

Stowe Nine Churches, Northamptonshire Village Design Statement

v.6 September 2018



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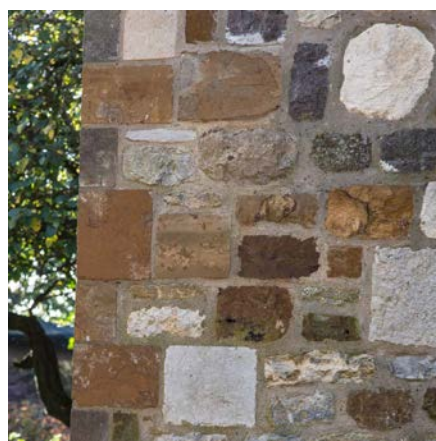
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Village Design Statement

Summary, Process & Purpose

The Parish of Stowe Nine Churches in Northamptonshire encompasses the two settlements of Church Stowe and Upper Stowe, together with outlying rural properties. Preparation of the Village Design Statement (VDS) began in 2017 with the aim of being adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to work in conjunction with the Daventry District Council (DDC) Settlements & Countryside Local Plan. It is intended to be a useful resource that will also raise awareness of design issues within Stowe Nine Churches, contribute to the overall improvement of local planning decisions, and so help to preserve the character of the two settlements within the Parish.

During 2017, Stowe Nine Churches Parish Council agreed that it would be appropriate to develop a VDS to reflect the views of the local community such that these could be adequately reflected during the consideration of planning applications.

Following advice taken from Northamptonshire Action with Communities in Rural England (NACRE), a VDS launch event was held on 25th November 2017 and this was attended by almost 50 parishioners. A survey completed by those attending provided insight into the views and priorities of the local community, whilst almost 30 of those attending volunteered to take part in the subsequent development of the VDS.

During 2018, a Working Party comprising five sub-groups developed each of the various themes to be covered by the VDS and these have subsequently been integrated into this version of the document which has been reviewed by both the Working Party itself, and the Parish Council.

The Parish Council has since approved the VDS for submission to DDC as the local Planning Authority who will now conduct further review and consultation prior to final sign off and ultimately, adoption as a planning guideline document.



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Introduction

The Village Design Statement (VDS) describes the parish of Stowe Nine Churches as it is today and highlights the qualities valued by its residents. This document has been produced by a large group of villagers following an open launch event to which all households were invited. In this way local knowledge, views and ideas will contribute to improving the quality of our environment.

The open meeting was held in November 2017 to launch VDS development process, and to seek comments. During the revision process drafts of the document will be published on the Stowe Nine Churches Parish Council Website and comments sought there and through the village Facebook page, so that they may influence the final document.

This VDS is aimed at ensuring that our local distinctiveness and character is taken into consideration when local planning decisions are being taken.

In this document, the term "Stowe Nine Churches" refers to both of the two settlements of Church Stowe and Upper Stowe and the rural landscape surrounding them within the Parish boundaries delineated on the map in Appendix 1.

This document is expected to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by Daventry District Council. It will be a material consideration when considering any planning application in or near the parish and provides guidelines for future changes.

Who should use this guide?

- **Property owners planning extensions and changes**
- **Developers and Builders**
- **Stowe Nine Churches Parish Council**
- **Daventry District Council**
- **Highways authorities**
- **Utility companies**



Parish Context

The parish of Stowe Nine Churches lies atop a low range of undulating hills, known as the Northamptonshire Heights. Covering nearly 781 hectares, the parish lies south west of Watling Street (A5) which forms its north eastern boundary, and approximately 5 miles north of the town of Towcester.

The west and central part of the parish is occupied by a wide flat-topped plateau that divides to become two ridges on which stand, approximately 1km apart, the two settlements of the parish, Church Stowe and Upper Stowe. The parish of Stowe Nine Churches consists of 115 houses, 2 churches, and the Old School Rooms which is used as a village hall, as well as several farms and the Old Dairy Farm Craft Centre.

