

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Standish Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

Standish Parish Council, Gloucestershire

March 2026

Quality information

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Non-Technical Summary

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken to inform the Standish Neighbourhood Plan. This process is required by the SEA Regulations.

Neighbourhood Plan groups use SEA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the assessment is to help avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects through the Neighbourhood Plan and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the quality of life of residents.

What is the Standish Neighbourhood Plan?

The Standish Neighbourhood Plan (Standish NP) is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. It is being prepared in the context of the Stroud District Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted in 2015), and the emerging Stroud District Local Plan Review which will have a plan period to 2040.

Purpose of this Environmental Report

This Environmental Report, which accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the Standish NP, is the latest document to be produced as part of the SEA process.

The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Standish NP and alternatives; and
- Provide an opportunity for consultees to offer views on any aspect of the SEA process which has been carried out to date.

The Environmental Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the Standish NP and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes;
- Relevant aspects of the current and future state of the environment and key sustainability issues for the area;
- The SEA Framework of objectives against which the Standish NP has been assessed;
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the Standish NP;
- The likely significant effects of the Standish NP;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the Standish NP; and
- The next steps for the Standish NP and accompanying SEA process.

Assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Standish NP

A key element of the SEA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the Neighbourhood Plan.

However, it is apparent that the Parish Council is very limited in terms of potential alternatives to the draft plan that can be considered.

This is due to the specific circumstances of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Protected Area of Search (PAS) at Stagholt Farm in terms of the reason for its nomination by the landowner, its spatial relationship with adjacent strategic allocations and its potential to deliver the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Alternative site options

No alternative site options have been identified for potential allocation through the Standish NP. Fundamentally, this reflects the key fact that the allocation of Stagholt Farm is not driven by the need to meet a housing target, but rather to rationalise available land to enable a coherent strategic scheme which reflects the landowner's wishes.

The absence of a housing target and the absence of evidence of local housing need within Standish – plus the general presumption against development in Tier 5 settlements in the Local Plan – means that there is no need for the Parish Council to undertake a call for sites to explore potential locations for growth within Standish. This highlights the fact that Stagholt Farm is additionally unique in the context of the plan area as having potential to function as a part of the Stonehouse urban area, i.e. a Tier 1 settlement rather than any of the Tier 5 settlements elsewhere in the parish.

Alternative spatial strategy options

In the absence of a housing target or evidence of local housing need, and on the understanding that allocation of Stagholt Farm is proposed to achieve a specific and unique purpose in the context of the plan area, it is not possible to derive meaningful spatial strategy alternatives to the Standish NP. A 'do nothing' scenario is not a reasonable alternative to test, as this is the existing baseline without a plan.

On this basis, it is considered that there are no reasonable alternatives to the preferred spatial strategy for the Standish NP.

Assessment of the Standish NP

The Standish NP performs well overall, with **neutral / no effects – major positive effects** predicted across all the SEA themes.

With regard to biodiversity, **no significant effects** are considered likely overall. Minor impacts are largely avoidable at the project-scale, supported by both existing planning policies and the proposed policies of the Standish NP. Establishing Standish as a 'green lung' and potential net gains in development could lead to **long-term minor positive effects**.

Broadly **neutral effects** are considered most likely under the climate change SEA topic – particularly over the plan period. In the longer-term, cumulative positive effects could be possible through the delivery of additional connected development

around Stonehouse (that could otherwise be land-locked and a lost opportunity) and in this way, potentially avoiding development elsewhere in the countryside surrounding the main settlement.

In terms of the historic environment, **minor long-term positive effects** are concluded as most likely overall due to the policy provisions made within the Standish NP (specifically Policy 3), as well as the PAS at Stagholt Farm being relatively unconstrained from a heritage standpoint.

With regard to landscape, considering the policy provisions made within the Standish NP, and recognising that the PAS at Stagholt Farm is soon to be enclosed by new development areas, **no significant effects** are anticipated at this stage.

Finally, broadly **neutral effects** are noted under the national resources SEA topic. This is because development in this location will not lead to the loss of BMV agricultural land, and potential impacts on water quality are likely to be mitigated as a result of national planning policy. However, a degree of uncertainty is noted in this respect.

Next steps

This Environmental Report accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the Standish Neighbourhood Plan for consultation.

Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by Standish Parish Council, and the Standish NP and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Standish NP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, SDC, for subsequent Independent Examination.

At Independent Examination, the Standish NP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the adopted Stroud District Plan and emerging Local Plan Review.

If Independent Examination is favourable, the Standish NP will be subject to a referendum, organised by CDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Standish NP, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Standish NP will become part of the Development Plan for Stroud district, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Standish Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as “the Standish NP”).
- 1.1.2 The Standish NP is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2022 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulation 2012. The Standish NP is being prepared in the context of the current Stroud District Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted in 2015) and the emerging Stroud Local Plan Review (LPR).
- 1.1.3 It is currently anticipated that the Standish NP will be submitted to Stroud District Council (SDC) in 2026. This SEA Environmental Report accompanies the pre-submission version of the Standish NP at Regulation 14 consultation, and subsequent submission. Once ‘made’ it will establish a planning framework for development proposals in the neighbourhood area (see **Figure 1.1**) up until 2040.

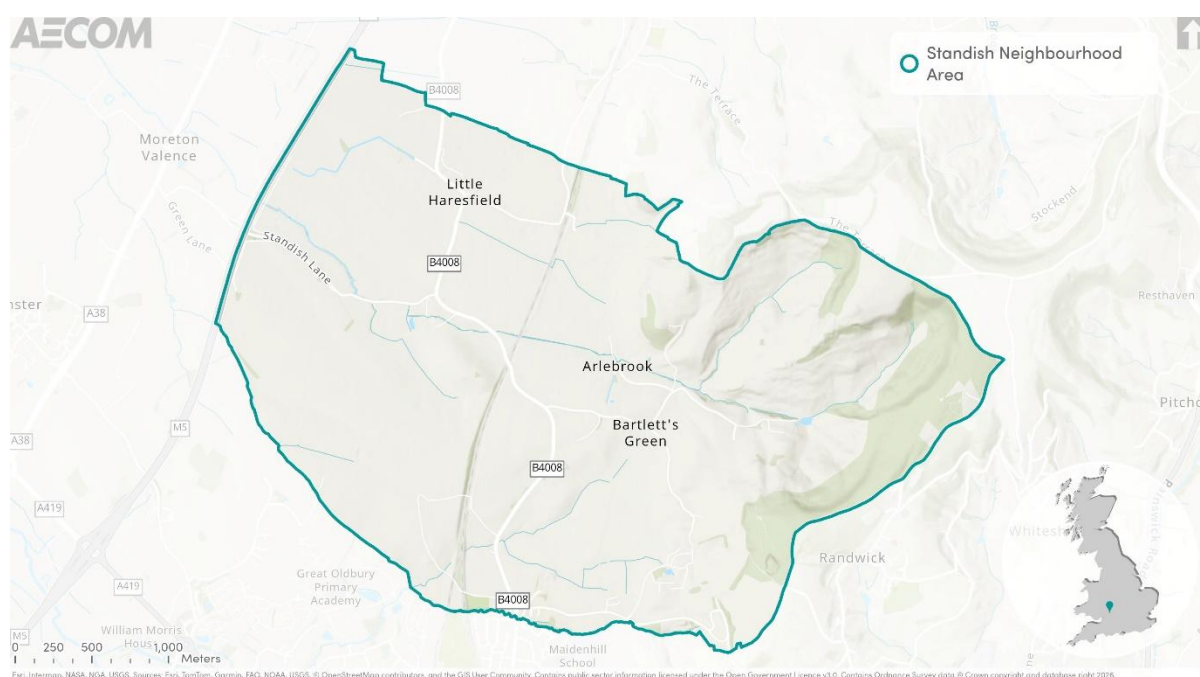


Figure 1.1: Standish neighbourhood area

1.2 SEA explained

- 1.2.1 The Standish Neighbourhood Plan was screened in by SDC as requiring Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in July 2020, in a combined screening opinion for SEA and HRA. The screening opinion does not identify a specific receptor or feature which might be sensitive to significant effects from the proposals of the Neighbourhood Plan. Rather, the screening opinion simply gives the following view:

