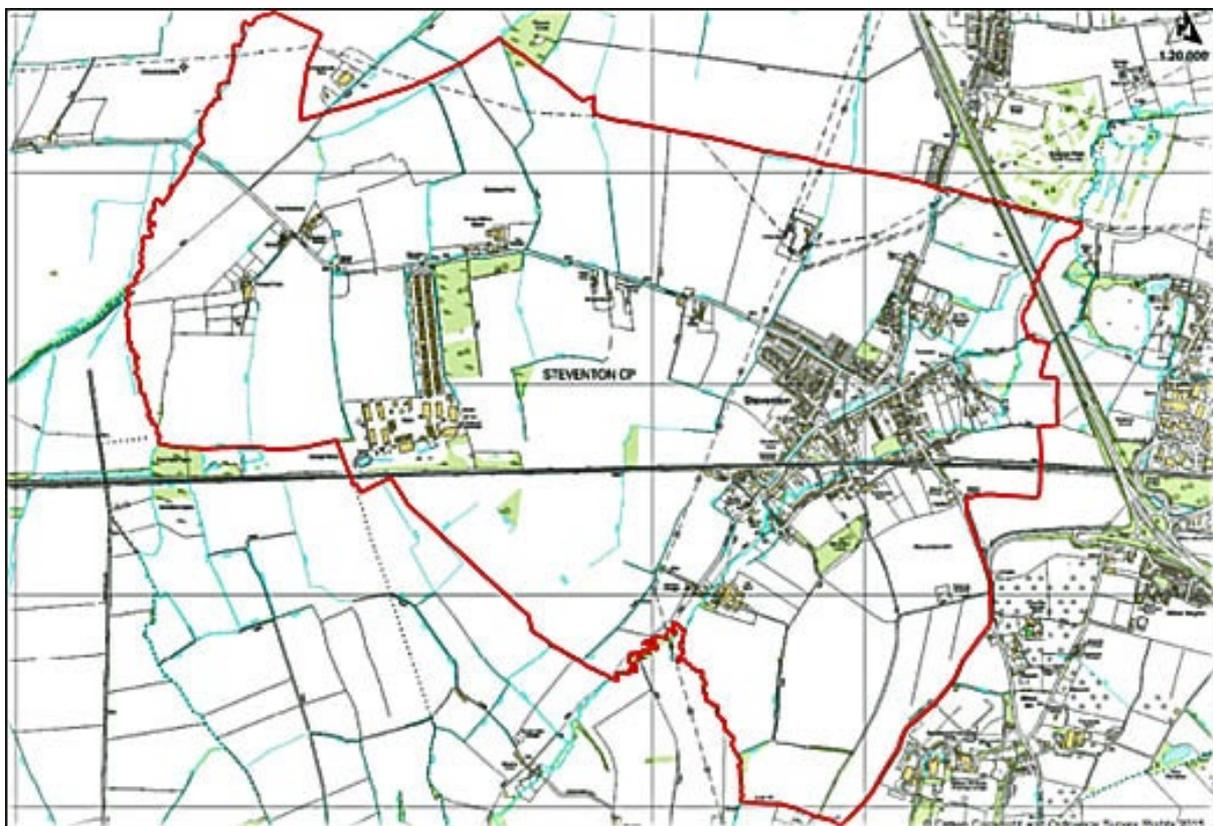
8. Steventon Parish Council looks forward to working with the community, the Vale of White Horse District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and other stakeholders to deliver the ambitions contained in this Neighbourhood Development Plan.

## 1. Introduction and Background

9. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to shape the development of the village in order to make Steventon Parish an even better place to live, now and for future generations. It will cover a 20 year time period with a review at a minimum every 5 years, or earlier, in line with any significant national or local policies, which may result in the Neighbourhood Plan becoming out of date.

10. The Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) designated the parish boundary area shown in the map below as the Steventon Neighbourhood Plan Area on 16 November 2015.

**Fig. 1 Steventon Neighbourhood Plan Area**



11. The Neighbourhood Plan process enables communities to better shape their living environment, to inform how development takes place and helps to influence the type, quality, and location of that development, ensuring that change brings with it local benefit where possible.

12. Neighbourhood Planning provides an opportunity for the community to have a real influence in local decision making, to achieve its long-standing goals through the planning system and to address the challenges and opportunities facing the Parish in the future.

13. This Neighbourhood Plan is based on extensive research since 2014 and is influenced by robust engagement with the local community. Pre-submission consultation has provided feedback from the larger area to that which shaped the original document as detailed in the consultation statement. Engagement with the local community will continue throughout the process and will include a public referendum at the end of the process where the community will vote on whether they want the Vale of White Horse District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Steventon to help decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

## 1.1 Location and History

14. The village of Steventon is a traditional Vale of the White Horse village. It lies on the south side of the Thames Valley, some three miles west of Didcot and four miles south of Abingdon. Oxford is 12.6 miles north of Steventon and London 56 miles to the east. It is known to have been inhabited for about 1200 years.



15. The ancient Causeway, the old village centre and the Ginge Brook run from south-west to north-east. The Causeway intersects the High Street at right angles and runs for nearly one mile from the church at the south-western edge of the village towards Milton to the north-east. The Causeway is crossed in five places, by the High Street; a large lane through Allotment Gardens; Stocks Lane; Mill Street and the mainline railway line. Ditches flank the Causeway on either side and form part of the village drainage system. The raised path is paved with pitchings and is lined with trees on both sides of the crest. This path is now, rightly, a listed building, with the most likely construction date being mid-13th century and there are records of the causeway maintenance dating up to modern times.

### The Causeway

16. With the advent of coach travel in the 1700s the north/south route from Oxford to Southampton became more important with toll roads being introduced. This was the main route through the village until the 1840s when firstly the Wilts & Berks Canal and then Isambard Kingdom Brunel planned for the Great Western Railway

to come through the village. However, the north/south road route became the A34 trunk road until the new bypass was built in the 1970s. The main railway line from Bristol to Paddington passes through the village with two level crossings. The station was closed in 1964.

17. These changes in the village geography are reflected in two conservation areas in Steventon – the first being the causeway and village greens, with neighbouring houses, the second being the skewed railway bridge and associated houses.

18. The North/South Abingdon Road and the High Street bisect the village and the Hanney Road approaches the village centre from the west.

