Stoke Albany Planning Criteria Document

Prepared and adopted by Stoke Albany Parish Council (SAPC)
3rd November 2026

Introduction

This document describes the criteria that SAPC will apply when considering whether to endorse a planning proposal within the Parish. The intended audience includes residents, applicants, developers, local authority officers & councillors, and other decision-makers within the planning process.

Each criterion is written as a prescriptive Requirement. A planning proposal which meets a large number of those Requirements is likely to be viewed sympathetically by SAPC, unless it fails to meet the other Requirements in a major way.

For convenience, the criteria can be grouped conceptually into a number of different functional "Domains of interest", but it's entirely possible that some aspects of a proposal might impact multiple Domains.

The Parish Council's rationale for adopting these criteria is explained in the various Annexes to this document. Annex A provides the overview; the other Annexes provide further useful context for each Domain of interest.

D1. Heritage

R-101. Respect the historic character of the village, its listed buildings/structures, and the scheduled monument at Fishponds Farm.

R-102. Reflect the scale and form of neighbouring buildings.

R-103. Use materials that complement the traditional appearance of Stoke Albany.

R-104. Retain historic boundary walls, mature trees and other features that contribute to the streetscape wherever possible.

R-105. Preserve the relationship between the village, its historic core and the surrounding countryside.

D2. Natural Environment & Biodiversity

R-201. Retain existing trees, hedgerows and other important habitats wherever possible.

R-202. Protect and enhance wildlife corridors that connect the village with the surrounding countryside.

R-203. Incorporate planting that supports biodiversity and reflects the rural character of Stoke Albany.

R-204. Deliver measurable biodiversity improvements wherever practical.

R-205. Avoid unnecessary loss or fragmentation of habitats that contribute to the village's natural environment.

R-206. Respect the Stoke Albany Conservation Area, and the two Sites of Special Scientific Interest at Stoke Wood and Bowd Lane Wood.

D3. Green Spaces & Footpaths

R-301. Retain important green spaces that contribute to the character of the village.

R-302. Respect the relationship between buildings and open land.

R-303. Protect existing trees, grass verges and landscape features wherever possible.

R-304. Incorporate high-quality landscaping that complements the rural setting of Stoke Albany.

R-305. Ensure that new development does not erode the openness that contributes to the village's distinctive character.

R-306. Not encroach on or otherwise compromise the public footpaths within the Parish.

D4. Important Scenic Vistas

R-401. Respect important vistas into, out of and within the village.

R-402. Avoid development that interrupts or dominates significant vistas of the surrounding countryside.

R-403. Retain landscape features such as mature trees, hedgerows and stone walls that frame important vistas.

R-404. Respect the contribution that open spaces make to the visual setting of the village.

R-405. Ensure that new buildings sit comfortably within the existing landscape and do not detract from Stoke Albany's rural character.

D5. Highways & Traffic

R-501. Recognise the historic nature and physical constraints of the village's road network.

R-502. Demonstrate that additional traffic can be accommodated safely without harming the character of the village.

R-503. Respect the rural appearance of lanes, verges and roadside boundaries.

R-504. Avoid proposals that would require inappropriate urbanisation of the highway network.

R-505. Recognise the importance of maintaining safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users on roads where there are few or no footways.

R-506. Demonstrate that any additional parking demand can be accommodated without increasing pressure on existing constrained areas of the village, including key junctions and narrow sections of road.

D6. Scale, Design & Materials

R-601. Respect the scale and proportions of neighbouring buildings.

R-602. Use materials that complement the traditional character of Stoke Albany.

R-603. Retain the spacious relationship between buildings and open spaces.

R-604. Respect established building lines, boundary treatments and landscape features.

R-605. Demonstrate high-quality design that enhances the character of the village rather than competing with it.

D7. Infrastructure

R-701. Recognise and seek to mitigate the village's lack of essential domestic/transport infrastructure when planning future housing stock.

Annex A. Contextual Overview - The Special Characteristics of Stoke Albany

Every village has its own character, shaped by its history, landscape and the way it has developed over time. Stoke Albany is no exception. Although small in size, it possesses a strong sense of identity that is immediately apparent to residents and visitors alike.