“It is our opinion that the plan will require SEA/HRA as it proposes to allocate a site”

- 1.2.2 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA seeks to maximise the emerging plan’s contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.2.3 The SEA has been prepared in conformity with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). This has included an initial scoping stage to determine the scope of the SEA. The proposed scope was consulted upon with the statutory consultees for SEA, specifically: Natural England, Historic England and Environment Agency. More details on this process can be found in **Chapter 3** and **Appendix B** of this report.
- 1.2.4 The SEA Regulations require that a report (known as the Environmental Report) is published for consultation alongside the draft plan that ‘identifies, describes and evaluates’ the likely significant effects of implementing ‘the plan, and reasonable alternatives’. The report must then be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan. This Environmental Report seeks to meet this requirement.

1.3 Structure of this Environmental Report

- 1.3.1 To meet the legislative requirements, this Environmental Report has been structured to answer the following questions in turn:
1. What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point? (i.e., what alternatives have been considered?)
 2. What are the appraisal findings at this stage? (i.e., what are the likely effects of plan implementation?)
 3. What are the next steps? (for both the Standish NP and the SEA)
- 1.3.2 However, before answering these questions further context is provided around the local planning policy framework (Chapter 2) and the scope of the SEA (Chapter 3).

2. Local planning policy context

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 The Standish NP is being prepared in the context of the current Stroud District Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted in 2015) and the emerging Stroud Local Plan Review. Both are explored in turn below.

2.2 Adopted Stroud District Local Plan (SDLP)

- 2.2.1 Core Policy **CP2** (Strategic Growth and Development Locations) of the SDLP establishes that at least **11,400 new dwellings** will be delivered in the district over the plan period to 2031. Of this total, 3,300 new dwellings are allocated at five strategic sites around the district. The largest of these is the West of Stonehouse strategic site immediately south of Standish.
- 2.2.2 Core Policy **CP3** (Settlement Hierarchy) establishes a five-tier settlement hierarchy for the district as follows:
- Tier 1:** Accessible Local Service Centres → **Tier 2:** Local Service Centres → **Tier 3:** Accessible Settlements with Limited Facilities → **Tier 4:** Accessible Settlements with Minimal Facilities → **Tier 5:** Unclassified
- 2.2.3 None of the settlements within the neighbourhood area, including Standish village, are large enough to feature at any tier of the hierarchy, meaning that they will be “*treated as open countryside, where development will be restricted*”. Accordingly, the settlements within Standish parish are given no housing target and no site allocations through the adopted SDLP.
- 2.2.4 However, the West of Stonehouse strategic site allocation is immediately adjacent to the parish and is important to understand in more detail to appreciate its significance in relation to the neighbourhood area.
- 2.2.5 Policy **SA2** (West of Stonehouse) of the adopted SDLP allocates land west of Stonehouse for a strategic mixed-use development comprising:
- 1,350 new dwellings, including at least 405 (i.e., 30%) affordable
 - 10ha of B-class employment.¹
 - A local centre, incorporating local retail and community uses.
 - A two-form entry primary school.
 - Various landscaping, open space and green infrastructure features.
- 2.2.6 The allocation is currently being built out and is expected to continue to deliver housing completions to 2027/2028 as per the SDC 2020 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).² The allocation is now also referred to as Great Oldbury, reflecting the developer’s branding of the development.
- 2.2.7 Spatially, the West of Stonehouse allocation is an extension of the existing built area of Stonehouse, though administratively it falls largely within Great

¹ As of September 2020, the use class order has been amended and B-class employment uses now comprise part of the new E use class.

² <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/1411155/5yrs-november-2020-update-report.pdf>

Oldbury parish. The allocation abuts the southern boundary of Standish parish between the Bristol-Birmingham railway line and Pidgemore Farm, a total interface of around 1km.

2.2.8 Currently, the boundaries with both Great Oldbury parish and Stonehouse town are largely undeveloped and rural in character, meaning that as the West of Stonehouse allocation continues to be built out to 2027/28 the character of the neighbourhood area along its southern boundary is significantly changing.