19. The village has many valuable historic timber framed buildings including the National Trust Priory Cottages which date from the 13th century. The Church of St Michael and All Angels is of a similar age being built on the site of a wooden Anglo-Saxon church and stands in a beautifully kept graveyard which boasts a 1200 year old yew tree. The church supports the 19th century Church of England Village Primary School. Opposite the local school is the well renowned ancient pub, `The North Star`, named after the locomotive that pulled the first train out of Paddington in 1837 and located halfway from Bristol to Paddington. The unique character of this pub has gained its fame throughout the county. A list of Listed buildings within Steventon is given in **Appendix 1**.

The Priory



St. Michael's Church



The North Star



20. Several small scale housing estates have been built in the village since the 1960's. Recent developments since 2013 have resulted in the village expanding by about 40%.

## 1.2 How the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared.

21. The Steventon NDP was initiated by Steventon Parish Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014. A steering group of Parish Councillors and residents was formed in May 2015 with the objective of understanding the relevant processes and creating a compliant Plan.

22. The core elements of the process were:

### 1.3 Community Engagement

23. A questionnaire was designed by the steering group and distributed to every household by volunteers the week commencing 16th November 2015 for completion and collection by Monday 7th December 2015. Almost four hundred completed questionnaires were received (a 60% response rate out of the original distribution to 658 households). It was estimated that it captured the views of 67% of the population as at the census 2011.

24. Subsequent questionnaires in 2017 and 2020 have been distributed to addresses, in light of the increased population of Steventon and the completion of new housing developments, to reflect current resident views on housing and experiences of quality and infrastructure within the village.

25. Details of the questionnaires are given in **Appendix 2**.

26. In parallel with the distribution of questionnaires there have been public meetings held in the Village Hall, articles in the Steventon News and on the Neighbourhood Plan website to provide feedback to residents of Steventon.

27. The information gathered is provided in **Appendix 3**.

28. Based on evidence provided from the responses to these questionnaires the steering group identified the key issues that the Neighbourhood Plan should address in the pursuit of sustainable development. The objectives evolved during the process of developing the Neighbourhood Plan.

### 1.4 Engagement with external planning specialists

29. In January 2016, the Parish Council commissioned Community First Oxfordshire for support with a scoping and sustainability appraisal which was generated in 2016. The requirement to submit this document was rescinded following advice from the VWHDC in 2017. Nevertheless, the information gathered as an output from this exercise been invaluable in its contribution to the development of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The VWHDC determined that Steventon Neighbourhood does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and that proposals within the neighbourhood plan would not have a significant impact on the natura two thousand sites and therefore a Habitats Regulation Assessment was not required, **Appendix 4**.

## 2. Structure of the Plan

30. *The Neighbourhood Plan sets out:*

- The Vision and Objectives for the future of Steventon Parish.
- The Neighbourhood Plan Strategy – Sustainable Development for the Whole Community.
- The Neighbourhood Plan Policies.

31. These contribute to the Vale of White Horse District Council Development Plan.

### 2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Vision for Steventon

32.. Our vision is to:

***“Continue as a thriving village and to protect and enhance our rural heritage and natural environment by supporting high quality sustainable development which meets the needs of residents at different stages in their lives, conserves natural resources and improves biodiversity.”***

33. The execution of the Neighbourhood Plan will be the responsibility of the Parish Council by:

- Encouraging a thriving and prosperous community that delivers a high quality of life for all its residents.
- Promoting a flourishing local economy that exhibits vitality and dynamism.
- Supporting measured, proportionate, and sustainable development to meet local requirement.
- Endorsing policies that have a positive effect on the environment, including those that remove or minimise flood risk, mitigate climate change and reduce our carbon footprint.
- Maintaining the present high quality natural environment and its wildlife interests.

### 2.2 Objectives

34.

1. To ensure that the form, design, and scale of any new development proposals are of a quality to enhance or preserve Steventon’s distinctive local character.
2. To maintain a rural and woodland perimeter to the village and seek to ensure that new development proposals do not damage or harm the appearance of the perimeter or harm the important views from within the village to the surrounding fields and woodland.
3. To increase resilience to flooding and climate change by ensuring adequate drainage and sewage capacity for all developments and by the application of

design measures which mitigate the effects of changing temperatures and rainfall.

4. To improve and protect the natural environment and biodiversity for the benefit of people and wildlife.
5. To ensure any new development proposals address environmental sustainability through building design and infrastructure which conserves energy, water resources and materials and minimises soil, water, air, noise, and light pollution.
6. To ensure that any new development provides homes of a type, size and tenure that meet local needs and that site design provides a high level of social cohesion.
7. To encourage and promote that all new developments are well and safely connected to village amenities and are designed to create a sense of community.
8. To ensure and promote that housing is designed to have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the occupants through appropriate interior and exterior spaces.
9. To ensure and promote that any new development proposals provide appropriate provision for off-road parking.
10. To ensure and promote that any new development proposals do not have an adverse effect on road safety.
11. To reduce car use within the village by ensuring that all developments have convenient and safe provision for walking and cycling which connects to existing networks.
12. To protect and improve green infrastructure such as public open spaces, footpaths, verges and sports and recreation facilities.
13. To protect important local green spaces in line with the open space and recreation section of the NPPF.
14. To seek opportunities wherever possible to maintain and enhance the social and economic vitality of the Parish by supporting the expansion of services and facilities.
15. To assist in the development of a strong and sustainable economy, particularly in support for home working and small businesses.

### 3 The Neighbourhood Plan Strategy - Sustainable Development for the Whole Community

35. This Neighbourhood Plan is designed to frame strategy, policy and specific objectives that support current and future development based upon three sustainable planning factors. The three objectives listed on this page are taken from Page 5 of the NPPF.

**36. Economic** – to help build a strong, responsive, and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation, and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.

**37. Social** – to support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safely built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

**38. Environmental** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built, and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

39. To achieve these aims an approach is required, which works positively; with residents, landowners and developers taking a continuing interest in the future of the village.

40. This is the approach that the Parish Council will adopt in order to engage positively with the statutory planning process to guide future development.

41. People living in Steventon appreciate the special qualities the village possesses. It is a great place to live, and, in accommodating housing growth, it will be vital that the characteristics which make Steventon so successful are protected. Current residents accept that more people will want to come and live in Steventon and that this adjustment is important to any thriving and evolving community.