In Daventry District Council's 'Settlements and Countryside Local Plan' Church Stowe has been designated as a "other village" which has a limited range of services, e.g. the Old School Rooms. Therefore, it is considered that development should be limited as being small scale and within the confines. Upper Stowe is classed as a "small settlement/hamlet" and in total as 'open countryside' and any development is judged against open countryside policies.

Both settlements within Stowe Nine Churches are characterised by a typical linear format with development fronting onto and following the main road. In Church Stowe this linearity is punctuated with areas of open agricultural land which softens the built form providing views into and a sense of the proximity of the surrounding countryside. This is less the case in Upper Stowe which, although smaller in terms of dwellings, has a harder street scene which extends into a parallel road. Between the villages, the settlement pattern includes scattered farmsteads and dwellings located both adjacent to roadsides, and set back from the road and accessed via minor tracks. Any future development should respect the linear format of the existing built form with development fronting onto the road.

The parish has a dark sky policy and has no streetlights; this means an unusually large amount of stars can be seen on a clear dark night. It also gives the settlements a quiet, peaceful, non-intrusive feel, without compromising a sense of safety and security due to a low level of background light emanating from the glow over Northampton, Daventry and Banbury. This is a valuable asset that is important for wildlife and benefits the health and wellbeing of residents.

The parish contains 3 major arterial transport features:

- Watling Street - A5 trunk road (north, south)
- Grand Union Canal
- West Coast Mainline Railway

Parish History

Parish register records begin in 1558; however, recent studies suggest that Stowe Nine Churches may be more important in an historical context.

Adjacent to the old Roman road of Watling Street (A5) and lying halfway between the important Roman town of Towcester and the large Whitehall Roman Villa, the parish has strong historical connections to Roman Britain. By virtue of its topography and hydrology, the parish has been established as a strong candidate for the battle site of Boudicca's last stand. Analysis of the area around Church Stowe has identified apparent field fortifications which may be attributable to Roman military fortifications (*craft:pegg 2010*)

Reference to the settlement of Church Stowe can also be found in the Domesday Book where it records that in 1086 the population was quite large at 27 households and the Lord of the Manor, Gilbert of Ghent, received rent from the villagers of £5.

Records show that in 1716 the charity 'Corporation of the Sons of Clergy' purchased 1,493 acres as well as 120 acres of woodland for £15,500. The charity, which was founded in 1655 by a group of merchants in the City of London, together with a group of sons of clergymen, was established to provide for destitute clergy and their families during the time of Oliver Cromwell, and still exists today. The Corporation were the Lords of the Manor for the next 200 years, relinquishing their estates just before the First World War.

By 1853 a limestone quarry had been established to the south of the road from Church Stowe to what is now the A5. It was linked by a horse worked tramway which led under the main railway to the canal between Nether Heyford and Weedon. The limestone quarry ceased operation in 1900, however, parts of the tramway embankment can still be seen between the A5 and the railway. There were also a number of gravel pits around the village, evidence of which can still be seen.

There are three memorials related to the two World Wars situated within the Parish; within St James' churchyard in Upper Stowe lies a single Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone to the memory of Private T.J. Colley who died on 2nd May 1918 during World War I.



Close by to the main memorial at Church Stowe is a plaque inside the Old School Rooms which commemorates the amount of £260 raised by the Parish in support of a War Memorial appeal by Northampton General Hospital following the World War II.



The parish also played a significant role as the birthplace of radar and a memorial to its discovery was unveiled in September 2001 in a field at the extreme south-east corner of the Parish; this is connected to Upper Stowe by a path (public right of way) across the fields. For location, see map at Appendix 1.



The Radar memorial and the field path to Upper Stowe

The memorial marks the place where the experiment that first proved the possibility of Radar was carried out in 1935, when, asked by the Air Ministry for a demonstration of his theories, Arnold Wilkins chose a field near Upper Stowe to set up receiving equipment from the National Physical Laboratory in London, which he installed in an old ambulance parked in the field across the road from the memorial.

On the 26 February 1935 a bomber airplane flew along a path between the receiving station near Upper Stowe and the transmitting towers of a BBC shortwave station in nearby Daventry. This convincing test, known as the *Daventry Experiment*, was witnessed by a representative from the Air Ministry, and led to the immediate authorisation to build a full demonstration system. Without this experiment, it is almost certain that the outcome of World War 2 would have been very different.