What makes Stoke Albany special is not a single building or landmark, but the way a number of important features come together to create a village that has retained its rural character and unique identity for over 1000 years, whilst continuing to evolve:

- A historic village with a strong sense of time and place.
- Traditional limestone and ironstone buildings that reflect local building traditions.
- Narrow rural lanes that contribute to the village's distinctive character.
- Mature trees, hedgerows and green spaces that soften the built environment and provide valuable habitats for wildlife.
- Important vistas within the village and across the surrounding countryside.
- A close relationship between the village and the open agricultural landscape that surrounds it.
- A community that values its heritage while recognizing that sensitive development has an important role in the future of the village.

Individually, each of these features contributes to the unique identity of Stoke Albany. Together, they create the special form and character that the Parish Council seeks to protect.

Annex D1. Heritage Context

The historic character of Stoke Albany has not been created by one landmark or one period of history. It is the result of centuries of gradual change, where each generation has added to the village while retaining the qualities that make it distinctive today.

Traditional limestone and ironstone buildings, historic farmhouses, St Botolph's Church, boundary walls and the pattern of the village's lanes all contribute to a sense of place that cannot easily be recreated once it has been lost.

The value of this heritage lies not only in individual buildings, but in the way they relate to one another and to the surrounding landscape. Mature trees, traditional boundaries, open spaces and the scale of the village all combine to create the character that residents recognise as Stoke Albany.

Future development should respect this heritage by responding positively to its surroundings. Good design does not require new buildings to imitate the past, but it should acknowledge the village's established character through its scale, materials, layout and relationship with neighbouring buildings.

Protecting Stoke Albany's heritage does not mean preventing change. It means ensuring that change strengthens the qualities that have made the village a special place for generations and allows that character to be passed on to those who will live here in the future.

A dry stone wall, typical of many dozens in the village



The Old House, built in the late 14th Century



The Manor House, built in the 13th Century, then refurbished in the 17th & 21st



St Botolph's Church, established in the 9th century, fully rebuilt in the 13th, restored in the 19th