42. This plan is not anti-development, and the community understands the need to accommodate housing growth. However, there is great concern that new development in Steventon could erode the very qualities that make the village special if it is not carefully managed in terms of its scale and design. Any further growth must be of a quality which contributes to the character of the village and, where possible, which provides local benefit. It must be more than an exercise in meeting housing supply 'numbers' by the addition of characterless estates on the rural fringes of the village more typical of suburban developments. The objective, therefore, is to enable the provision of a choice of new homes to meet the needs of all sections of the community in a manner which respects the character of the village and wider parish.

43. The Neighbourhood Plan encourages developers to use Building for a Healthy Life (2020)<sup>1</sup> and to demonstrate the quality of their schemes, through full and thorough assessment.

### 3.1 Strategy

44. The heart of the village will be prioritised for local shops, services, and community infrastructure. Sustaining local businesses and improving local facilities is a key plan priority.

45. Housing growth is to be accommodated in a sensitive way and the strategy for housing growth is explained later in this document (See Policy 1). This is primarily based on modest scale developments within Steventon village but also enabling smaller scale development across the Parish. Future large scale growth with inappropriate development along existing village boundaries will not be supported by the community.

46. A number of small scale dispersed developments can be accommodated throughout the parish and could provide new affordable housing, opportunities for new and existing residents.

47. Important Views and Vistas are to be protected within and out of the Parish of Steventon (Important views and vistas are listed at **Appendix 5**). Green wildlife corridors are encouraged in and around Steventon.

48. Improved walking and cycling connections within Steventon, neighbouring villages, and nearby employment opportunities (Milton Park and Harwell Campus) are supported.

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<sup>1</sup> Building for a Healthy Life – Urban Design Group [www.udg.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications...](http://www.udg.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications...)

## 4 The Neighbourhood Plan Policies

49. Steventon's complement of policies has been developed in conjunction with the residents in order to manage the future development of Steventon as a means of accomplishing the strategy, vision, and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. Residents have been engaged by public meetings, responding to 3 questionnaires over this time period (2015, 2017 and 2020) and the use of social media. This Neighbourhood Plan and associated documentation reflects community-wide views.

50. Some aspects of this Neighbourhood Development Plan, as identified in community engagement, fall outside of the Policies and form part of the ongoing Community Aspirations. **Community Aspirations** can be found in **Appendix 6**.

51. Applicants and decision makers must read the policies as a whole when judging if a proposal would be acceptable.

52. The policies are separated into four themes –

- Housing and Local Character,
- Local Facilities and Economy,
- Transport and Connectivity, and
- Landscape and Environment.

## 5 Housing and Local Character

### 5.1 Justification and Evidence

53. The development of Steventon has created a village with rural characteristics and heritage assets. There are forty-three listed buildings, two listed structures and two conservation areas (under one designation). The conservation areas are outlined in red on the map below. The larger of the two areas covers the village greens and the historic Causeway and the development adjacent to both. The smaller area is around the now closed Railway Station.

**Fig 2. Steventon Conservation Areas**

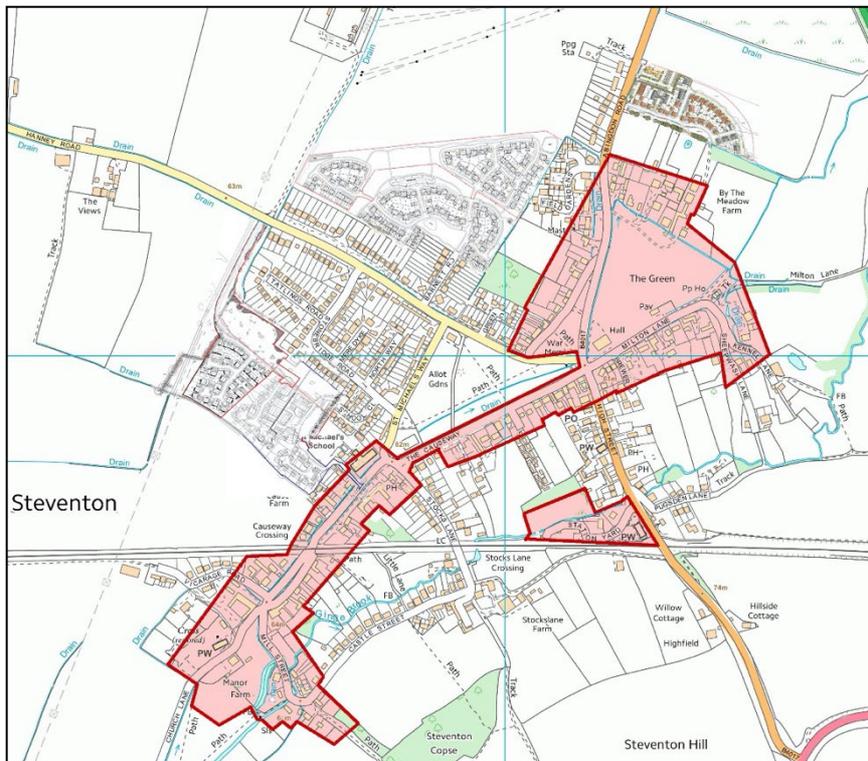
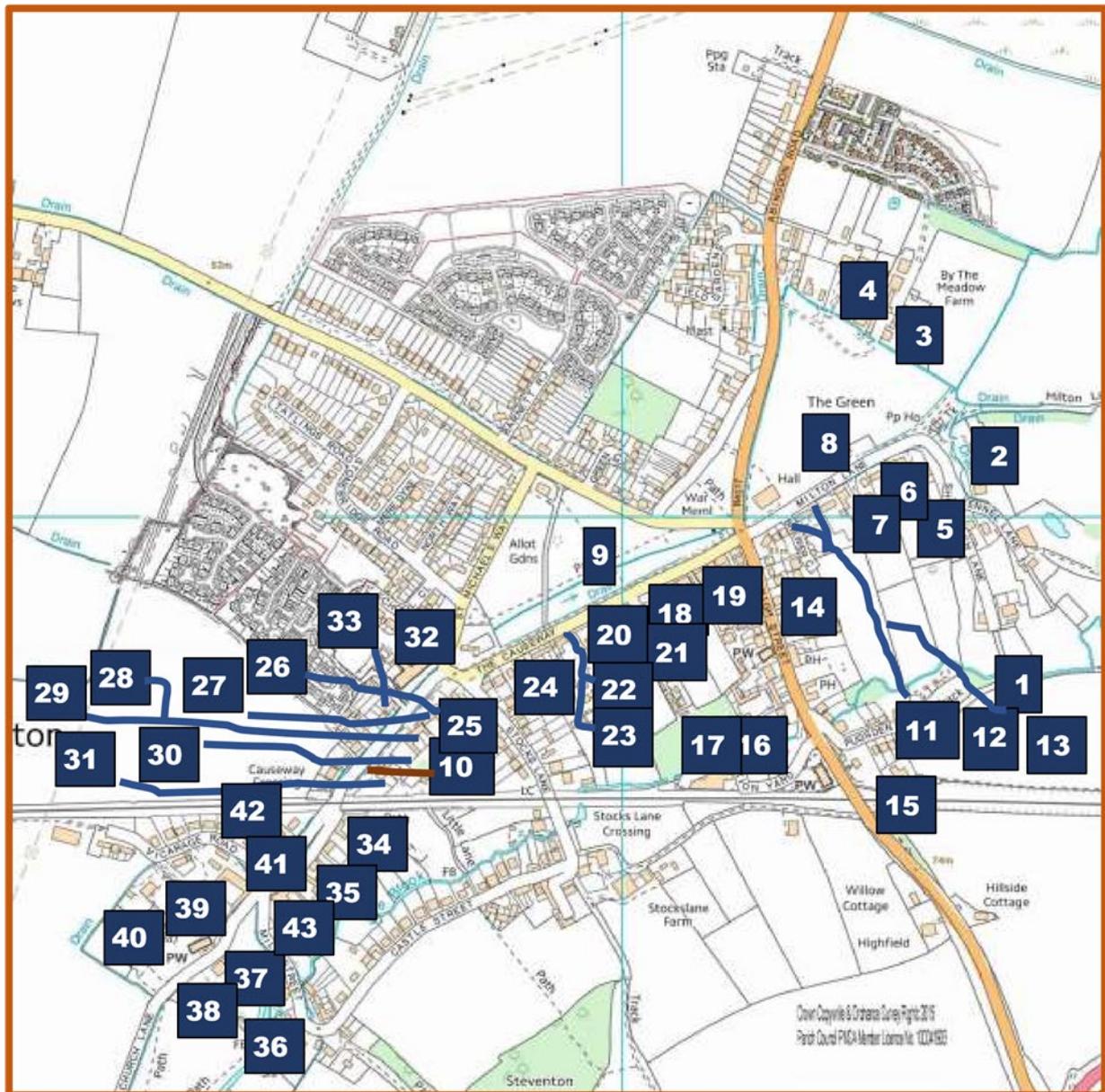


