



**LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL**

*in connection with a Neighbourhood Development Plan for*

*Standish Parish Council*

**JULY 2019**

**illman**YOUNG

*landscape design*

**Standish Parish**

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## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Site location

Standish Parish is located within Stroud District, to the north west of Stroud, north of Stonehouse which is the closest town. It borders the M5 to the west, and extends eastwards to the top of the Cotswold escarpment. The Parish church, a notable local feature, is located within the western third of the parish – **figure 1**.

### 1.2. Commission

Illman Young Landscape Design Ltd were commissioned by Standish Parish Council to undertake a Landscape Appraisal of the Parish, to inform and assist in the preparation of their Neighbourhood Development Plan. Illman Young have wide experience in the preparation of landscape appraisals, and the development of both design criteria and detailed designs on a variety of sites.

### 1.3. Scope of the Study

This landscape appraisal covers the whole of Standish Parish. This study seeks to assess the Parish's local character, and its visual relationship to, and setting within, the Vale and the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The purpose of the study is to then consider the development constraints arising from that assessment, and how they may limit the extent of the potential housing allocations, and what mitigation measures would be necessary to enable the areas of strategic development proposed within the Stroud District Emerging Local Plan to be acceptable (in landscape terms). The areas currently proposed for housing within the Parish are land parcels PS19a and PS19b.

It should be noted that this visual appraisal does not consider the potential for development within the AONB itself due to the importance and constraints imposed by this designation.

### 1.4. Policy and Planning Background

The existing Local Plan Nov. 2015 identifies a target of 11400 additional dwellings within the District for the period between 2006 - 2031. In the current Local Plan, the area west of Stonehouse has an allocation SA2 for a mixed-use development including 1350 residential dwellings, 10 hectares for employment land and community uses. SA2 lies south of Standish Parish.

Stroud District Council are currently reviewing their Local Plan, with a programme to undertake their Final Plan Consultation in the autumn this year. As part of this work, they are still finalising an alternative sites assessment to help identify land that may potentially

be available for future housing and economic development sites during the new local plan period up to 2031.

Stroud District Local Plan Review Emerging Strategy Paper from November 2018 identifies a number of potential site and alternatives within the Stonehouse Cluster of which PS19A and PS19B fall within Standish Parish.

- RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PS19A – Potential site for up to 500 dwellings, plus open space and 5 ha of employment.
- RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PS19B – Potential site for the development of 150 dwellings and open space.

They have also identified a number of potential ‘additional sites’, which would appear to have been identified as a reserve, should they not achieve the desired numbers from the list of potential sites. Those within Standish Parish are STO 020, STO 015, STO 013 and STO 017, (see **Appendix figure 1.**) These were not included within the brief for this report, therefore the effect of development on them is only briefly considered.

In undertaking their assessment of housing, each local settlement in the District has been assessed to consider the role that they play, and the extent to which they can be increased in size. This assessment ranks settlements in a range of Tiers from 1-5 (greatest to smallest in terms of facilities), and therefore Tier 1 settlements have the greatest potential to support future growth. However, no areas within Standish were considered in this process as they are too small to be included. Stonehouse and Stroud, (to the south and south-east) are both Tier 1.

#### **1.5. Consultations between the Parish and District Council**

As part of the planning consultation process, the Parish have been involved in several consultations with the District Planning Department through their Planning advisor, Andrea Pellegram (who has prepared a number of Planning Advice reports). This Landscape Appraisal has been commissioned by the Parish as a consequence of that process; as those discussions clearly identified the need to provide robust landscape evidence to support the Parish’s concerns regarding the proposed development areas.