2.2.9 The West of Stonehouse strategic allocation is presented in **Figure 2.1**.

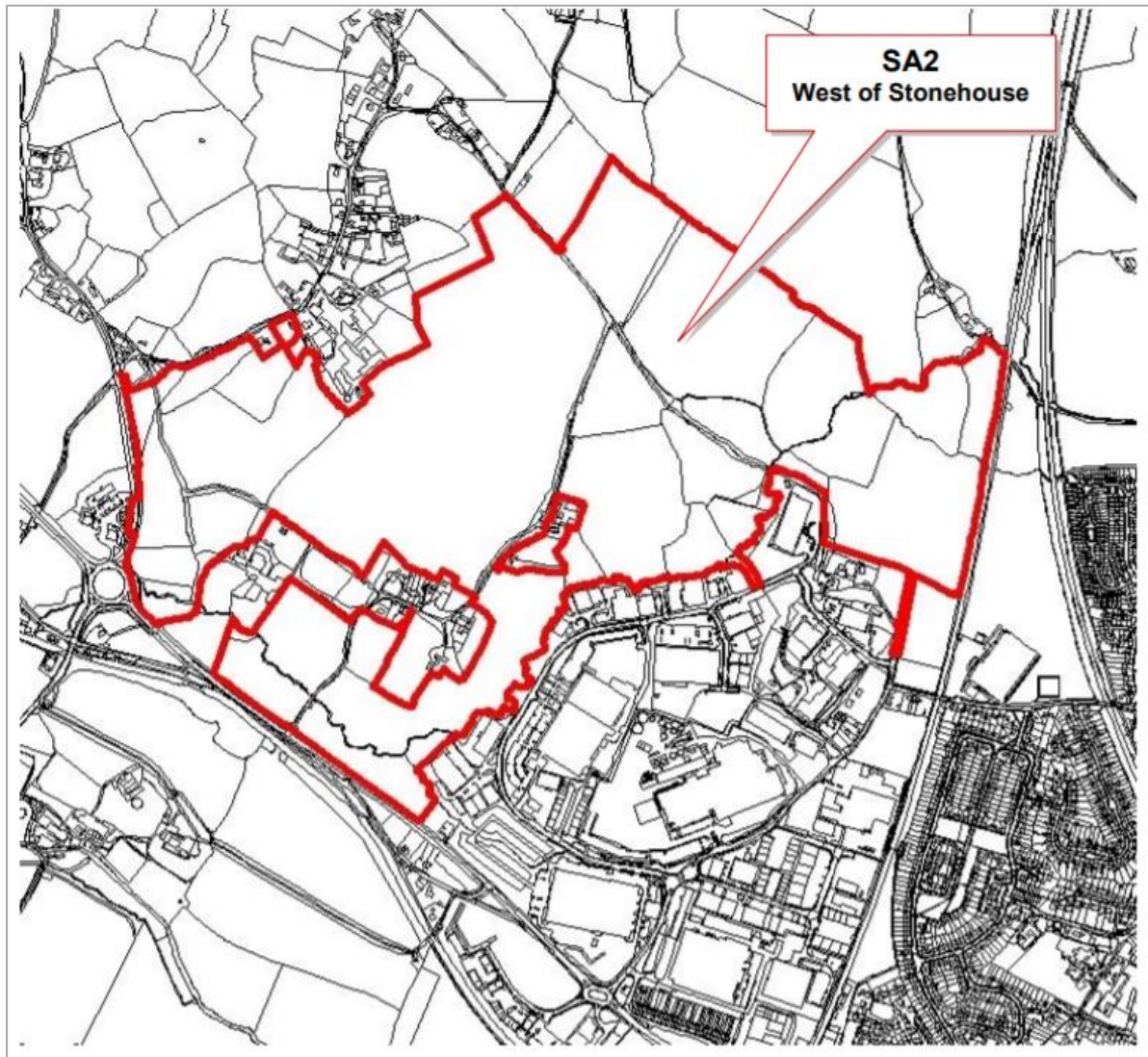


Figure 2.1: West of Stonehouse strategic allocation site

2.3 Emerging Stroud District Local Plan Review

- 2.3.1 SDC are currently undertaking a review of the adopted SDLP. Consultations on the Local Plan Review (LPR) have been ongoing since 2017, and a finalised plan was submitted for examination in October 2021.
- 2.3.2 Hearing sessions began in March 2023 and in August 2023 the Inspectors raised soundness concerns in relation to issues surrounding the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the proposed Sharpness and Wisloe new settlements.³
- 2.3.3 Since the issues were raised and an agreed pause was put in place, the Council has been working with all parties to resolve the outstanding matters. The Inspectors have confirmed that the issues at Wisloe are now resolved, and the remaining highways matters have also progressed. In May 2025, National Highways (NH) wrote to the Inspectors confirming that they had significantly changed their position. NH now agrees that a new junction at M5 J14 is not required to deliver the Local Plan and that an interim scheme – already agreed and funded – would be sufficient to support the full housing requirement. NH has also confirmed agreement with SDC's long-held position that a new junction at M5 J12 is not required early in the plan period. This significant change effectively removes the Inspectors' earlier concerns relating to the Strategic Road Network (SRN).
- 2.3.4 However, the Inspectors have continued to misunderstand the evidence presented and, in October 2025, wrote to the Council again recommending withdrawal of the plan. The Council has responded, asking the Inspectors to reconsider their position and allow a dedicated hearing session on the new evidence. Should the Inspectors decline to reconsider, the Council has requested a final report setting out clearly which elements of the plan they consider sound and unsound.
- 2.3.5 As of February 2026, the Council has received no response. Separately, the Government now requires the Council to begin work on a new Local Plan in 2026 under the new plan-making system, and the Council is committed to preparing a new plan and delivering the level of housing needed to contribute to the national target of 1.5 million homes in this Parliament.
- 2.3.6 The submitted version of the emerging LPR identifies a need to deliver at least 12,800 new dwellings within the district in the period up to 2040, with a residual need of around **8,000 new dwellings** once completions and commitments are accounted for. With the submitted plan essentially 'frozen' at that point in time it will not be assessed against the more recently updated Government Standard Method for calculating local housing need which substantially raises housing need.
- 2.3.7 The spatial strategy locates most of this growth at the district's three main settlements of Cam and Dursley, Stonehouse, and Stroud. These three main settlements continue to sit at the top of an amended four-tier settlement hierarchy outlined by Core Policy **CP3** of the LPR, organised as follows:

³ Stroud District Local Plan Review Inspectors Letter dated [4 August 2023](#)

1. Main Settlements
 2. Local Service Centres
 3. a) Accessible Settlements with Local Facilities
b) Settlements with Local Facilities
 4. a) Accessible Settlements with Basic Facilities
b) Settlements with Basic Facilities
- 2.3.8 However, none of the settlements in the neighbourhood area, including Standish village itself, are large enough to be given a defined settlement boundary, or 'settlement development limit' (SDL) meaning that none appear in the settlement hierarchy. The LPR is clear that small settlements not mentioned in the settlement hierarchy will be treated simply as countryside where there is a presumption against most forms of residential development (with some exceptions). There is no current pressure therefore to allocate sites within the Standish NP to meet the district's housing need.
- 2.3.9 The LPR also organises the district's settlements into functional 'parish clusters' for the purposes of understanding and responding to *"particular needs and opportunities that most concern different parts of the District"*. Eight clusters are identified in total. Standish forms part of the Stonehouse cluster, along with the villages of Eastington, Frocester, Kings Stanley and Leonard Stanley.
- 2.3.10 In painting a spatial portrait of the Stonehouse cluster, the LPR describes Stonehouse as *"the second most populous town in the district, with a good range of services and shops at its centre"*. In contrast, Standish is characterised as *"amongst the most sparsely populated parishes in the district, with a strong rural character"*.
- 2.3.11 The LPR proposes three new strategic site allocations in the Stonehouse cluster to meet local and strategic growth needs. One of these options – proposed **site PS19a** Northwest of Stonehouse – falls entirely within the boundary of Standish parish, and therefore entirely within the Neighbourhood Area. Currently, the southern boundary of Standish broadly marks the northern extent of strategic growth at the West of Stonehouse strategic site allocation (in the adopted plan). Should PS19a be taken forward in the emerging LPR, this would extend Stonehouse-linked development into Standish parish.
- 2.3.12 The proposed strategic allocation PS19a in the 2021 Submission Draft Local Plan is for 700 new homes and 5ha of employment land, as depicted in **Figure 2.2**. Importantly, the allocation excludes the Land at Stagholt Farm.

Figure 2.2: Site SA2, Site PS19a and Land at Stagholt Farm

2.4 Vision for the Standish NP

2.4.1 In developing the Standish NP, and in response to the wider strategic context outlined above, the community has established the following vision for the parish by the end of the plan period in 2040:

“In 2040, Standish will have retained its character as an environmentally diverse rural area of outstanding natural beauty, responding effectively to the challenges of climate change.

It will continue to be a pleasant and tranquil place for its residents to live, providing a green lung for nearby urban communities.

The small, scattered hamlets which make up the Parish will have retained their separate and distinct character.

New housing will be of high-quality, carbon neutral design, integrated into the landscape and complementing the historic features of the Parish, such as the Almonry Arch and monastic buildings that constitute the ancient Parish centre.

The Parish’s open countryside and farmland will support a wide range of biodiversity.

East access to countryside will be maintained via the Parish’s extensive public rights of way network.

A diverse range of sustainable travel options will enable safe, well-connected movement throughout the Parish and to neighbouring urban centres.

Good community facilities will be maintained and enhanced and be accessible to all.”

2.4.2 To help achieve this vision, the following 13 plan objectives have been identified under five themes.

Landscape, biodiversity and climate change

- Ensure priority is given to protecting the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Standish countryside.
- Maintain a strong rural identity and provide a 'green lung' by maintaining a green buffer with neighbouring built up areas.
- Ensure new development supports the retention and enhancement of local habitats, biodiversity, dark skies, wildlife corridors, and linkages.
- Ensure new development responds to the local landscape character and the Parish's situation as a transition between the Cotswolds National Landscape escarpment and the Severn Vale.
- Ensure new development is of high-quality, well designed, and using carbon neutral technology. New development should be sensitive to the green environment and non-intrusive to the landscape.

Heritage

- Maintain the historic characteristics of the Parish and protect the setting of designated heritage assets.
- Improve understanding of the contribution made by undesignated heritage assets to local character and sense of place within the Parish.
- Ensure undesignated heritage assets and their settings are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Travel and connectivity

- Ensure new development provides appropriate connectivity to the existing and proposed footpaths, bridleways, cycle routes and multi-user paths through the provision of new routes and enhancements to existing routes.
- Support a new strategic active travel link between Gloucester and Stroud through Standish, thus providing a sustainable travel option from Standish to these towns.
- Preserve and enhance as necessary access to Stagholt Farm and ensure it is accessible from any new surrounding development.