Fig 3. Location of Steventon Listed buildings.



52. The listed buildings are fully detailed in **Appendix 1**

53. There are several established large open spaces in the village. Some, such as the village greens, the allotments in the centre of the village and the fields and woodland on the southern edge of the village are visible and accessible to all residents. Expansive views of other areas are primarily limited to residents of houses abutting them, but limited views are visible to all residents and make an important contribution to the visual amenity of the village. Overall, there is significant green infrastructure throughout the village which contributes to its individual character and is enjoyed by the residents. This should be preserved.

54. An account of the development of the village through the centuries with photographs to illustrate its current character is available in the Steventon Character Appraisal in **Appendix 7**.

55. 20<sup>th</sup> century development was small infill or replacement dwellings and some development of new roads and cul-de-sacs. While the style of the architecture was sometimes not particularly sympathetic to the earlier vernacular, most roads and plots are reasonably generous and provide a feeling of spaciousness, a varied streetscape, substantial green infrastructure, and reasonable privacy within individual plots.

56. Since 2015 three developments have been built on the edges of the village. These have higher density housing, less variety of streetscape and small gardens. There are houses on these developments that closely overlook several others with a detrimental impact on privacy.

57. Recent developments have been built that have only one access road that allows both ingress and egress effectively isolating developments as stand-alone with no interconnectivity with the rest of the village by means of a footpath network throughout the village.

58. To retain its character development in Steventon the delivery of new homes in the village and the wider parish should be sympathetic with the distinctive features, scale, and grain of the local area. Future housing sites must be carefully considered and will only be supported where the existing character and setting of buildings is maintained and are consistent with the Development Plan taken as a **whole**.

59. Delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes is essential to support sustainable, mixed, and inclusive communities. In light of the community's increasingly ageing population, housing developments should provide a mixture of housing to meet the needs of the community.

60. The community recognises that housing development can sometimes bring wider benefits, such as the redevelopment of brownfield sites, securing the on-going use of a building and providing much needed affordable homes. Such proposals will be supported in accordance with these policies.

61. These policies seek to shape the continuing evolution of the village by ensuring appropriate design and layout of any additions to reflect the dominant characteristics of the Parish, its heritage, local styles and particularly its extensive conservation area status. The railway line running right through the main conservation area cuts the village into two parts with one essentially rural outlying part to the South including farms, the church, and the Parish Council owned copse. The much larger Northern part with more bustling village life includes the primary school and Village Greens and extensive allotments adjacent to the Causeway. The policies make clear that new builds beyond the existing curtilage of the village should give the feel and look of a natural extension of habitation.

## 5.2 Community Feedback

62. Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan by means of the Parish questionnaires (Appendix 2) and community feedback revealed the key issues that the policy seeks to address.

63. The following plans, documents, and strategies support policy 1:

- National Planning Policy Framework; Key relevant paragraphs, 101, 124 – 132 and 184 – 202,
- Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan's 1 & 2; Core Policies 22 - 26,37,38,39 and 40, Development Policies 23,36,37 and 38),
- Building for a Healthy Life (2020),
- Steventon Character Appraisal.

### Policy 1 - Housing Development and Local Character

- Development proposals will be supported if they make a positive contribution to the village character through innovative design which has been tailored to the local area and which has had regard to the Steventon Character Appraisal and design statement.
- Large scale residential development proposals will be supported where the layout and massing of the houses within the development reflect the historic grain of development found within the existing village.
- Development proposals will be supported if they demonstrate that detailed consideration has been given to the balance of built form and green infrastructure. Proposals which deliver beyond the minimum open space requirement set out in Development Policy 33: Open Space of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2 will be encouraged.

## 6 Local Facilities and Economy

### 6.1 Justification and Evidence

64. As a result of increasing mobility, the viability of many rural services has declined significantly over the past fifty years. Many villages closer to Abingdon and Didcot have a poor range of retail services, as local residents tend to use the larger retail outlets located on the periphery of Oxford, Abingdon, and Didcot. In Steventon, retail services have declined.