## 2. THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE

### 2.1. Landscape Character

The landscape within the study area has been subject to a number of separate landscape character assessments, undertaken at a range of differing scales, these are:

- **At the National Level:**
  - Landscape Character Assessment by Natural England
    - 106 Severn and Avon Vales, and
    - 107 Cotswolds
- **At the County Level:**
  - Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment
    - Landscape Character Area: SV6A Vale of Berkeley
      - Landscape Character Type: Settled Unwooded Vale
  - Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment
    - Landscape Character Type: 2 Escarpment
      - Landscape Character Areas: 2C Uley to Cooper's Hill
    - Landscape Character Type: 18 Settled Unwooded Vale
      - Landscape Character Areas: 18A Vale of Gloucester Fringe
- **At the District Level:**
  - Stroud District (2000) Landscape Character Assessment
    - Escarpment
    - Rolling Agricultural Plain
      - Subdivision: Escarpment Foot slopes
      - Subdivision: Lowland Plain

### 2.2. National Character Assessment

At a national level, the site sits within the boundary of two areas, described and documented in Natural England's 'National Character Assessment (NCA): Volume 106 Severn and Avon Vales' and '107 Cotswolds'. These cover large areas of land, giving a broad-scale description of how the landscape has been defined and shaped by natural, historical and sociological events including local geology, soils, topography, land cover and land use. Collectively these landscape features combine to create the unique character of the landscape.

#### **NCA 106: The Severn and Avon Vales**

The characteristics of the NCA are extremely wide-ranging, such that there is little that directly applies at the Parish scale. The closest description is as follows:

- *'A diverse range of flat and gently undulating landscapes strongly influenced and united by the Severn and Avon rivers...'*
- *'Woodland is sparsely distributed across this landscape but a well wooded impression is provided by frequent hedgerow trees, parkland and surviving traditional orchards...'*

**NCA 107: The Cotswolds.**

The relevant key Characteristics for this NCA within the study area are:

- *'Defined by its underlying geology: a dramatic limestone scarp rising above adjacent lowlands with steep combs, and outliers illustrating the slow erosion of escarpments. The limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.'*
- *'Ancient beech hangers line stretches of the upper slopes of the scarp...'*
- *'Large areas of common land, important for unimproved calcareous grassland, are characteristic of the scarp...'*

Relevant Opportunities for NCA 107 are provided (but not for NCA 106):

- *'Protecting the contrasts in character between scarp, high wold and dip slope by using their defining characteristics to inform new development...'*
- *'Identifying key views into and out of the Cotswolds, particularly along the scarp and main settlements such as Stroud, Bath, Cheltenham and Gloucester. Using this to mitigate development in or around these key views which could otherwise be intrusive and increase disturbance. Where new development is appropriate, ensuring that it is integrated into and informed by the existing high quality and distinctive landscapes, increasing the area and networks of semi-natural habitats and avoiding light pollution in areas below the scarp.'*
- *'Maintaining the nucleated settlement pattern of small towns and villages in valleys and at the foot of the scarp along the springline, further characterised by fine churches, country houses and estate villages...'*
- *'Maintaining and improving multi-user paths and connectivity between settlements, both within and connecting with those outside the area; the scarp, wooded valleys, parklands and other assets utilising and extending the existing network of public rights of way including links to and from the Cotswold Way National Trail.'*

These characteristics of both the Cotswolds and Severn and Avon Vale NCA can be seen within the study area, but does not provide the smaller scale detail that is more relevant.

### **2.3. County Character Assessment**

Within Gloucestershire, Landscape Character Assessments were undertaken independently for the Cotswolds AONB and the Forest of Dean. Gloucestershire County Council therefore covered the remaining areas within the county. Relevant information from both reports is summarised below:

**Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment** identifies the Landscape Character Type as **Settled Unwooded Vale within the area SV6A: Vale of Berkeley**

The relevant key Characteristics, within the study area, are;

- *Soft, gently undulating to flat landscape, but with intermittent locally elevated areas that project above the otherwise flatter landform*
- *Mixed arable and pastoral land use enclosed by hedgerow network, in places forming a strong landscape pattern*
- *Limited woodland cover with mature hedgerow trees and occasional orchards*

**Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment** identifies the Landscape Character Types and areas as:

Type: 2 Escarpment; Areas: 2C Uley to Cooper's Hill

*The relevant key Characteristics, within the study area, are:*

- *'Steep exposed and elevated west facing scarp slope, partly cloaked in semi natural broadleaved woodland;*
- *generally poor soils and steep sloping relief of the escarpment not suited to arable farming, and primarily used for pasture or woodland;*
- *distinct sense of elevation with dramatic panoramic views over the Severn Vale to the Forest of Dean and beyond into Wales, the Malverns and the Shropshire Hills;*
- *continuity of escarpment face interrupted by a series of major valleys and embayments*
- *gentler landform on lower slopes below the spring line*
- *calcareous grasslands located on steeper scarp slopes*
- *summit of the scarp slope marked by dramatic linear beech hangers*
- *woodlands, hedgerows, scrub and isolated trees give the impression of a well treed landscape;*
- *small scale settlement generally confined to lower, shallower slopes of the escarpment, in sheltered locations, and adjacent to spring lines'*

Type: 18 Settled Unwooded Vale; Areas: 18A Vale of Gloucester Fringe

*The relevant key Characteristics, within the study area, are:*

- *'Soft gently undulating landform, with lower escarpment slopes forming a transitional area between the vale and escarpment;*
- *Cotswolds Escarpment defines the eastern limit of the Vale and provides a dramatic backdrop to vale settlements and landscapes;*
- *mixed arable and pasture land use with occasional orchards;*
- *well maintained hedgerows forming a strong landscape pattern;*
- *quiet winding lanes linking villages, hamlets and farms at the foot of the escarpment;*
- *major transport corridors through vale; rural areas bordered by large urban and suburban areas and interspersed with commercial and industrial uses'*

Again these descriptions are helpful, and should be seen in conjunction with the Character Assessments undertaken by the District.

#### 2.4. ***District Character Assessment***

The Stroud District (2000) Landscape Character Assessment, **see figure 2** divides this part of the District into two landscape character types: **Escarpment** and **Rolling Agricultural Plain**, the latter of which has two sub-divisions.

##### Landscape Character Type: Cotswold Upland Landscapes - Escarpment

The relevant key characteristics, within the study area, are:

- *'large scale, semi-natural elevated scarps with outliers or isolated hills at the edge of the escarpment forming distinctive local landmarks;*
- *large deciduous woods including beech hangers;*
- *areas of unimproved permanent species rich calcareous grassland*
- *patches of scrub*
- *small pastures, enclosed by hedges on gentler slopes;*
- *parklands feature on upper and mid-slopes*
- *few roads climbing the escarpment*
- *settlements at the top or bottom of scarp face;*
- *Historical cultural sites, i.e. hill forts and barrows along the escarpment ridge.'*

This character description reflects the nature of the study area and its surroundings. In particular, the elevated scarp gives the area a sense of place, forming the backdrop to the parish, with its small pastures and larger arable fields enclosed by hedges on the gentler slopes.

The relevant key priorities for action are:

- *Exercise development control to limit impact of new developments including change of use. Particular regard to the texture and mosaic of land patterns, settlement pattern and tree cover is essential for successful integration of any development permitted in these areas. The scale of proposed development and the use of proposed building materials should be subject to landscape impact assessments'.*

##### Landscape Character Type: Severn Vale Lowland Landscapes - Rolling Agricultural Plain

This varied and extensive character type is differentiated by variations in topography, land use pattern and vegetation cover. Standish Parish contains two Subdivisions: Lowland Plain & Escarpment foot slopes.

The relevant key characteristics are given for the overall Character Type, and those relevant to the study area, are:

- *'Varied landscape of open flat plain to more undulating landform towards limestone escarpment*
- *Established, old, rich rural lowland; woodlands and mature hedgerow trees and occasional orchards*
- *Traversed from north to south by the M5, railway, Gloucester-Sharpness canal and the A38*
- *Semi-enclosed landscape with some distant views...'*
- *Churches act as strong foci and landmarks*
- *Dispersed pattern of isolated villages*
- *Land use is a mix of arable and pasture*
- *Strong field patterns small to medium in scale'*

Whilst this character description reflects the nature of the study area and its surroundings, there is also a clearly identifiable difference between the land predominantly to the west of the railway from the land to the east; with the former much less undulating (with the exception of Court Hill).