Community Facilities

- Improve the existing community facility provision within the Parish and support the provision of appropriate new community facilities.

Site Allocation

- To designate land at Stagholt Farm as a Protected Area of Search, to be released for housing development only if site PS19a is allocated in the Stroud Local Plan or if a planning application for PS19a otherwise receives planning consent.

3. Scope of the SEA

3.1 Scoping

- 3.1.1 The scope of the SEA was presented in the SEA Scoping Report (2021) which set out:
- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional and local plans and strategies relevant to the Standish NP.
 - Baseline data against which the Standish NP can be assessed.
 - The key sustainability issues for the Standish NP; and
 - An ‘SEA framework’ of objectives against which the Standish NP can be assessed.
- 3.1.2 The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. As such, the Scoping Report was released to these authorities for consultation during a five-week consultation period in early 2021. The consultation responses, and how they have been considered through the SEA, are presented in **Appendix B**.
- 3.1.3 Given the length of time which has passed since scoping, consideration has been given to any emerging / recent baseline information and policy context during the subsequent stages of the SEA. The most notable are listed in **Table 3.2** below.
- 3.1.4 The SEA framework emerging from this work provides a methodological framework for the appraisal of likely significant effects on the baseline. The SEA framework for the Standish NP is presented in **Table 3.2** overleaf. Further scoping information is also presented in **Appendix B**.

Table 3.1 Emerging / recent baseline information and policy context

Baseline information or policy	Date
National Planning Policy Framework	2025
Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023	2023
Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2025	2025
The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024	2024
Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025	2025

Table 3.2 The SEA framework for Standish

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance designated and non-designated biodiversity and geodiversity features.
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area.
	Support the resilience of the neighbourhood area to the potential effects of climate change.
Community vitality	Cater for a range of existing and future residents' needs by supporting growth at locations which support access to key services and facilities, improving the health and wellbeing of residents and promoting sustainable modes of travel.
Historic environment	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the neighbourhood area, including both designated and non-designated historic assets.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes, including in relation to the Cotswold AONB and its setting.
Natural resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land and protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.

4. What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point?

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 Plan-making has been underway in Standish since late 2013 when the Parish Council made an application to SDC for the parish to be designated as a neighbourhood area. The application was approved in February 2014. The extent of the neighbourhood area is presented in **Figure 1.1** of this report.
- 4.1.2 Subsequently, the Parish Council has made significant progress on the preparation of both the Neighbourhood Plan and the evidence base which underpins it, culminating in a draft of the plan undergoing Regulation 14 (pre-submission) consultation between 10th June and 22nd July 2020.
- 4.1.3 The plan was subsequently screened in as requiring SEA on 31st July 2020.
- 4.1.4 This SEA Environmental Report accompanies the second iteration of the Standish NP. The first version was turned down at Examination in May 2022. This is because the examiner deemed all the policies unclear, imprecise and/or poorly phrased.⁴ In light of this outcome, the Standish NP has been extensively rewritten and revised.
- 4.1.5 This SEA Environmental Report accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan. The findings of the SEA have informed and influenced the development of the Standish NP.

4.2 Housing numbers to be delivered through the plan

- 4.2.1 Standish parish has no settlements large enough to feature on the Stroud District settlement hierarchy and is not allocated a housing target through either the adopted SDLP or emerging LPR. There is no evidence indicating a specific local housing need.
- 4.2.2 However, as discussed above, significant strategic development is underway immediately south of the parish at West of Stonehouse, whilst further strategic growth is proposed through the emerging LPR entirely within Standish parish.
- 4.2.3 If the LPR is found sound at examination and adopted by SDC, proposed site PS19a will therefore bring forward around 700 homes within the neighbourhood area. This proposed allocation would be an urban extension to Stonehouse which will function as part of the town and contribute to meeting the district's strategic housing needs rather than needs arising within Standish in isolation.

⁴ [Standish Neighbourhood Development Plan Independent Examiner's Report \(2022\)](#)

- 4.2.4 In this context, it is apparent that there is neither an identified local housing need nor a residual strategic housing need to be met through allocations in the Standish NP.
- 4.2.5 However, the Parish Council recognise that there are implications for areas of the Parish where strategic growth is being proposed, which are a focus for the NP.

4.3 LPR proposed strategic development area

- 4.3.1 As noted previously – the land at Stagholt Farm, highlighted in **Figure 4.1** is an area of the Parish that will be greatly affected by the LPR proposals at Site PS19a. Notably, this area would be largely surrounded by the proposed new development.

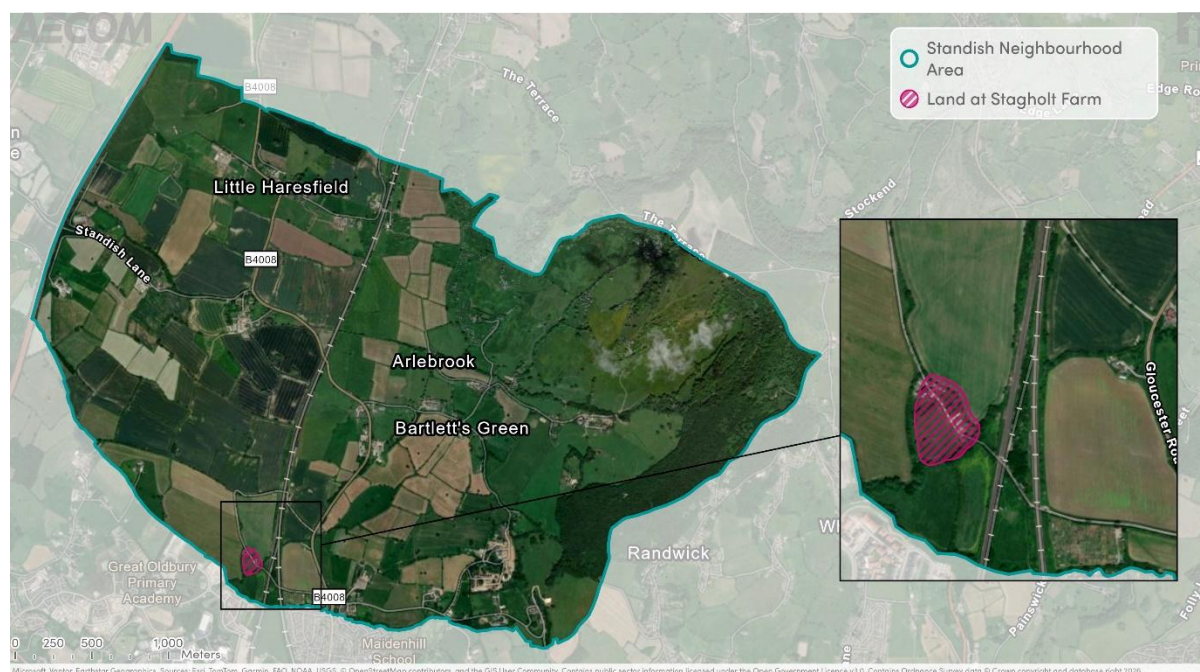


Figure 4.1: Land at Stagholt Farm in the context of the Neighbourhood Area

- 4.3.2 The strategic development area and PS19a boundary effectively excludes and sandwiches Stagholt Farm. In order to address this anomaly, the Parish Council began working with the landowners of Stagholt Farm with a view to identifying the site in the Standish NP. The landowners of Stagholt Farm also nominated the site to SDC for allocation in the LPR via the SDC call for sites process; however, it was withdrawn as it was made by their agent in error.
- 4.3.3 Notwithstanding this, the Parish Council judged that it remained appropriate for the Standish NP to continue to identify Stagholt Farm in order to secure a scheme which best supports the objectives of the Standish NP and best reflects the landowners' wishes, whilst also contributing to a coherent development across this area. The Parish Council are of the understanding this decision is taken in agreement with SDC.