65. At present, Steventon's only retail facilities include a Post Office within a Co-op. Other services are also provided through these outlets, such as dry cleaning and a cash machine. These facilities are complemented by three public houses located within the village.

66. Steventon is adjacent to the A34, in close proximity to Milton Park, Harwell Science Park and Didcot Railway Station, thus most of the residents commute out of Steventon to work.

67. Steventon lacks retail outlets and the absence of them means leaving the village for all but groceries or bread with the loss of many small retail businesses in the village over the years (ca: Village Plan's 1975 and 2004). This shift has coincided with residents creating "home based and mobile" based businesses within the Parish. We would like to support home working and encourage suitable small businesses and believe that it is essential that Steventon retains and provides local services that will sustain the current fragility of the community and encourage local spending.

68. Classified as a larger village in Core Policy 3 of the VOWH Local Plan Part 1, Steventon has a splendid Village Hall on a large green and sporting facilities centred on a Sports and Social Club. These provide scope for a wide range of social gatherings and sporting activities which are essential for a thriving community.

The allotments in the centre of the village and the fields and woodland on the southern edge of the village are visible and accessible to all residents.

69. There are over twenty-six clubs and societies in the Parish, meeting in both the Village Hall, St Michael's Hall, and the Hall within St. Michael's School, whilst a wide range of sporting facilities are offered at the Steventon Sports & Social Club. The Parish Church is well attended and used as a venue for events, meetings, concerts, and musical gatherings. Open spaces include the Park with its children's play area, the Greens, and the Copse.

70. It is considered essential that Steventon retains and provides ongoing recreational and leisure facilities.

71. Several home-based small enterprises operate where space to accommodate them exists and three redundant farmyards contain commercial businesses. As there are plenty of job opportunities in enterprises close to the village the demand for employment is not a priority.

The main Village Green



## 6.2 Community Feedback

72. Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan by means of the Parish questionnaires (**Appendix 2**) and community feedback revealed the key issues that the policy seeks to address.

73. The following plans, documents, and strategies support policy 2:

- National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraphs 91 -93,96 and 98.
- Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan's 1 & 2; Core Policies 7, 31, 33,34, 36 - 38, Development Policies 8,9 and 14.

### Policy 2(a) Local Facilities and Economy

Proposals that support the village centre by diversifying and enhancing the range of local shops and related commercial services for the local community will be encouraged.

## Policy 2(b) Preservation of Existing Community Facilities

Development proposals that will result in either the loss or significant harm to a community facility will not be supported, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the operation of the asset, or the ongoing delivery of the community value of the asset is no longer financially viable, it is surplus to requirements or it will be replaced by a facility of at least equivalent value, utility and ease to the local community.

## 7 Transport and Connectivity

### 7.1 Justification and Evidence

74. Steventon is a rural Parish and there are no major roads within it. The busy A34 borders the community. Traffic flow is constant throughout the year, and significantly enhanced during road repairs or traffic emergencies on the A34.

75. The village centre can become particularly congested during periods of peak travel. HGV movements from the local storage and distribution depot and a lack of dedicated car parking provision contribute to this issue.

76. Local transport is by achieved by walking, cycling or by driving by car, motorbike, and mobility scooters. Recent developments are only connected to village amenities by one point of entry/exit and thus a tendency for excessive use of a car over walking/cycling and indeed use of public transport.

77. Public transport provision in the Parish is adequate, with a regular bus services travelling to Oxford, Abingdon, and Didcot together and Didcot, Grove and Wantage.

78. The nearest train station is Didcot Parkway, which can be accessed using the X2 bus service or by a four-mile road journey. This station is on the main London to South Wales line, with a journey time to London Paddington of about 50 minutes. Steventon is also affected by the main rail line running through the village that restricts access to the southern part of the village via two level crossings.

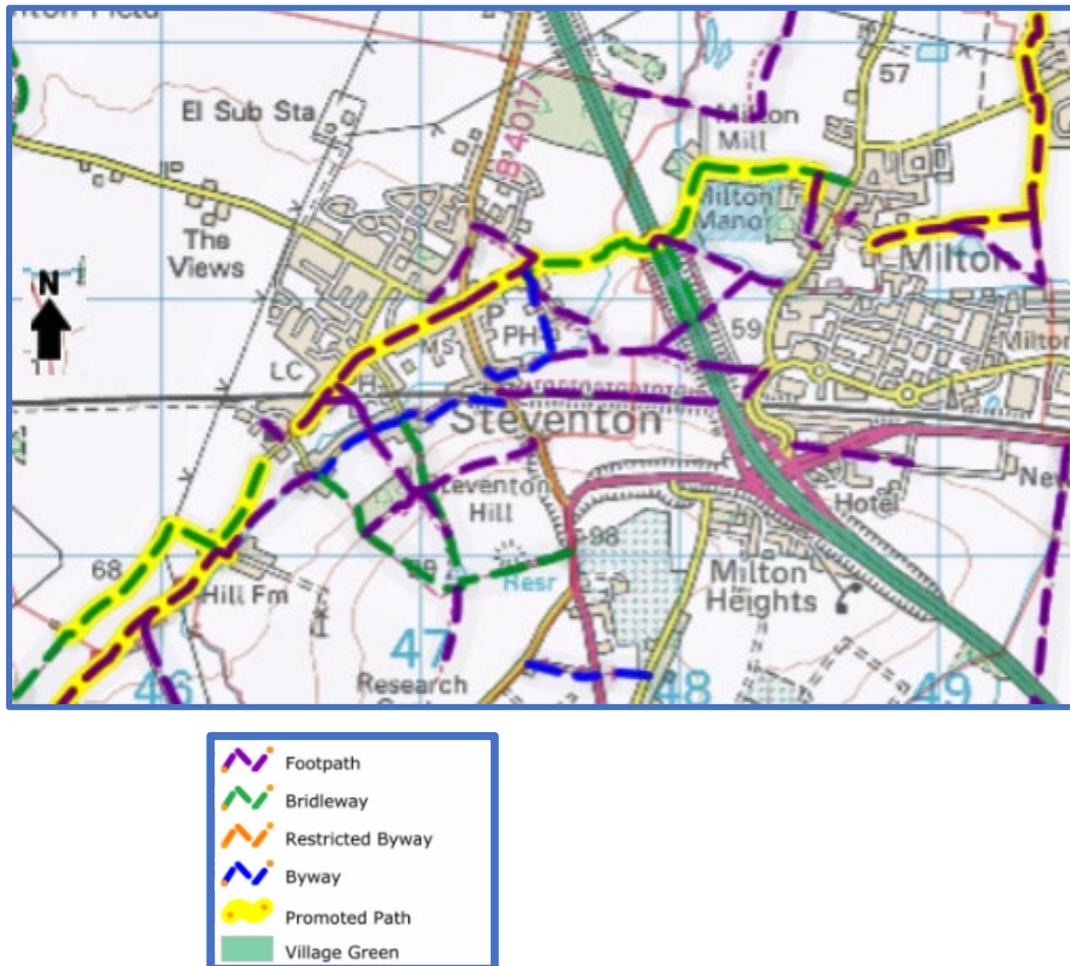
79. The Hanney Road and Abingdon Road provide routes for commuters from Grove and Faringdon to Milton Park and from Drayton and Abingdon to the Harwell Campus, most of which use the junction with the A4130 at Steventon Hill.