The relevant key priorities for action are:

- *'Encourage the continued management of existing hedgerows, hedgerow trees and farm woodlands.*
- *Control sporadic development along the major routes and at the edges of settlements'*

## **2.5. Local Landscape Character of the Parish**

Generally, the study area is a broadly undulating arable landscape with more pastoral agriculture to the east towards and up the escarpment foot slopes. The agricultural land largely comprises small-medium scale open rolling fields, defined by hedgerows of mixed quality with occasional young to semi-mature hedgerow trees and copses, the density of which gives areas to the south-west of the Parish a 'well-wooded' appearance. These hedgerows and copses play a key role in defining the character of the Rolling plains, and in combination with the gently rolling topography, provides strong visual containment in near distance views.

Fields on the escarpment slopes are generally unimproved pasture and broadleaved woodland, whereas the escarpment foot slopes are mainly pastoral. The lowland plain is mainly arable with occasional orchards and species rich hay meadows that give the area a strong traditional agricultural character in this broad open landscape.

The Escarpment forms the backdrop to the lower foot slopes and lowland agricultural area while isolated vale hillocks and Standish Church provide local landmarks.

**Constraints and Opportunities** – *Standish generally retains a strong agricultural character with small-scale scattered settlements across the parish that are well integrated within the local landscape. Development should seek to retain this rural characteristic, such that where it occurs it should be well assimilated by the local topography, existing hedgerows and woodland, and strongly reinforced by new planting, as necessary to ensure the retention of this wooded agricultural characteristic.*

## 2.6. Topography

The topography of the area is typical of the character description: with steep incised valleys to the scarp in the east of the parish, but softer and gently sloping foot slopes forming a transitional area between the escarpment and plain, in contrast to the gently undulating landform of the plain where a number of small low hills (vale hillocks) are evident.

see figure 3.

**Constraints and Opportunities** - *The varied topography within the Parish imposes significant constraints upon its development potential. The entire scarp area and its foot slopes are broadly considered unsuitable for development, due to their steepness, and consequent high degree of visibility from the vale, which would be in sharp conflict with their character. Conversely, the lower slopes and vale are overlooked from the higher slopes above. However, opportunities for development, are more likely to be available on flatter, lower slopes, where either existing enclosing woodland and hedgerows or new planting would enable it to be more readily assimilated*

## 2.7. Landscape Resource

The landscape resource of the area is currently **High** but its nature varies throughout the Parish. The arable land is generally of good quality but is limited in value as a landscape resource, whereas all other aspects provide an extensive and varied landscape resource:

- Species rich hay meadows are of very good quality where they occur
- Traditional small-scale orchards are present but are scarce within the area.
- Permanent pasture is variable in the quality of its resource on the steeper slopes, but is generally good
- Hedgerows across the parish are generally of good quality though gaps are evident.

- Trees are generally young to semi-mature with occasional mature specimens present.
- Copses and woodland are extensive on the scarp but less evident elsewhere

**Constraints and Opportunities** – *there is the opportunity to increase species diversity, green infrastructure and connectivity throughout the Parish. Retain good quality hedgerows and improve by infilling gaps where present and lay over mature hedges. Utilise hedgerows, copses and small woodlands in a locally typical manner where and when required to assimilate any new development.*

## 2.8. Existing Rights of Way

There is an extensive network of PRow's across Standish Parish which includes part of the Cotswolds Way National Trail. **see figure 4.**

Generally, these path networks are well signposted, in good condition, showing regular signs of use, particularly those linking the lowland villages or access to the escarpment. However, those with less direct routes to villages or the escarpment are often obscured during the summer months, being overgrown by seasonal crops or hay fields.

Footpaths leading to/from the escarpment are more well used and occasionally metalled. The Cotswold Way is metalled and widened to accommodate its high level of use and to allow maintenance vehicle access. The Cotswolds Way along the majority of this part of the escarpment is within a dense and well-established woodland: The Beech Hangers. However, it opens out to grassland along the north of the escapement at the Topograph and Haresfield Beacon viewpoints.

### 3. VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

#### 3.1. Overview

Whilst the study encompasses the entirety of Standish Parish, the focus of development is currently (and likely to be in the future), progressing as a 'natural' extension of the existing developed areas of the Stonehouse cluster. This area is to be infilled and consolidated within the current Plan, with potentially, some much more minor extensions to Stroud. At the same time, development is almost completely excluded from areas that fall within the AONB designation.