4.4 Stagholt Farm

- 4.4.1 Stagholt Farm is located at the south of the neighbourhood area, just north of the parish boundary with Stonehouse. The built area of Stonehouse town itself has historically not extended as far as the parish boundary, meaning that traditionally Stagholt Farm's location has been within the open countryside.
- 4.4.2 The site comprises an area of around 1.6ha and includes the farmhouse itself plus associated open space, hard standing and outbuildings.
- 4.4.3 Primary access to the site is achieved currently via a restricted local access road which crosses the railway line at Black Bridge and joins the B4008 around 0.5km north of Stonehouse. Secondary pedestrian-only access is available via two public rights of way (PRoW):
- Footpath EST/6 which runs east-west through the site linking the B4008 in the east with Nupend in the west;
 - Footpath EST/6A which forks off the main PRoW, running south to Oldends Farm via the new Great Oldbury development.
- 4.4.4 The Bristol to Birmingham mainline and the Golden Valley line (linking Swindon and Gloucester) converge a short distance north of the site. Both lines run immediately past the east of the site, severing the site from more direct access to the B4008 and central Stonehouse. This represents a significant constraint in relation to site access from the east, particularly given that the Golden Valley line runs on a raised embankment.
- 4.4.5 The boundary of the Cotswolds National Landscape is around 350m to the east of the site. In practice, the setting of the National Landscape does not extend to the site as it is severed by the combined effect of the B4008 and the two railway lines, particularly the raised Golden Valley line, which interrupt sightlines from the National Landscape and substantially limits the rural, tranquil character of the landscape around Stagholt Farm.
- 4.4.6 There are no local, national or international biodiversity designations within or adjacent to the site.
- 4.4.7 To address the original anomaly whereby Stagholt Farm was not allocated but was surrounded by PS19a and SA2, the landowners of Stagholt Farm nominated the site through the Stroud LPR call for sites process in 2019. The call for sites nomination cites this anomalous relationship with the two strategic sites as a key reason for nomination, stating that:
- “Although Stagholt Farm was subsequently absorbed into the boundaries of proposed site PS19a, its late inclusion means it has not formed part of masterplanning work undertaken for the rest of PS19a, which is under separate ownership. The Parish Council is of the view that this means Stagholt Farm will benefit from being masterplanned as a separate component of the overall strategic allocation, something the Parish Council views is best achieved by allocation through the Neighbourhood Plan.”
- 4.4.8 In this context, the proposed allocation of Stagholt Farm is underpinned by a rationale to make best use of available land rather than to meet an identified local housing need.

“Stagholt Farm is effectively surrounded by SA2 West of Stonehouse and PS19a – North / Northwest of Stonehouse. A further anomaly is the fact PS19a includes part of Stagholt Farm whilst the remainder has somewhat surprisingly been omitted from both PS19a and SA2”.

4.5 Reasonable alternatives

- 4.5.1 A key element of the SEA process is establishing and appraising ‘reasonable alternatives’ for the Standish NP. The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative, stating only that the Environmental Report should present an appraisal of the “*plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan*”.
- 4.5.2 However, it is apparent that the Parish Council is very limited in terms of potential alternatives to the spatial strategy that can be considered.
- 4.5.3 Considered alongside the role of Standish in the settlement hierarchy (without a need to deliver more homes) this is due to the specific circumstances of the proposed site allocation at Stagholt Farm in terms of the reason for its nomination by the landowner, its spatial relationship with adjacent strategic allocations, and its potential to deliver the objectives of the Standish NP.
- 4.5.4 No alternative site options have been identified for potential allocation through the Standish NP. Fundamentally, this reflects the key fact that the allocation of Stagholt Farm is not driven by the need to meet a housing target, but rather to rationalise available land to enable a coherent strategic scheme which reflects the landowners’ wishes.
- 4.5.5 The absence of a housing target and the absence of evidence of local housing need within Standish – plus the general presumption against development in Tier 5 settlements in the Local Plan – means that there is no need for the Parish Council to undertake a call for sites to explore potential alternative locations for growth within Standish. This highlights the fact that Stagholt Farm is additionally unique in the context of the plan area as having potential to function as a part of the Stonehouse urban area, i.e. a Tier 1 settlement rather than any of the Tier 5 settlements elsewhere in the parish.
- 4.5.6 In the absence of a housing target or evidence of local housing need, and on the understanding that the allocation of Stagholt Farm is proposed to achieve a specific and unique purpose in the context of the plan area, it is not possible to derive meaningful spatial strategy alternatives to the Standish NP. A ‘do nothing’ scenario is not a reasonable alternative to test, as this is the existing baseline without a plan.
- 4.5.7 On this basis, it is considered that there are **no reasonable alternatives to the preferred spatial strategy for the Standish NP**.

4.6 Preferred approach to the Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.6.1 As noted above, SEA Environmental Report accompanies the second iteration of the Standish NP. In this iteration of the Standish NP, rather than an allocation, Stagholt Farm is identified as a Protected Area of Search (PAS) for new housing with no other principal use permitted. Policy 6A of the Standish NP outlines that the owners may only offer the site for development if PS19a is allocated for development in the draft Stroud District Local Plan (currently at Examination in Public) and/or if a planning application is approved for PS19a.

5. What are the appraisal findings at this stage?

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This chapter presents an assessment of the Regulation 14 version of the Standish NP. This most recent version incorporates suggested amendments identified through an appraisal of an earlier draft of the plan. A schedule of these recommendations is provided at the end of this chapter.

5.2 Assessment method

- 5.2.1 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1**) as a methodological framework.
- 5.2.2 For each theme 'significant effects' of the current version of the plan on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations.⁵ So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.
- 5.2.3 Every effort is made to identify and evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the plan. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects and ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

5.3 Standish NP policies

- 5.3.1 The Standish NP proposes a total of seven policies, as listed in **Table 5.1** below.

Table 5.1: Standish NP policy list 2025

Policy reference	Policy name
Policy 1	Standish Landscape Character Areas
Policy 2	Biodiversity
Policy 3	Locally Significant Heritage Assets
Policy 4	Sustainable Transport in Standish
Policy 5	Community Facilities
Policy 6A	Protected Area of Search 'Stagholt Farm'
Policy 6B	Site Allocation PS19A