The Old School House, built in the 18th Century. A Listed Building

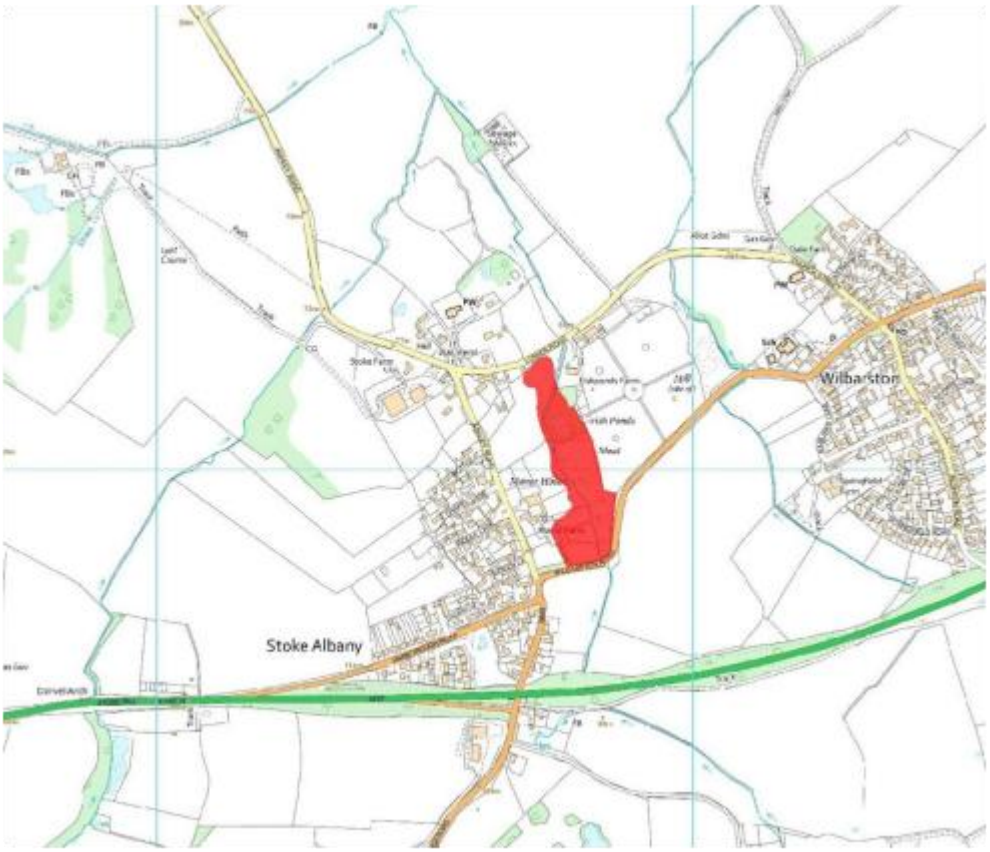


Catalogue of Listed Buildings & Structures, and Scheduled Monuments in Stoke Albany

*Grade II**
Church of St Botolph
The Manor House
The Old House

Grade II
2 Middle Lane
8 Bottom Lane
Barn approximately 20 metres north-east of The Manor House
Brockenhurst
Chest tomb approximately 20 metres south-east of the chancel of St Botolph's Church
Coffin lid adjacent to the east wall of the south aisle of St Botolph's Church
Headstone approximately 13 metres south of the south aisle of St Botolph's Church
Stable, coachhouse and attached house approximately 75 metres west of Stoke Albany House
Stoke Albany House
Stoke Albany War Memorial
The Close
The White Horse Public House
Village Hall and attached house

Map of The Scheduled Monument at Fishponds Farm



Annex D2. Biodiversity & Natural Environment Context

The natural environment is an essential part of the character of Stoke Albany. Biodiversity is not confined to the surrounding countryside; it is woven throughout the village in its mature trees, hedgerows, gardens, grass verges, ponds, field margins and the network of habitats that connect them.

These features support a wide variety of wildlife while also contributing to the appearance and rural setting of the village. The transition between the built environment and the surrounding landscape is often gradual, creating valuable wildlife corridors and reinforcing the close relationship between the village and its countryside.

The Parish Council recognises the importance of protecting and enhancing biodiversity and has appointed a Climate and Biodiversity Lead to help promote environmental awareness and support initiatives that benefit both wildlife and the wider community.

Future development should seek opportunities not only to protect existing habitats but also to enhance biodiversity wherever possible. Retaining mature trees and hedgerows, providing wildlife-friendly planting and maintaining connections between habitats can all contribute positively to the long-term environmental health of the village.