Landscape

Geologically, the soil character is a mixture of lias clay, ironstone and Northampton sand which gives rise to a number of springs within the Parish. This sandstone is iron rich, making it 'a warm brown with a hint of orange' and the colour of the stone varies considerably both within and between blocks. The soil on top is free draining which provides excellent grazing for sheep and cattle as well as good arable soil.

There are long views across the Parish afforded by the open countryside. The field boundaries are marked by rich and varied hedgerows. The Parish contains approximately 7km of footpaths within its boundaries. Ridge and furrow fields are still evident and there are woods, coppices and ponds, both natural and man-made across the parish. See map at Appendix 1.

The local topography is rapidly undulating and covered by a patch work of differing arable and livestock fields, broken up by a network of hedgerows and sporadic woodland/ copses.

Within the Parish is Ramsden Corner Plantation, a 3.2 hectare biological Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is managed by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. A stream runs through this valley site, which is acidic grassland, woodland and scrub on clay and sand. Plants such as wood millet, wood-sorrel and wood vetch are indicators of ancient woodland. Opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage is found in wet flushes.

There are also three areas within the Parish which are designated as Country Wildlife Sites (Woodhill Plantation, Stowe Wood and Stowe Spinney) and four other sites which Northamptonshire Biodiversity Record Centre have designated as 'potential wildlife sites' (Site 458, Site 460, Site 461 and the site named Litchborough Fen North, near the radar memorial). In the north of the parish lies the Grand Union Canal which is part of the counties 'Nene Valley Nature Improvement.' See map at Appendix 2.

Hedgerows are a significant visual amenity in the parish and perform important roles as stock proof boundaries as well as wildlife corridors. Many of the hedges are a result of the Enclosure Act in the 18th Century.

The Parish is bounded by open countryside which has been protected by the use of 'village confines' for planning development purposes. This has successfully preserved its character and is valued by villagers. A comparison between the village confines' and the Tithe Maps of 1839 shows that very little has changed in 180 years - see Settlement Patterns, below.

Key Landscape / Views

Favoured views in and out of the Parish are illustrated below.