⁵ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

5.4 Overview of the Standish NP

5.5 Biodiversity

- 5.5.1 Standish is relatively unconstrained in relation to designated biodiversity sites, however impact pathways to nearby European designated sites have been identified through screening, thus requiring Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). With the HRA unavailable at time of writing this report, it is assumed that the findings of the HRA will be considered in finalising the plan for consultation, and any recommendations would be suitably addressed to avoid significant effects arising.
- 5.5.2 Whilst no nationally designated sites fall within the neighbourhood area, the proposed Protected Area of Search (PAS) at Stagholt Farm is located within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ). The IRZ captures any residential developments with a net gain in units, with a requirement to consult further with Natural England. Recognising that the proposed PAS has been presented to Natural England through both the Standish NP and its supporting HRA and SEA documents to date, and no significant objections to the site have been raised, no significant negative effects are considered likely.
- 5.5.3 Onsite at Stagholt Farm, its current agricultural use has biodiversity values associated with arable land, mature hedgerows and trees, meadows, and a brook at the southern boundary. Notably, Policy 6A seeks to ensure that new development at the site retains biodiversity features and complements biodiversity with betterment where possible. Net gains on-site have good potential to enhance the existing values associated with features such as the brook at the border of the site. Additionally, Policy 1 recognises the potential for strategic development to occur in the Neighbourhood Area and seeks the appropriate delivery of landscaping, green infrastructure and biodiversity gains in this scenario.
- 5.5.4 More widely, the Standish NP proposes Policy 2 dedicated to protecting the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Standish countryside and the natural features of this, including habitats, endangered species, dark skies, and mature trees. The Policy reflects the intention to retain the natural character of Standish and reinforces a role of Standish as a 'green lung' to neighbouring built up areas, thus seeking to demonstrate that the ecological and biodiversity values of this area extend the neighbourhood area itself.
- 5.5.5 The role of Standish as a 'green lung' will become increasingly important should Site PS19a be allocated through the Local Plan and eventually built out as an extension of Stonehouse. This role should help establish the nature values associated with Standish and help avoid these values being eroded by urbanising effects.
- 5.5.6 Considering these points, **no significant effects** are considered likely overall. Minor impacts are largely avoidable at the project-scale, supported by both existing planning policies and the proposed policies of the Standish NP. Establishing Standish as a 'green lung' and potential net gains for nature delivered through new development areas could lead to **long-term minor positive effects**.

5.6 Climate change

- 5.6.1 The key considerations in relation to climate change include a need to increase resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including appropriate consideration of existing and future flood risk, whilst also minimising contributions to climate change made by activities within the neighbourhood area.
- 5.6.2 Climate change is difficult to tackle at the neighbourhood scale, particularly recognising the role of Standish in the settlement hierarchy, and the limited opportunities for self-containment that exist. Ultimately, as a rural Parish, reliance is placed on wider connections to nearby larger settlements, and key transport corridors.
- 5.6.3 In this context it is important to consider the intentions of the Standish NP – which do not effectively allocate a development site but instead identifies an area of land (PAS) that would likely be suitable for future development in the context of the planned expansion of Stonehouse. The plan seeks to ensure that this land is not prejudiced (or land locked) by the development that is expected to surround it in the future. In this way, it allows for future growth in an area of the Parish which is expected to become relatively well-connected (following completion of the wider development being planned for there). Thus, ensuring the efficient use of land and supporting connected development in line with climate change objectives.
- 5.6.4 Notably, a small part of the Stagholt Farm site (in the south-west corner) falls within an area of high flood fluvial risk, and it will be important to ensure that vulnerable development avoids areas at risk both now and in the future. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) could help to improve drainage rates where necessary, particularly considering the surface water flood risk bordering the site. Impacts in relation to flood risk are considered likely to be avoided or mitigated at the project-level scale considering the wider policy context of the NPPF and Local Plan.
- 5.6.5 Other Standish NP policies, such as Policies 4 and 5, which seek to enhance sustainable transport connections and safeguard the existing community facilities, also provide support for climate change objectives such as connected development and reduced transport emissions.
- 5.6.6 Considering these points, broadly **neutral effects** are considered most likely (i.e., no significant deviation from the baseline) – particularly over the plan period. In the longer-term, cumulative positive effects could be possible through the delivery of additional connected development around Stonehouse (that could otherwise be land-locked and a lost opportunity) and in this way, potentially avoiding development elsewhere in the countryside surrounding the main settlement.

5.7 Community vitality

- 5.7.1 The Standish NP is geared towards supporting community vitality through its main objectives and resultant policies. The Standish NP performs well in characterising the Parish and in identifying the changes and challenges likely to be faced in the near future.

- 5.7.2 Firstly, of note is the response to strategic development. The Standish NP recognises the plan-led intentions to strategically grow Stonehouse as one of the main towns in the district. By identifying the PAS at Stagholt Farm, the Standish NP supports growth in the most sustainable part of the neighbourhood area. Notably, Policy 6a encourages early consultation with the Parish Council to ensure designs include the highest standards of green infrastructure, walking and cycling routes and the latest environmentally sustainable technology. This will all support the quality of life of residents and thereby contribute towards community vitality.
- 5.7.3 Policy 4 focuses on sustainable travel provision, supporting safe and accessible transport across the neighbourhood area. Whilst it is recognised that Standish itself has limited services and facilities, and is only served by one bus service (the 65, which provides connections to Stroud and Gloucester), the PAS at Stagholt Farm is well located to Stonehouse, which has a much more extensive offering. If development were to come forward in this location, it would likely be well connected to the town considering the extensive development that has been / is due to be delivered around the site.
- 5.7.4 The safeguarding (and enhancement) of community facilities is addressed through Policy 5. This policy also sets out that development proposals for new and/or improved community facilities must be in accordance with Core Policy CP15 of the Local Plan.
- 5.7.5 Considering the above, the Standish NP is anticipated to lead to **major long-term positive effects**, reflecting the sustainable location of the PAS at Stagholt Farm and the policy framework more broadly. In particular, the focus of the policies on ensuring that the design of any strategic allocations within the parish needs to appropriately reflect the local considerations proposed within Policy 6A and integrate with the PAS at Stagholt Farm.

5.8 Historic environment

- 5.8.1 The main designated historic features in the neighbourhood area are a cluster of listed buildings within Standish village, and isolated listed buildings in the countryside. In this respect, the PAS at Stagholt Farm is not constrained by any historic assets, as there are none within the setting of the site. Given the future context that this site would only be developed after the larger PS19a site has, and that the site would be relatively enclosed by this development, limited effects are anticipated in relation to the historic environment.
- 5.8.2 The Standish NP proposes Policy 3, which identifies and provides policy protections for undesignated but locally significant heritage assets, which is of benefit to the historic environment. In addition, Policy 6a sets out that the PAS at Stagholt Farm may only come forward for development if the density and layout of the proposal retains and complements the existing farm buildings reflecting the historic layout of the allocation. This will support the preservation of the historic environment in this location by ensuring that any strategic growth respects its historic character and rural setting.
- 5.8.3 In light of the above, **minor long-term positive effects** are concluded as most likely overall.

5.9 Landscape

- 5.9.1 The parish lies at the western extent of the Cotswolds escarpment and much of the elevated eastern half of the parish falls within the Cotswolds National Landscape, whilst its western half is relatively flat and lies much lower in the landscape within the Severn Vale. High ground in the east supports long range scenic views over the Vale from multiple viewpoints. This gives rise to potential landscape sensitivity in much of the neighbourhood area, either directly in relation to the National Landscape in the east, or indirectly in relation to its setting in the west. Correspondingly, the Standish NP seeks to ensure that the parish's landscape quality is protected, supported by a detailed evidence base which informs the subdivision of the parish into seven landscape 'character areas', detailed in **Table 5.2**.

Table 5.2 Key policy considerations relating to the landscape character areas as per Table 4 of the Standish NP

Area	Area name	Key policy consideration
Area A	The National Landscape in Standish Parish.	Development would not normally be appropriate here.
Area B	This area falls outside the National Landscape but is an important feature of its setting.	Development here would have a negative impact on the setting of the National Landscape.
Area C	The area bound by draft Local Plan Strategic Allocation PS19a to the south and the local ridge to the north.	Standish historic core and its setting should be preserved and enhanced by all development and views of Standish Church spire should be preserved. Opportunities should be maximised to create new and strengthen existing green corridors and to improve and create new / better connections to multifunctional green infrastructure. Development here would have a negative impact on the setting of the National Landscape
Area D	This area is bounded to the south by a low ridge and to the north by the B4008.	Standish historic centre and its setting should be preserved and enhanced by all development and views of Standish Church spire should be preserved. Green energy benefits should be balanced against potential harm to Standish historic centre, the two Bowl Barrows and other historic assets. Development here would have a negative impact on the setting of the National Landscape.
Area E	This land is countryside where only rural development would be appropriate (NPPF 2025 p. 80 and 84) Area E includes Standish Airfield Meadow: Centroid SO7927051 (approximately 8ha).	Opportunities should be maximised to create new and strengthen existing green corridors and to improve and create new/better connections to multi-functional green infrastructure. Biodiversity net gain should be focused on improving local natural features. Development should resist harm to Standish Airfield Meadow's biodiversity and habitats. Development here would have a negative impact on the setting of the National Landscape.
Area F	The Standish historic core.	Standish historic core and its setting should be preserved and enhanced by all development and views of Standish Church spire should be preserved.