80. Two Public footpath routes to Milton are particularly prone to flooding. Footpath twenty, alongside the railway line could, and should, be improved to provide a drier route to Milton village, Milton Park and beyond to Didcot and Didcot Parkway Station. This is a community aspiration **Appendix 6**. If this route were upgraded a safe cycle route to both Milton Park, a major employment site in the area, and to Didcot Parkway station would be possible. The footpath network within Steventon also provides a route south-west to East and West Hendred. From these neighbouring villages it is possible to access National Trails – The Ridgeway and The Thames Path.

81. Footpath connectivity to existing new developments is limited, being restricted to only one way, in and out, resulting in incumbent residents having to endure crossing busy roads in order to connect with the rest of the village amenities. Any new development should avoid this situation.

7.1 Shows the existing footpath network within Steventon.

Fig. 4. Footpaths, bridleways in Steventon



82. The evidence highlights the lack of safe cycle tracks and footpaths. The present situation is less than satisfactory. The need is for safe cycle and footpath tracks to destinations like Milton Park and Harwell without which a car is necessary. Such car commuting could be reduced by the provision of properly surfaced and maintained safe cycle tracks. The creation of a network of footpaths safely connecting residents to bus stops within the Village is also a fundamental requirement.

## 7.2 Community Feedback

83. Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan by means of the Parish questionnaires (**Appendix 2**) and community feedback revealed the key issues that the policy seeks to address.

84. The following plans, documents, and strategies support policy 3:

- National Planning Policy Framework Paragraphs 108, 109 and 111.
- Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan's 1 & 2; Core Policies 33 and 35 ,Development Policies 16,17 and 19,
- Building for a Healthy Life (2020)
- Steventon Character Appraisal.

## Policy 3 Transport and Connectivity

Development proposals should ensure that any significant impacts from the development on the transport network or on highway safety, can be effectively mitigated.

New development should maximise opportunities to walk and cycle, including between Steventon and neighbouring villages by:

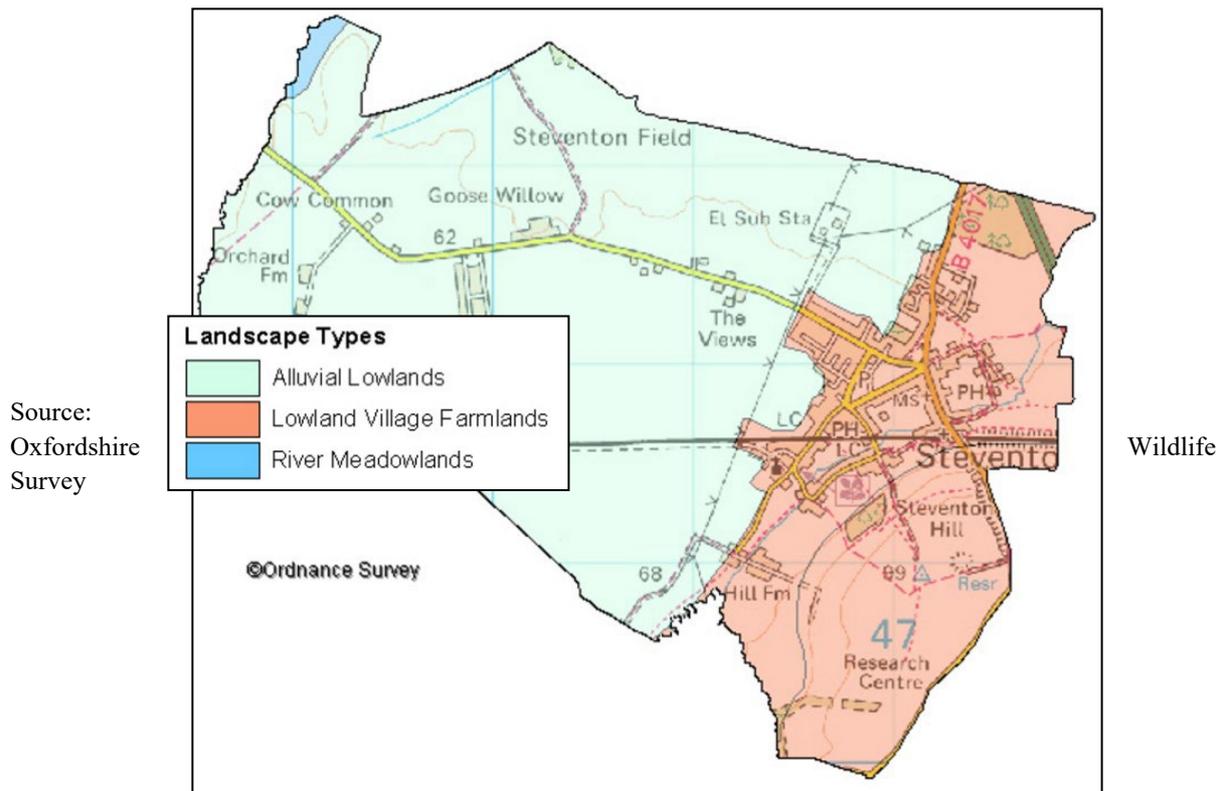
- On site: providing stretches of cycle tracks which pass through the sites, providing secure cycle storage, and incorporating good quality pavements for pedestrians and mobility scooters with dropped kerbs onto roadways.
- Off-site: mitigating the transport impacts of the development by providing link pavements and cycle tracks to key village facilities and public footpaths.