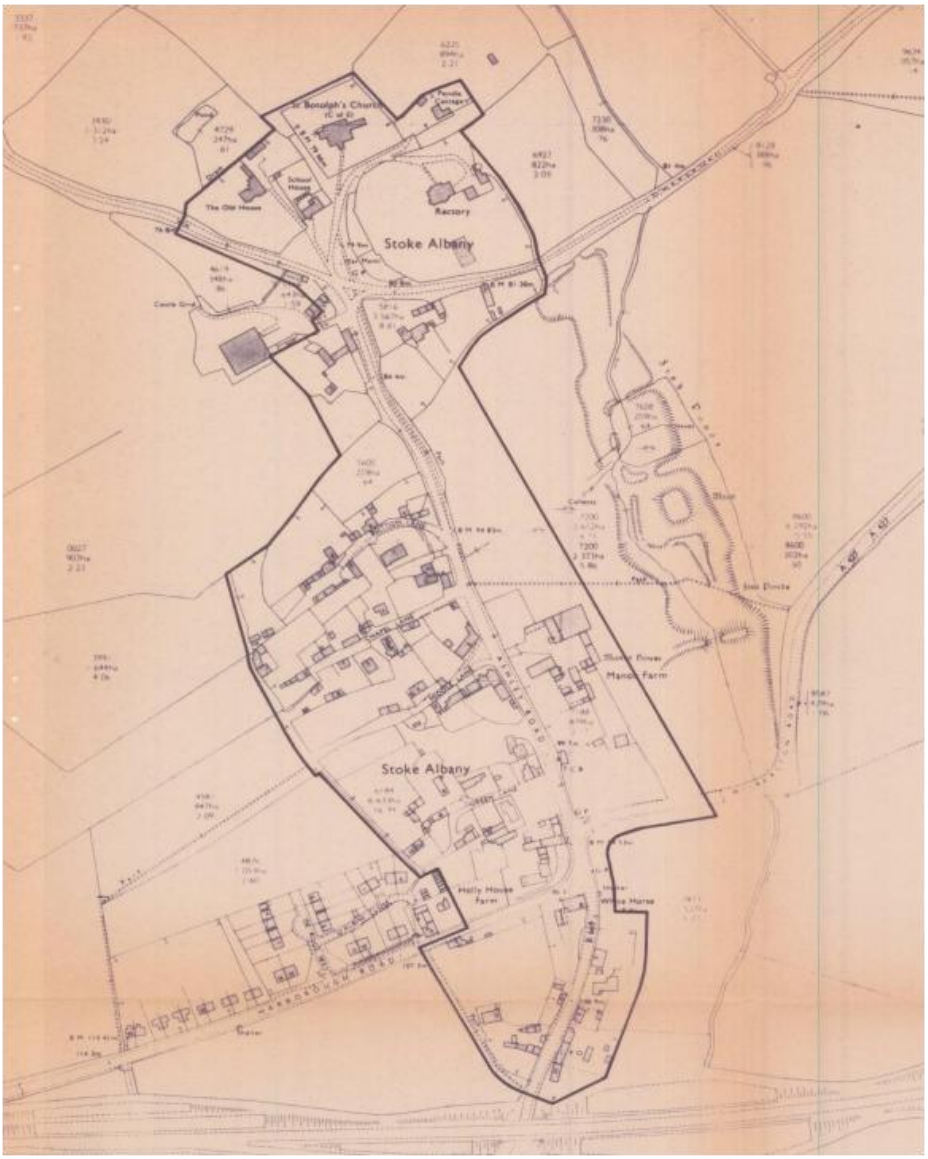
A vista across a pasture with Fishponds Farm Scheduled Monument in the distance