Main Street, Church Stowe towards A5



Views from field near Waterloo Barn



View of countryside behind The Old Forge, Upper Stowe



From St Michael's Church, Church Stowe



Entering Upper Stowe from A5

Landscape Guidelines

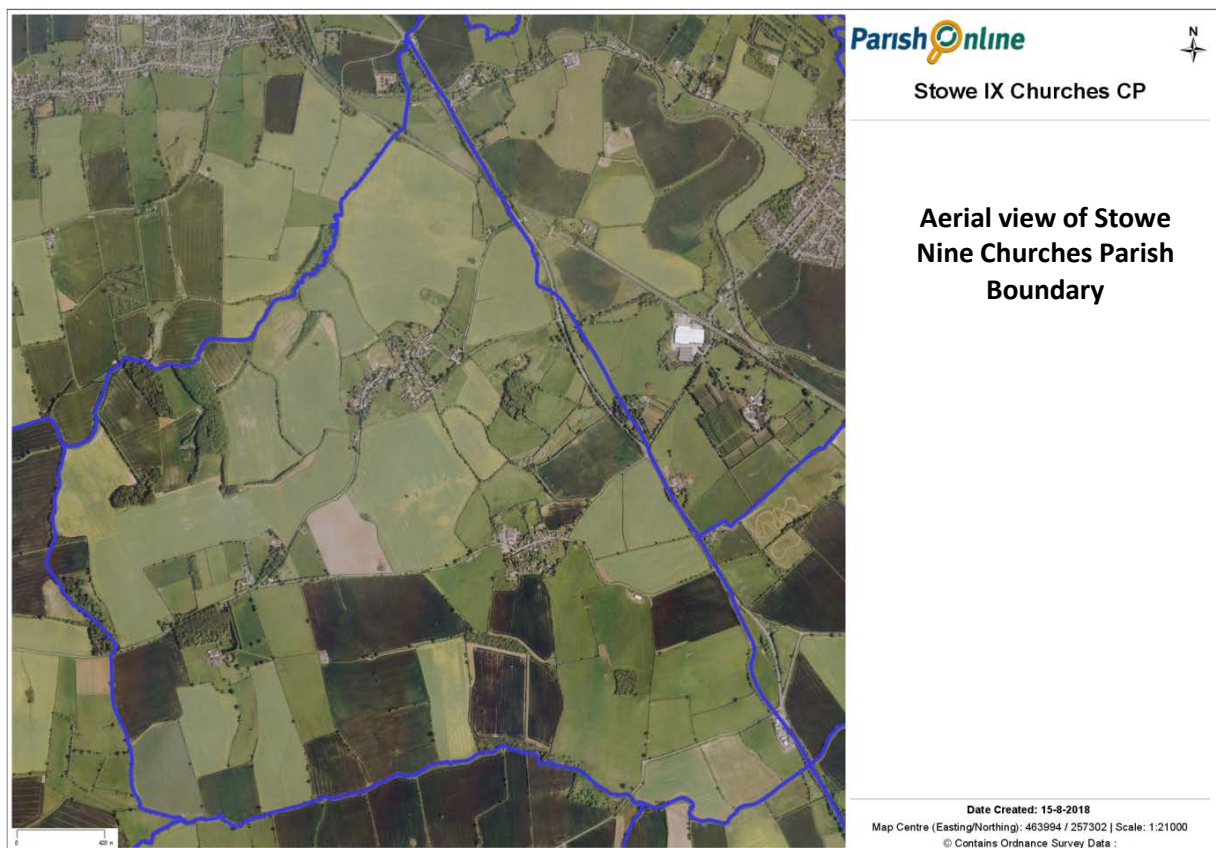
- **Unencumbered open countryside surrounding the two village settlements is important and should be protected, and not compromised by new development.**
- **Any development within the Parish should value existing trees and green space.**
- **Important views within the Parish, and visual links into the surrounding countryside should be protected; any changes or development impacting the key visual approaches into and out of each of the two settlements should be sympathetic and appropriate to the surroundings.**
- **All applications for development should be accompanied by tree surveys, landscape & visual character assessments, and detailed landscape proposals demonstrating adherence to this principle.**
- **Development should be of a sympathetic nature and in keeping with the Parish vernacular.**
- **Any application for development should be sympathetic towards the presence and significance of features such as ridge and furrow. All features of archaeological or historic interest should be preserved.**
- **Developers, landowners and farmers are encouraged to preserve existing hedgerows and to restore them where necessary. Hedgerows and trees should be conserved and opportunities sought to increase these, making use of appropriate tree planting. Tree and hedgerow species planted should reflect native species found within the wider area.**
- **All new development should be in keeping with the local area and full wildlife surveys should be carried out to establish habitats of value and to include new habitat creation. Local Wildlife Sites must be considered before development is permitted that would result in their loss or deterioration.**
- **Existing households and new developments should not impact the dark sky policy of the Parish. External lights should be around 3000k in colour temperature, mounted as high as possible and generally pointed down as much as possible, with low wattage lamps that are adequate for the task and do not emit significant light beyond the boundaries of the property. Presence detectors and timers should be used so that the lights are not on unnecessarily.**
- **Where new agricultural buildings are necessary in open countryside they should be located and designed to minimise their visual impact.**
- **Proposals involving large intrusive structures such as wind turbines and solar panel arrays should demonstrate overwhelming benefits to the community to balance the loss of social and environmental amenity.**

Settlement Pattern & Views

The parish of Stowe Nine Churches consists largely of mixed agricultural land with some woodland. Habitation consists mainly of two settlements - Church Stowe and Upper Stowe, together with a scattering of farmhouses.

Between the settlements there are scattered farmsteads and dwellings located both adjacent to roadsides and set back from the road and accessed via minor tracks.