## 8 Landscape and Environment

### 8.1 Justification and Evidence

85. From an assessment by the Oxfordshire Wildlife Survey, Steventon Parish has two main landscape types: Lowland Village farmlands and Alluvial lowlands and a small area of river meadowlands. It falls within medium to medium high “biobands”.<sup>2</sup>

**Fig. 5 Landscape types**



<http://owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/OWLS/Home/>

86. In the five miles around Steventon the Lowlands landscape (in brown) is a variable, often large scale farmed landscape strongly associated with village settlements. Key characteristics are a varied, gently rolling and almost flat topography; medium to large-sized arable and hedged fields; thinly scattered hedgerow trees, which are mostly; ash, alder, willow, and poplars fringing ditches and streams; and prominent village settlements scattered throughout the area. The alluvial landscape (in blue) includes flat landscapes of lowland river valleys, associated with alluvial soils. It is characterised by a regular pattern of medium-sized hedged fields with permanent pasture and arable cropping; broad alluvial plains; mixed farming pattern with regular fields with both arable cropping and

<sup>2</sup> OWLS: A bioband which is classified as very high tends to support a wider range of wildlife habitats including some which may be of national or international importance. Lower biobands generally have fewer habitats and these are usually of more local importance.

pasture; densely scattered hedgerow trees of ash and willow; dense willow corridors bordering a large number of ditches; and is sparsely settled.

87. Steventon Parish falls into the agricultural land category “good to moderate” (grade 3) according to Natural England (Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007) Natural England 24 August 2010.) It is also categorised as good to moderate in Vale of White Horse District’s Landscape Assessment i.e., the land which is most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs, and which can best deliver future crops for food and non-food uses.

88. The Ginge brook with its associated water courses provides a rich habitat for small fish and frogs and hosts many ducks, moorhens, and the occasional kingfisher. There is a steady population of endangered water voles which can even be found in the ditches in the middle of the village. Rabbits, field mice, voles, hedgehogs, foxes, and rats are resident in the fields and open spaces. The copse of hazel and some ash, owned by the Parish Council, is partially coppiced on a 10-year cycle by village volunteers and the primroses and orchids are increasing. Strict rules ensure that the copse is not damaged or abused by fires, litter, motor bikes and horses, except on the bridleways, and thus it provides peaceful enjoyment for walkers and children. In the un-coppiced half, the fallen timber and undergrowth provides wonderful insect habitat and plenty of fungi.

89. Grey squirrels thrive and muntjac, roe and red deer are resident on village edges. Bats are no longer commonly seen except in the Churchyard and in some gardens. Bird life includes most common species with red kites constantly present. Buzzards and sparrow hawk prey on smaller birds. Small and tawny owls, a rookery, crows and a host of garden birds flourish. Swallows nest in the outbuildings, undeveloped barns, and some houses. Skylarks still nest in the fields, but lapwings have disappeared. Egrets and Heron are also seen in the Parish. There are several beekeepers in the village and masonry bees maintain colonies.

90. The tree population of the village gives a rich diversity. On the edges of the principal Green are many mature horse chestnuts, with mostly limes on the little Green. It is important that any future work on the village green, such as improving drainage, is done with care. Many willows flourish on the banks of the Ginge brook. Of particular note is woodland. One site that was surveyed has ash canopy and hazel coppice in the shrub layer plus areas which are just hazel coppice. Such woodland is a national priority for nature conservation. Woodland wildflowers found here include early purple orchid, primrose and sanicle.

91. The importance of this biodiversity to those living in the village was reflected in the respondents to the 2015 survey who supported measures to encourage wildlife, particularly trees on the Green, near the Copse and a pond on the Green.

92. Views and Vistas are an important part of the landscape that defines Steventon Parish. Many of views complement the built form and play an intrinsic role in helping to create and preserve the setting of the heritage assets and emphasise the qualities of the natural and formed landscape within the Parish, **Appendix 5**.

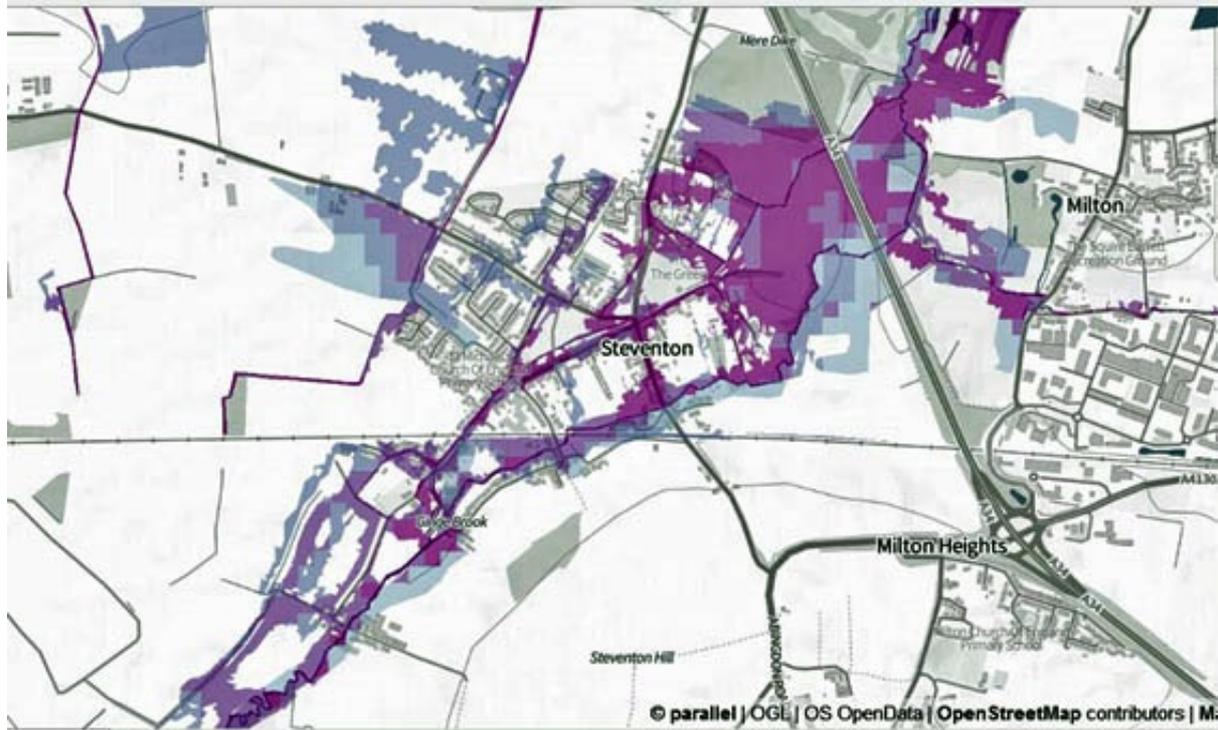
93. The edge of the village, particularly to the west and south benefits from fine, wide ranging views. The views into and out of the Conservation Area as well as the setting of Listed buildings should be maintained and enhanced as appropriate. The edge of the village, particularly to the west and south benefits from fine, wide ranging views.