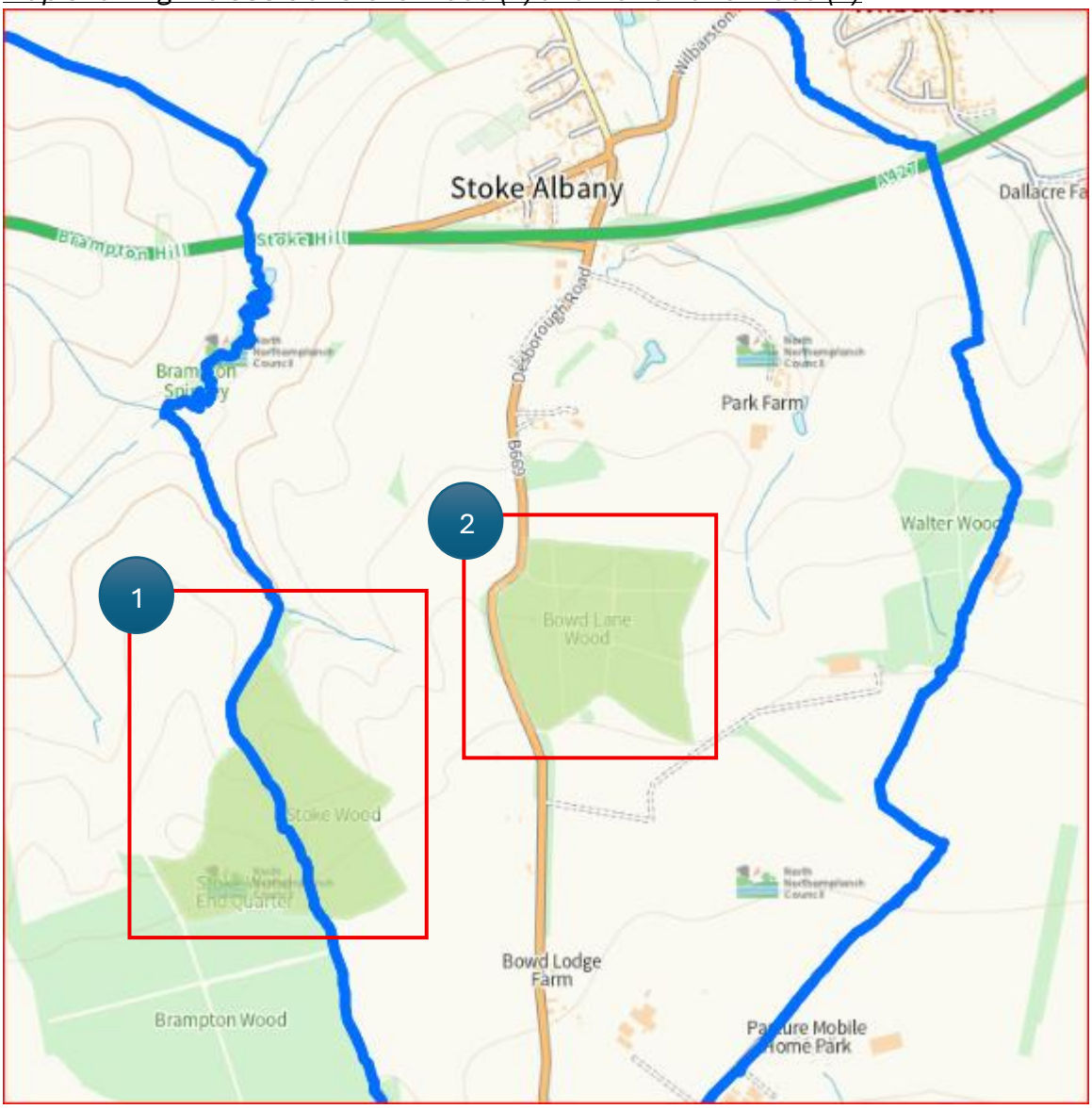
Vista of grazing horses and sheep, one of many such views in the village