Generally, the proposed development sites are highly visible from a number of viewpoints, with all locations identified as viewpoints being located on public rights of way, pedestrian paths along local roads and the roads themselves. With the exception of road users, all visual receptors will be of high sensitivity. The effect of development is therefore likely to be significantly adverse from almost every location where extensive or clear views can be seen, unless the layout of development can be appropriately arranged and suitably mitigated.

#### 3.2. Analysis of views of the proposed development sites

Views of the potential zones for development fall into three different areas, dependent on their broad location, and their elevation relative to external viewpoints:

- From the elevated viewpoints on the scarp to the east
- From the lower level foot slopes of the scarp
- In the localised vicinity of the site

All viewpoints are illustrated on **Figure 7 Viewpoints 1-16**.

**From the elevated viewpoints on the scarp to the east** these are all highly sensitive viewpoints, as they are from the Cotswold Way, and include the Topograph and Haresfield Beacon, as nationally identified viewpoints. The areas identified for development are clearly visible due to the elevation of the view, and appear extensive, due to the elongated/oblique nature of the view (**see viewpoints 1-2**). In particular, the north-west area of the PS19A extends significantly (like a peninsula) beyond the proposed development zone SA2, and will be seen in relative isolation to the rest of the proposed development area (**see viewpoints 3-4**). From the east, directly above the proposed development area, PS19A extends significantly beyond SA2, whilst there are clear views across the entirety of PS19B due to the elevation and angle (**see viewpoint 5**).

**Constraints and opportunities:** *Whilst the viewpoint photographs acknowledge the development areas that are already allocated, the effect both visually and on landscape character, will be significantly adverse, unless the new housing is assimilated by substantial planting to the north and eastern boundaries of PS19A and the eastern boundary of PS19B. There will be a need to use large scale forest trees along the boundary zones and within the internal layout as part of the Public open space areas, to enable development to be structured by this network. The use of trees, hedgerows and other planting within the site and along the road network should be coordinated to provide a density of cover that will allow effective filtering of inward views from these elevated views in the longer term.*

**From along the lower foot slopes of the scarp:** in general, there are limited views of the development area from around Stroud Green and the north of the Parish, due to the lower levels and the screening effect of the localised hillocks (**see viewpoint 6**). However, further south (**see viewpoint 7**), the view westwards is more open, allowing views across both proposed development sites, to the allocated land that extends substantially beyond them. The lower elevation flattens the view (**see viewpoints 8**), and whilst the ground plain cannot be seen at present, housing would be clearly visible beyond the existing hedgerow.

**Constraints and opportunities:** *there is the need for a substantial boundary treatment and internal planting to both sites, if development is to be effectively assimilated within the landscape. This may also incorporate informal avenue trees to the roadside of PS19B*

**In the localised vicinity of the site SP19A** the potential effect of the proposed development areas is dependent on its location relative to the open countryside to the north and west, or the land allocated for development to the south. It should also be noted, that it is not considered appropriate to allocate employment land within SP19A unless the height of the buildings is no taller than a conventional 2 storey house. Taller buildings in this location are likely to have a significant adverse visual effect on the local landscape and it's character.

- **From the south:** west of the railway, the land will be developed as part of the existing allocation, and there are good quality boundary hedgerows and copses between SA2 and PS19A

**Constraints and opportunities** *the good quality vegetation as above should be retained, additional planting should be provided to enhance its quality, as the planting indicated within the allocation plan appears inadequate. Similarly, the location of*

employment land, requires substantial screening along its eastern boundary to assimilate it within the landscape, but such planting is not currently shown. Further development of PS19 A and B will require this lack to be properly mitigated (if it cannot be rectified within permissions for the current allocation). Therefore, a broad landscape strategy, should be determined to ensure that all allocated and additional proposed development can be well integrated within it.

- **From the west:** the western boundary of PS19A is of mixed quality and stature (**see viewpoint 9**).

**Constraints and opportunities:** This should be maintained and reinforced to provide a strong visual and physical separation to the agricultural fields beyond.