94. Historically the village was regularly flooded as it is situated in a low-lying area. As a result, the village relies on a system of ditches and culverts to disperse rainfall and excess surface water. The main ditches are clearly visible on regular Ordnance Survey maps. The primary ditches are the Causeway Ditch and the Allotment (or North Brook) Ditch but there are numerous other ditches and culverts throughout the village. There are also ditches to the West and North of the village. The maintenance of these ditches is the responsibility of individual landowners which now includes management companies of the new developments. It is essential that the ditches are kept clear.

96. The South and Vale Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2014) included identification and records of high risk of flooding to properties in Steventon. In the last thirty years there have been five significant events, in 1992, 1993, 2002, 2007, 2014 and 2020. Flooding events were also recorded in 1999, 2000 and 2008.

Fig. 6. Environment Agency Flood risk from rivers



### RISK OF FLOODING FROM RIVERS AND SEA

Now with 3D terrain. Example: Ambleside.

The Environment Agency RoFRS data shows the chance of flooding from rivers and the sea presented in categories taking account of flood defences and the condition they are in, and describes the suitable uses of the data.

It uses local water level and flood defence data to model flood risk across 40 different flood likelihoods. Results are put into categories and checked by local experts.

- High: greater than 1 in 30
- Medium: 1 in 30 to 1 in 100
- Low: 1 in 100 to 1 in 1,000
- Very Low: less than 1 in 1,000

3

Environment Agency: March 2021:  
[data.gov.uk/.../risk-of-flooding...](https://data.gov.uk/.../risk-of-flooding...)

97. Where appropriate each new development application should be accompanied by a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SUDS) plan to show how the surface water from the rainfall on the development is dealt with, i.e. either using:

- collection tanks under the roads with controlled discharge into the foul water drains, or
- balancing ponds to collect water in an 'open reservoir' that would gradually run away into existing ditches, so as to disperse much as it did as before development.

98. The first method requires the approval of Thames Water to ensure that its existing drains are not compromised whilst, with the latter solution, there is a need to ensure that clear responsibility for the future maintenance of both the new ponds and existing ditches are both known and monitored.

99. The effectiveness of the SUDS systems is dependent on rigorous pre-planning site testing, calculations, material selection and regular post development maintenance.

100. Planning applications should include robust plans for the continuing management of existing drainage ditches and of all new SUDS infrastructure with clear identification of with whom this responsibility for management lies and the penalties for failure to so manage.

101. The present landscape to the South is rural rising to a copse and Steventon Hill Trig Point. To the West is the flat land towards Hanney which is currently designated for a possible massive bunded reservoir and already has new housing right to the permitted edge. To the North lies Drayton one field away and to the East is farmland up to the A34. Beyond it is Milton Park Trading Estate and Milton Village. Within the Village there are over four hundred mature trees mainly on the Causeway, surrounding the Village Greens and in gardens and orchards. This policy is currently largely enforced by the Parish Council and Causeway Trustees but must be adopted to new developments.

## 8.2 Community Feedback

102. Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan by means of the Parish questionnaires (Appendix 2) and community feedback revealed the key issues that the policy seeks to address.

103. The following plans, documents, and strategies support policy 4:

- National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraphs 170 and 174.
- Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan's 1 & 2; Core Policies 37 – 40, 42 and 44 - 46, Development Policies 20, 21, 23 – 26,
- Steventon Character Appraisal.

### Policy 4 (a) Landscape and Environment

As appropriate to their scale and nature development proposals will be supported provided that:

- It avoids the unnecessary loss of mature trees, hedgerows, or other form of wildlife corridor. If the loss of a mature tree or hedgerow is unavoidable, the proposals should make provision on site for replacements of similar amenity value and root area.
- Where appropriate the planting of trees, hedging, shrubs, and flower rich grassland is incorporated into the proposal.
- It clearly demonstrates appropriate measures taken to link new green infrastructure on the development with adjacent green infrastructure to enhance potential wildlife corridors.
- Where appropriate, fences, walls or hedges are designed to incorporate features that allow dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and gardens.

### Policy 4 (b) Landscape and Environment - Biodiversity

As appropriate to their scale and location development proposals should maintain and enhance the local biodiversity including the maintenance and creation of wildlife corridors.

Proposals should be accompanied by surveys which assess the impact of the development on local biodiversity. Development proposals should seek to deliver a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10%, having regard to the requirements of section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

### Policy 4 (c) Landscape and Environment - Views and Vistas

Development proposals which would have an unacceptable impact on the local character of an identified important view (as set out in Appendix 5) will not be supported.

### Policy 4 (d) Landscape and Environment – Flooding

As appropriate to their scale and nature development proposals will be supported provided that: it is demonstrated that proposed SUDS infrastructure is appropriate to the specific drainage and groundwater conditions of the development site.

## 9 Plan Delivery and Implementation

104. The Neighbourhood Plan will run concurrently with the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031, Parts 1 and 2 and apply up to 2031. The Plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it takes account of potential future changes in national planning policy and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have come together to work on a new Joint Local Plan which will guide the kinds of new housing and jobs needed and where they should go, informing planning application decisions for the districts. Joint Local Plan 2041

105. The Neighbourhood Plan will be delivered and implemented over a long period and by different stakeholders and partners. It is not a rigid “blue-print” and provides instead a “direction for change” through its vision, objectives, and strategy. Flexibility will also be needed as new challenges and opportunities arise over the plan period.

106. The Parish Council will monitor the Neighbourhood Plan and its associated implementation check progress in terms of meeting the community objectives.