Map of Stoke Albany Conservation Area



Map showing the SSSIs at Stoke Wood (1) and Bowd Lane Wood (2)



Annex D3. Green Spaces & Footpaths Context

The green spaces and footpaths within and around Stoke Albany are an essential part of the village's character. They provide a visual and physical connection between the built environment and the surrounding countryside, helping to preserve the rural setting that residents value so highly.

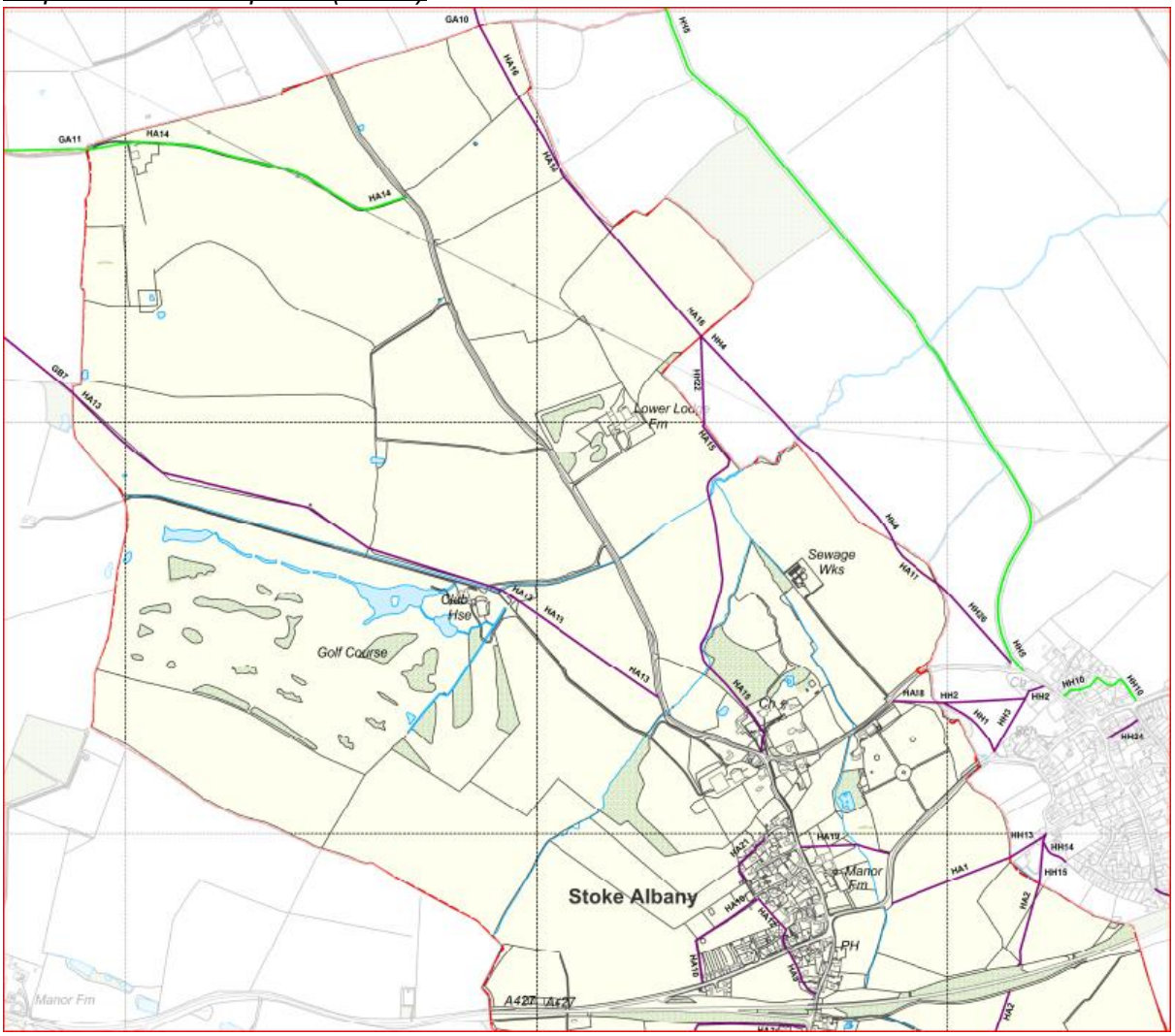
Green spaces take many forms. They include open fields, paddocks, grass verges, gardens, public open areas and the undeveloped land that allows the village to retain its spacious and informal character. Together, these spaces prevent the village from feeling over-developed and maintain the close relationship between buildings and the landscape.

The importance of these spaces and footpaths extends beyond their appearance. They provide opportunities for recreation, support wildlife, contribute to surface water management and help to maintain the peaceful character that distinguishes Stoke Albany from larger settlements.