Area	Area name	Key policy consideration
Area G	The rural edge adjacent to Stonehouse.	Opportunities should be maximised to create new and strengthen existing green corridors and to improve and create new / better connections to multi-functional green infrastructure. Development here would have a negative impact on the setting of the National Landscape.

- 5.9.2 As noted above, the Standish NP sets out that development would not normally be appropriate within the National Landscape (Area A). It also recognises the contribution of land surrounding the National Landscape to its setting. This is considered positive in principle as it will continue to be of great importance to avoid harm to the National Landscape and its setting.
- 5.9.3 It is considered that the approach taken in Policy 1 of defining landscape character areas within the parish is sensible and proportionate as a means of guiding development.
- 5.9.4 Turning to strategic development proposals which may come forward in the parish, the 2019 Standish Landscape Appraisal finds that proposed site PS19a in the south of the neighbourhood area is “highly visible from a number of viewpoints” and that the visual effect of strategic development will likely be “significantly adverse where extensive or clear views can be seen”. The Landscape Appraisal also notes that landscape effects could be significantly adverse without substantial mitigation through boundary treatment, such as “large scale forest trees along the boundary zones and within the internal layout”.
- 5.9.5 In response to this evidence, Policy 1 defines the extent of proposed site PS19a as Area C; policy considerations are set out in **Table 5.2** above.
- 5.9.6 More broadly, Policy 1 sets out that development proposals should consider where the location, materials, scale and use are sympathetic and complementary to the character of the landscape. They should also ensure the retention and appropriate future management of natural features that contribute to landscape character. Finally, the policy outlines that major or strategic development proposals should deliver appropriate landscaping and green infrastructure, such that the key characteristics of the built and natural environment are conserved and reinforced. The policy also considers the relationship between future development and landscape character areas.
- 5.9.7 Considering the policy provisions made within the Standish NP, particularly its focus on ensuring that any growth is sensitive to the landscape and rural setting, **minor positive effects** are anticipated at this stage. This also recognises that – if development comes forward through the Local Plan – the PAS at Stagholt Farm is soon to be enclosed by new development areas.

5.10 Natural resources

- 5.10.1 The PAS at Stagholt Farm is primarily greenfield (with some existing buildings / structures), and therefore development of the site will lead to the loss of greenfield land. However, it is recognised that opportunities to support the regeneration of brownfield sites in the neighbourhood area are limited.

- 5.10.2 There is a need to ensure that development makes best use of available land, i.e. avoids resulting in the avoidable loss of 'best and most versatile' (BMV) agricultural land where poorer quality land is available as an alternative. The agricultural land classification (ALC) identifies Grade 1, 2 and 3a as BMV land, whilst Grades 3b, 4 and below are of poorer quality. According to the post 1988 ALC, the PAS at Stagholt Farm is primarily underlain by Grade 3b agricultural land. Hence, development of this site would not lead to the loss of BMV agricultural land. The remainder of the site (along the northeastern boundary) is classified as 'other'.
- 5.10.3 There is also a need to ensure that water resources and water quality are not adversely affected by development. A minor watercourse runs along the southern boundary of the PAS at Stagholt Farm. Hence, development will need to utilise methods such as SuDS to ensure that runoff from new development areas does not contaminate this watercourse / adversely affect water quality.
- 5.10.4 Overall, the Standish NP is considered likely to lead to broadly **neutral effects** with regard to this SEA topic. However, a degree of uncertainty is noted with regard to potential impacts of development on water resources.

5.11 Cumulative effects

- 5.11.1 The Standish NP is likely to lead to **long-term positive cumulative effects** with the emerging Stroud Local Plan Review as it supports sustainable development of a site which may otherwise become landlocked and underutilised. The policy framework of the Standish NP also further strengthens the provisions made within the emerging Local Plan, ensuring that neighbourhood-level considerations are taken into account with regard to future development.

5.12 Conclusions

- 5.12.1 The Standish NP performs well overall, with **neutral / no effects – major positive effects** predicted across all the SEA themes.
- 5.12.2 With regard to biodiversity, **no significant effects** are considered likely overall. Minor impacts are largely avoidable at the project-scale, supported by both existing planning policies and the proposed policies of the Standish NP. Establishing Standish as a 'green lung' and potential net gains in development could lead to **long-term minor positive effects**.
- 5.12.3 Broadly **neutral effects** are considered most likely under the climate change SEA topic – particularly over the plan period. In the longer-term, cumulative positive effects could be possible through the delivery of additional connected development around Stonehouse (that could otherwise be landlocked and a lost opportunity) and in this way, potentially avoiding development elsewhere in the countryside surrounding the main settlement.
- 5.12.4 In terms of the historic environment, **minor long-term positive effects** are concluded as most likely overall due to the policy provisions made within the Standish NP (specifically Policy 3), as well as the PAS at Stagholt Farm being relatively unconstrained from a heritage standpoint.

- 5.12.5 With regard to the landscape SEA topic, considering the policy provisions made within the Standish NP, particularly its focus on ensuring that any growth is sensitive to the landscape and rural setting, **minor positive effects** are anticipated at this stage. This also recognises that – if development comes forward through the Local Plan – the PAS at Stagholt Farm is soon to be enclosed by new development areas.
- 5.12.6 Finally, broadly **neutral effects** are noted under the national resources SEA topic. This is because development in this location will not lead to the loss of BMV agricultural land, and potential impacts on water quality are likely to be mitigated as a result of national planning policy. However, a degree of uncertainty is noted in this respect.

5.13 Recommendations

- 5.13.1 No specific recommendations are made at this stage.

6. What are the next steps

6.1 Next steps

- 6.1.1 This Environmental Report accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the Standish Neighbourhood Plan for consultation.
- 6.1.2 Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by Standish Parish Council, and the Standish NP and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the Standish NP for submission to the Local Planning Authority, SDC, for subsequent Independent Examination.
- 6.1.3 At Independent Examination, the Standish NP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the adopted Stroud District Plan and emerging Local Plan Review.
- 6.1.4 If Independent Examination is favourable, the Standish NP will be subject to a referendum, organised by CDC. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Standish NP, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Standish NP will become part of the Development Plan for Stroud district, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

6.2 Monitoring

- 6.2.1 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.
- 6.2.2 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by SDC as part of wider monitoring associated with the Local Plan, via preparation of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
- 6.2.3 The SEA has not identified any potential for significant negative effects that would require closer monitoring.

Appendix A – Regulatory requirements

As discussed in Chapter 1, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. Table AA1 links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst Table AA2 explains this interpretation. Table AA3 provides a checklist of how and where in the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements are met.

Table AA1: Questions answered by the Environmental Report, in accordance with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

Report section	Questions answered	Regulatory requirement met
Introduction	What is the plan seeking to achieve?	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.
	What is the scope of the SEA?	- Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level. - Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance. - Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan. - The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. - Key environmental problems/ issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e., provide a 'framework' for) assessment.
Part 1	What has plan-making/ SEA involved up to this point?	- Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach). - The likely significant effects associated with alternatives. - Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives assessment/ a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the Plan.
Part 2	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?	- The likely significant effects associated with the Plan. - The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan.
Part 3	What happens next?	A description of the monitoring measures envisaged.