- **From the north:** this boundary is also of mixed quality, with relatively few substantial trees, and will require substantial reinforcing.

**Constraints and opportunities:** Consideration should also be given to the land use along this boundary, with areas of open space located along its length to allow the integration of a number of mixed species (forest species) copses, and individual specimen trees, as a minimum along this boundary to provide strong visual and physical separation to the land to the north, as this location is close to the setting of Standish Parish church, Village Hall and Standish Court. (**see viewpoint 10**)

- **From the east:** the boundary of the railway has areas of substantial planting along much of its length, which helps provide visual and physical separation from land to the east. Views are from the road and footpaths east of the railway.

**Constraints and opportunities:** any areas where the existing vegetation is not sufficiently dense should be reinforced, and the whole maintained to ensure its ongoing density

#### **In the localised vicinity of the site SP19B**

- **From the north:** Views are across the open land (potential alternative development site STO 015) and SP19B to housing on the outskirts of Stonehouse (which appears to be defined by a hedgerow, but is actually set further back beyond further hedges and allotments and open space).

**Constraints and opportunities:** Should SP19B be developed, land adjacent to the watercourse should be reserved for public open space, SuDS and informal tree planting

to compose and screen development from this view. Development of STO -15 would be highly visually intrusive on the steeply sloping land to the north, and is not considered likely to be acceptable in visual terms even with mitigation. **(see viewpoint 11).**

- **From the west:** Directly west of SP19B is the railway line which is elevated from the potential development area by some 4-5m. There is already low vegetation on the embankment

**Constraints and opportunities:** some larger tree planting along the western boundary of SP19B would improve views of the roofline above the railway.

- **From the south:** the existing good quality boundary hedge currently screens inward views **(see viewpoint 12)**, but would not screen development unless it is set significantly down the slope of this area.

**Constraints and opportunities:** Mitigation could be achieved by creating an area of public open space inside the boundary, and/or by reinforcing the hedge with copses and specimen tree planting. In either instance, any development or garden boundaries should be set off by a minimum of 5m from the hedge.

- **From the east:** the site appears relatively flat but does rise slightly towards the east, and is intermittently visible for much of its length over the boundary hedge **(see viewpoint 13)**. Therefore, any housing would be clearly seen above this hedge and would be prominent within the landscape.

**Constraints and opportunities:** Should development occur a comprehensive boundary treatment, with both formal and informal native planting (copses with understorey, avenue, alongside specimen tree and shrub planting) should reflect the transition from urban to rural along this development edge, in conjunction with any mitigation required to address views from the elevated viewpoints as identified above.

- **Other locations** – it should be noted that the area of land immediately outside the AONB to the east of the railway line **(see viewpoint 2)**, whilst not currently considered for development, has been noted as an alternative allocation site; STO020. It occupies a highly visible location in both near and distant views as well as from more elevated viewpoints to the east. Due to its location, this area of land forms part of the setting of the AONB, and should be considered as inappropriate for development in the longer term. It would appear likely that the AONB boundary was drawn along the

road in this location as a clearly identifiable boundary, but on the basis of the currently proposed extension of Stonehouse, the railway line forms a more visually appropriate boundary as a restraint to development.

### **3.3. *Consideration of the setting of Standish Church, Village Hall and Standish Court and its rural environs***

The landscape character around Standish Church, Village Hall and Standish Court has a small-scale rural quality (**see viewpoint 14**), with remnant orchards, hay meadows and small-scale fields. This is despite the effect that the large agricultural barns adjacent to the Court have both visually and on the character in some views from the south. Unusually, other than in close proximity to the barns, the scale of the trees reduces the extent of the otherwise adverse effects of these buildings. The Parish church is a significant feature in this landscape, with its spire visible in views from all locations within the near and medium distance, and from some elevated viewpoints to the east

The setting, of Standish Church, Village Hall and Standish Court, to the south is clearly defined by a shallow localised ridge running east/west to the south of the site (**see viewpoint 15**), along with a field boundary hedgerow including a number of mature trees. Should further development be considered on land to the north of the two current proposed areas, this ridgeline, and the effect of any built form that intrudes upon it, must be fully considered and avoided/mitigated to maintain the localised and historic setting of Standish Church, Village Hall and Standish Court.