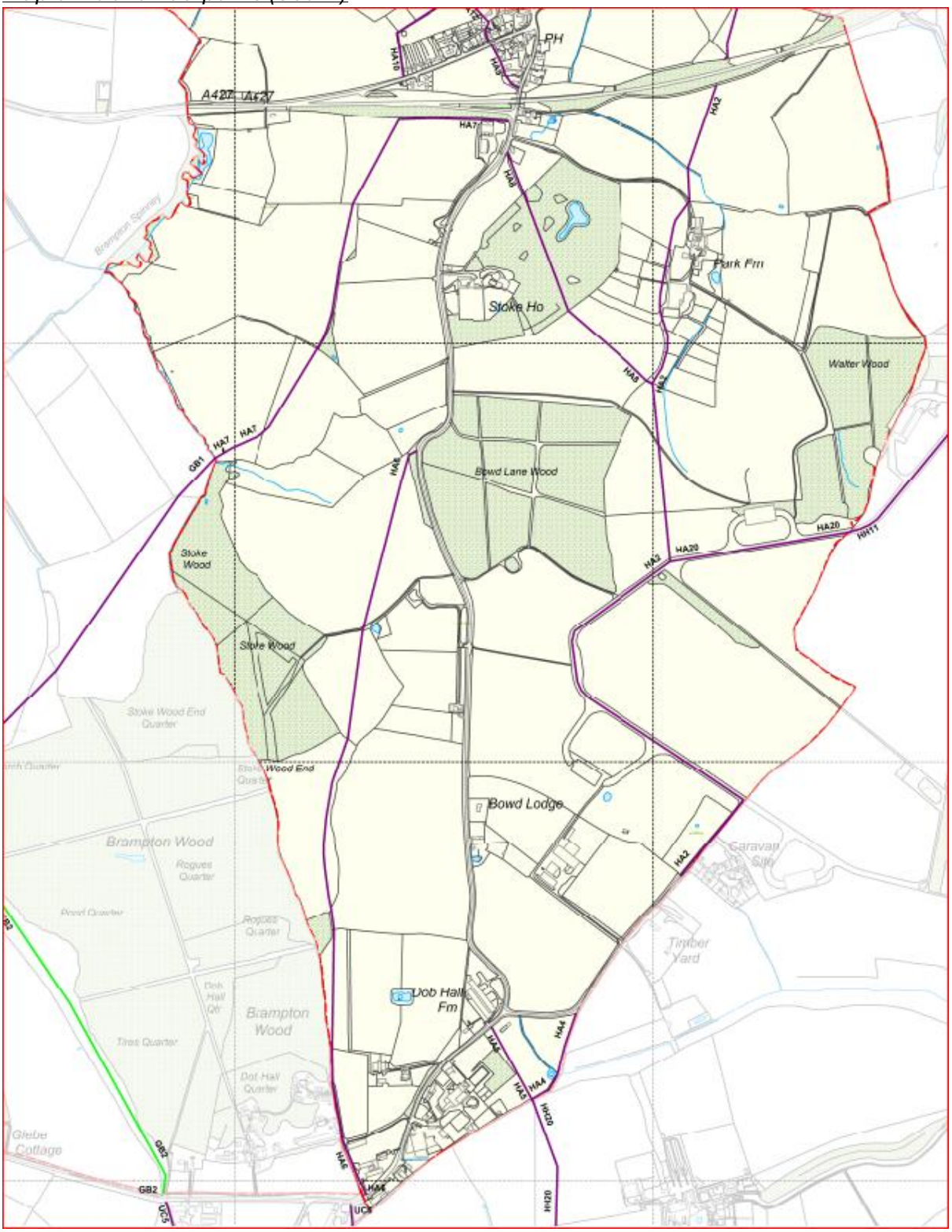
The Parish Council recognises that the value of green spaces cannot always be measured by their size. Even relatively small areas of open land can make an important contribution to the setting of neighbouring buildings, preserve significant vistas and reinforce the historic pattern of development within the village.

Future development should recognise the importance of these green spaces & footpaths, and seek to retain the openness and landscape character that are fundamental to Stoke Albany's identity.

Map of Public Footpaths (North)



Map of Public Footpaths (South)



Annex D4. Important Scenic Vistas Context

The landscape surrounding Stoke Albany is an integral part of the village's identity. Scenic vistas across open countryside, glimpses of historic buildings and the relationship between the village and its rural setting all contribute to a strong sense of place.

Many of the most valued vistas are experienced while walking or driving through the village. They are often framed by mature hedgerows, trees, traditional stone walls and the gentle topography of the surrounding countryside. Together, these features create a sequence of vistas that reinforce the village's rural character and provide a constant visual connection with the landscape.

The value of these vistas lies not simply in their beauty, but in what they reveal about Stoke Albany. They demonstrate the close relationship between the village, its historic development and the surrounding agricultural landscape. Protecting these vistas helps preserve the distinctive character that residents value and visitors immediately recognise.

The Parish Council believes that new development should be carefully designed and positioned so that important vistas into, out of and within the village are respected and, wherever possible, enhanced.

A vista across a sheep pasture; ancient woodland in the background



Annex D5. Highways & Traffic Context

The network of roads and lanes that serves Stoke Albany has evolved over many centuries. They were created at a time when travel was primarily on foot, horseback or by horse-drawn cart, long before the arrival of modern traffic. As a result, many of the village's roads remain narrow, with limited passing opportunities and few, if any, footways.

These historic lanes are an important part of the character of Stoke Albany. Their informal appearance, close relationship with traditional buildings, stone boundary walls and mature hedgerows contribute significantly to the village's rural identity and sense of place.