Table AA2: Questions answered by the Environmental Report, in accordance with regulatory requirements

Schedule 2	Interpretation of Schedule 2		
The report must include...	The report must include...		
1. an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>	
2. the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>	i.e. answer – <i>What's the scope of the SA?</i>
3. the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level		
4. any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>	
5. the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected		
6. the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance		
7. the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>	
8. an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]	
9. a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.		
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]	
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan		
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]	

Table AA3: ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where regulatory requirements are or will be met.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
Schedule 2 requirements:	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Chapter 2 (‘What’s the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information. The relationship with other plans and programmes is also set out in Appendix B (Scoping Information).
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	These matters were considered in detail at the scoping stage, which included consultation on a Scoping Report published in 2021. The outcome of scoping was an ‘SEA Framework’, and this is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What’s the scope of the SEA’). More detailed messages from the Scoping Report - i.e., messages established through context and baseline review - are presented within Appendix B . This also includes updates to scoping since the publication of the Scoping Report.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	
5. The environmental protection objectives established at international, national, or community level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	The Scoping Report (2021) presents a detailed context review and explains how key messages from the context review (and baseline review) were then refined to establish an ‘SEA framework’. The scoping information is presented in Appendix B and includes any relevant updates. The context review informed the development of the SEA framework and topics, presented in Chapter 3, which provide a methodological ‘framework’ for appraisal. With regards to explaining “how... considerations have been taken into account” - - Chapter 4 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. - Chapter 5 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the draft plan as well as a summary of the findings and any recommendations.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape, and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: these effects should include	- Chapter 4 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of available evidence. - Chapter 5 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the draft plan as well as a summary of the findings and any recommendations. As explained within the various methodology sections, as part of appraisal work, consideration has been given to the SEA scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how the requirement is met
secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short-, medium-, and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects).	
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.	Where necessary, mitigation measures are identified within the alternatives appraisal and appraisal of the Draft Local Plan (Chapter 5).
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Chapter 4 deals with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues/ options. Also, Chapter 4 explains the Council's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in light of alternatives appraisal). Methodology is discussed at various places, ahead of presenting appraisal findings, and limitations/ assumptions are also discussed as part of appraisal narratives.
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10.	At this stage no additional monitoring measures are identified as being necessary over and above those already being considered by the Council.
10. A Non-Technical Summary of the information provided under the above headings.	A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is provided at the start of this document.
The SA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations: Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying SA Report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1 and 6.2).	At the current time, this SEA Environmental Report is being published alongside the Regulation 14 version of the Standish NP for public consultation.
The SA Report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the Plan. The SA Report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6, and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7, shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.	The Council will take into account this SEA Environmental Report when preparing for submission of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Appendix B – Scoping information

B.1 Scoping consultation responses

A summary of representations to the statutory SEA Scoping Report consultation, along with how they have been considered is presented in Table AB1 below:

Table AB1: Summary of scoping representations received

Consultee	Consultation response summary	How the response is considered and addressed
Historic England	<i>n/a - no representation received within the consultation period.</i>	n/a
Natural England	<i>n/a - no representation received within the consultation period.</i>	n/a
Environment Agency	- Recommendations provided in response to the Reg 14 consultation in July 2020 still apply; - South west corner of the proposed site allocation at Stagholt Farm appears to be within Flood Zone 2 and 3 (medium and high risk); - Could be some potential for flooding from 'ordinary watercourses' which are not included within the EA's flood mapping; - It is recommended the SEA considers the potential for biodiversity enhancement and net gain.	- Noted – no action required. - This has been considered through the appraisal of the draft plan. - Noted – no action required as no specific potential for effects identified. - This has been captured in the appraisal of the draft plan.

B.2 Key issues

Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline, the Scoping Report process identified a range of sustainability issues that should be focus of SEA. These key baseline issues and opportunities are presented below under six environmental themes.

Biodiversity:

- There are no internationally or nationally designated sites within the Plan area
- This means there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Plan area, though the Plan area does fall within a number of SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) suggesting a degree of sensitivity from some forms of development.
- There are a number of sites recognised for their important potential to support domestic habitats and species and their wider habitat networks within the Plan area, including various woodlands, orchards, grassland and network expansion zones.

- Due to limited areas of notable biodiversity significance within the plan area, the Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to enhance/deliver net gain through the process of delivering development.

Climate change:

- Areas of high fluvial and surface water flood risk in the Plan area are very limited and mostly confined to the corridor of the Epney Rhyne, which runs through the centre of Standish village.
- Following SDC's declaration of a climate emergency, the Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of a District-wide target of carbon neutrality by 2050.
- Government emissions data (2018) indicates that CO2 emissions in Stroud District are falling, but still lower than comparative figures for the South West region.
- The transport sector continues to be the largest contributing sector towards CO2 emissions in Stroud District. There are several electric vehicle (EV) charging points located in nearby Stonehouse and at the garden centre in Haresfield parish, though none in Standish itself.
- Green Infrastructure in the Plan area includes Standish Park and Wood, located in the west part of Standish. The Plan should seek to preserve GI networks and open spaces such as Standish Park and Wood.

Community vitality:

- The population of the Plan area is small, at around 260 people in 2019. Evidence from census data and mid-year population estimates indicates the population may be gradually declining. However, since this data was compiled, there have been housing completions within the parish, providing a recent increase to the population. This includes (but is not limited to) 135 occupied houses at Green Walk, the former Standish Hospital site, which is anticipated to have contributed towards reversing the trend for a declining population.
- The 60+ age bracket is the largest within the Plan area, significantly greater than proportion for Stroud, the South West region and England as a whole. This may be partly due to the presence of the Moreton Hill Care Home within the parish, whose elderly residents form a sizable proportion of the total population of the parish.
- Census data indicates that an overall majority of residents in the Plan report good or very good health, though a significant minority report 'very bad' health. This could reflect the age profile of the parish and the number of residents in the care home, given a large proportion of residents are aged 60 or over. However, it is anticipated that the age profile has likely changed, reflecting the development of the Green Walk site.
- A large proportion of residents in the Plan area own their own cars in comparison to the District, region and national as a whole. In particular, a large majority of residents own multiple cars. Future development could offer the potential to support improved connectivity with higher tier services outside the parish, particularly at Stonehouse.

Historic environment:

- There are 46 listed buildings within the Plan area, including one Grade I listed building, two Grade II* listed buildings and 42 Grade II listed buildings. Additionally, there are four scheduled monuments within the Plan area. Development within the plan area requires the preservation and maintenance of these assets and their settings, subject to detailed matters of design and layout.

Landscape:

- The eastern half of the neighbourhood area falls within the Cotswold National Landscape, indicating significant landscape sensitivity, including at areas of the parish outside the National Landscape itself but which are likely to be within its setting.
- There are a number of viewpoints from high ground within the parish which offer distinctive panoramic views over the Severn Vale.
- Standish generally retains a strong rural character with small-scale scattered settlements across the Parish that are well integrated within the local landscape (Standish Parish Council).

Natural resources:

- There are two key watercourses within the Plan area. None of the water bodies within the Plan boundary meet the requirements for 'good' chemical status due to the presence of mercury and its compounds and Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE).
- The Plan area is underlain by Grade 3 agricultural land which could mean it has potential to be 'best and most versatile' land.
- The Plan area falls partly within two Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs), though there are not currently any mineral extraction sites in the Plan area.