**Land to the north of the Standish Church, Village hall and Standish Court** outside its setting, would also be unsuitable for any substantial development, as it would create built form in an isolated location unrelated to any existing settlement within this rural location (**see viewpoint 16**).

### **3.4. *Consideration of the setting of the AONB***

In considering the proposed development areas, the visual survey has looked primarily at inward views, however, the setting of the AONB in both inward and outward views should be considered to fully understand the overall effect of development. In the constraints and mitigation identified above, the recommendations for the two development parcels would ensure that outward views from the AONB could be appropriately mitigated. However, views towards the AONB from the adjacent roads, and footpaths have also been considered to ensure that the visual quality and character of the undeveloped adjacent areas and their relationship to the scarp is maintained.

- **Constraints and opportunities:** *The development parcels should have strong landscaped boundaries that reinforce the existing hedgerows and trees, so that the rural character of the footpaths within the agricultural fields beyond is maintained. In more visually sensitive locations, the siting of public open space could usefully form part of the visual and physical buffering of these boundaries.*
- *Within the newly developed areas themselves, there is the opportunity to create views towards the scarp (above any boundary reinforcement planting) as part of the masterplanning of the internal layout of these sites.*
- *Existing footpath routes should be maintained in their current location wherever possible, and incorporated within a broad landscape band, to maintain their more rural context. As the connectivity of these routes is good, it provides the opportunity to maximise the benefit of this existing network, which provides good access in all directions.*

### **3.5. Consideration of parcels SP19a and SP19b overall**

Whilst the scope of this report was also to consider whether the extent of the proposed allocations should be reduced on landscape and visual grounds, this was not considered necessary, but only if an appropriate masterplanning process and mitigation strategy for each area is undertaken. There must be a concern about this, as the existing allocation of SA2 does not appear to fully embrace the existing landscape constraints and opportunities within its layout, as each site appears to have been considered independently, rather than the whole, strategically.

Therefore, the appropriate siting of public open space, and the importance of boundary mitigation planting and the internal landscape layouts for both parcels are fundamental to the successful delivery of the proposed housing areas. An indication of its necessity and extent is given in **figure 17**. Therefore, high quality and detailed planning briefs for both parcels in line with these recommendations, should be required as part of the updated Local Plan to ensure their delivery.

## 4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 4.1. Summary

Whilst there is a clear need for a significant level of housing within Stroud District, Standish Parish Council have been very concerned to ensure that careful consideration of its extent, location and integration within the Parish is undertaken for a number of reasons:

- To ensure that the existing small-scale, and attractive rural qualities of the Parish are not destroyed.
- To ensure that the landscape and visual effects of the currently proposed housing areas PS19a and PS19b are understood in combination with the areas that have already been allocated north of Stonehouse: SA2
- To ensure that the effect on views towards Stonehouse and Standish from the upper scarp slopes of Cotswold Hills, which is within the AONB, are fully appraised and mitigated
- To ensure that the extent of the setting of both Standish Parish Church, Village Hall and Standish Court are understood, and development constrained appropriately both now and, in the future, alongside any necessary mitigation being provided
- To ensure that the setting of the AONB is respected and maintained within both inward and outward views, with appropriate mitigation
- To ensure that the area of land east of the railway (north of PS19b) but not within the AONB is acknowledged as being a key part of the setting of the AONB

This appraisal has then considered in detail what specific mitigation should be provided both within the two proposed development parcels and around their boundaries to fully mitigate the potential effects of the proposed allocations.

### 4.2. Conclusion

The Parish Council, whilst not wishing for such substantial development to encroach into the land under their jurisdiction (and which will physically form part of Stonehouse), have understood the need for further development within the District alongside a coherent Neighbourhood Plan. They have therefore been prepared to take a balanced view in terms of their potential objections, but expect that their proposals for limitations to development and appropriate mitigation are understood, respected and followed through as part of the evolving Local Plan.

Stroud District Council requested landscape evidence to support the Standish Neighbourhood Plan, and it is therefore hoped that these conclusions will inform decision-making both now and in the future.



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