While these characteristics are valued by residents, they also create practical constraints. Modern traffic volumes, larger vehicles and additional development place increasing pressure on a road network that was never designed for today's levels of use. The Parish Council is also concerned about the condition of parts of the highway network. Deterioration of the road surface, including potholes, affects residents, visitors and those who use the village's roads on foot, by bicycle or by vehicle.

Parking associated with residential properties and village amenities can also affect the operation of the highway network. In particular, on-street parking along parts of the village thoroughfare can make the crossroads near the White Horse public house more difficult to negotiate, particularly for larger vehicles. This is an existing constraint that should be recognised when considering proposals that may generate additional traffic or parking demand.

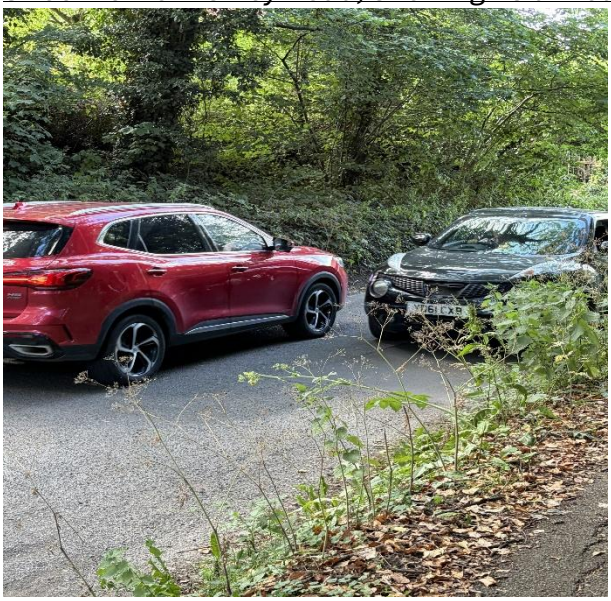
The historic road network is not simply a means of access; it is one of the defining characteristics of Stoke Albany and contributes significantly to the way the village is experienced.

The Parish Council believes that the capacity, condition and character of the village's roads should be carefully considered when assessing development proposals. New development should demonstrate that it can be accommodated without causing unacceptable impacts on highway safety, traffic movement or the distinctive rural character of Stoke Albany.

Streetview of Ashley Road, showing its narrowness



Streetview of Ashley Road, showing its difficulty for passing cars



View to the crossroads of the White Horse Inn



View into Bottom Lane; particularly difficult for cars to exit/enter



Annex D6 - Scale, Design & Materials

The character of Stoke Albany has developed gradually over many centuries. Although buildings vary in age and appearance, they share a number of common characteristics that contribute to the village's identity. It is these shared qualities, rather than any single architectural style, that should inform future development.

New development should respond positively to its surroundings. This does not mean copying existing buildings or creating pastiche designs. Good contemporary design can sit comfortably alongside older buildings when it respects the scale, proportions and character of its setting.

Particular attention should be given to the relationship between buildings, the spaces around them and the materials used in their construction. Traditional limestone and ironstone, natural roof materials, mature planting and traditional boundary treatments all contribute to the distinctive appearance of Stoke Albany and should be reflected where appropriate.

The scale of new development is equally important. Buildings that are significantly larger, taller or more densely arranged than their surroundings can alter the established character of the village. Development should therefore respect the existing pattern of buildings and the open spaces that allow Stoke Albany to retain its rural and spacious appearance.

Successful development is not achieved by reproducing the past. It is achieved by understanding what makes Stoke Albany distinctive and ensuring that new buildings make a positive contribution to that character.

Annex D7 - Infrastructure

From an all-time high of 470 people recorded living in Stoke Albany in the 1751 census, the overall population of the Parish has declined gradually as jobs have trended away from rural agriculture towards urban industry.

Once hosting three public houses, two bakeries, a butcher's, a taxi service, and a post-office/general-store, there is no longer any significant retail, transport or employment infrastructure in Stoke Albany; instead residents must commute using private transport from the village for work, shopping and medical welfare.

Although the nearby village of Wilbaston boasts a primary school and a post office, there are no safe verges or pavements from Stoke Albany to access these; pedestrians must instead walk in one of two roads: the busy B-Road from the White Horse Inn crossroads, or the single-track Lower Road.