The distinctive character of both settlements is largely determined by their compactness and sharp transition (lack of sprawl) from built environment to countryside with extensive, rolling views. This gives the feeling of two settlements embedded in, and being part of the countryside, rather than a larger development which has replaced the countryside. Neither settlement has street lighting, which again enhances the rural quality and enables the night sky to be enjoyed in all its beauty.



The two settlements are separated by a shallow valley through which runs an un-paved but well used footpath connecting the two. Above is an aerial photograph which shows the Parish boundary, the rural nature, and the position of the two settlements within the Parish.

The two, primarily linear, settlements are built along two adjoining ridges, with the ground falling away on each side, each predominantly consisting of houses flanking both sides of a main street. This positioning provides open and beautiful views from both settlements over the rest of this rural Parish.

Upper Stowe Settlement Pattern

Upper Stowe consists of the single 'Main Street' together with a single spur cul-de-sac, 'Francis Row', which diverges from Main Street at a small green near the western entrance to the hamlet. The nature of the junction gives the impression of a small single track road leading off into the countryside (see below), and preserves the impression of the hamlet as a single, small linear settlement along both sides of Main Street.



Francis Row junction with Main Street

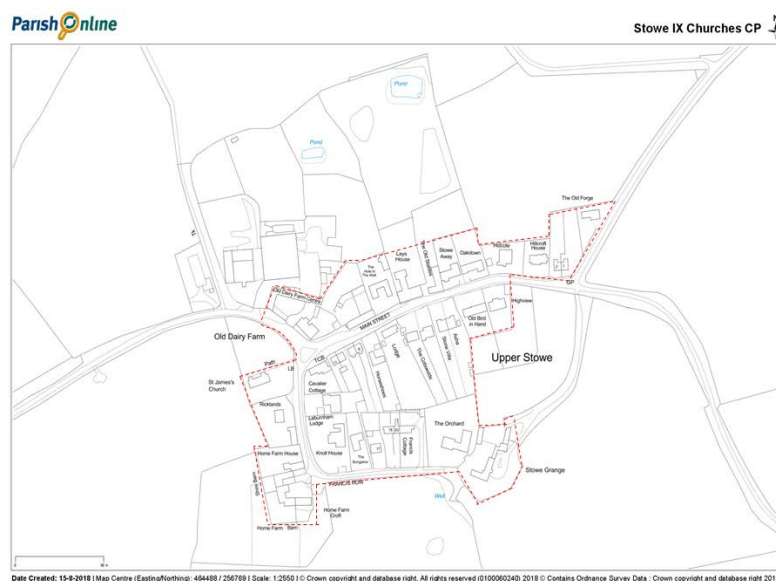


Main Street, Upper Stowe

This street layout has been preserved since at least 1839 as a comparison of the Tithe Map of that date, with the latest version of the 'village confines' shows:



1839 Tithe Map, Upper Stowe



Current 'village confines' map, Upper Stowe

The majority of buildings are in local ironstone/limestone, with the older buildings being generally set nearer the road, and any newer infill or replacement building being set back from the road, generally behind ironstone/limestone walls. The result gives an overall feeling of a traditional ironstone settlement as illustrated in the above photograph which shows Main Street, Upper Stowe.

Although the hamlet is small, comprising just 34 dwellings, it contains five listed buildings; the locations and full details of these are provided in Appendix 4.

Upper Stowe provides unimpeded views over the surrounding countryside, with gaps in the building line maintaining contact with the countryside and carrying the feeling of being part of the countryside throughout the hamlet. The map below illustrates the views from various points within the village.

Church Stowe Settlement Pattern

Church Stowe also shows a predominantly ridge settlement pattern with a single 'Main Street' flanked by houses on either side running along a ridge (see photograph below left). There are two newer developments: 'The Green', and 'The Manor'.

The Green consists of a small collection of well spaced new build stone houses set around a large 'village green' alongside Main Street. The green dominates the houses and preserves the small rural village feel of the rest of the village (see below right).

The Green is a valued open space which has been designated under the Parish Annexe process (see 'Open Spaces').



Western end of Main Street, Church Stowe



The Green, Church Stowe

'The Manor' consists of the manor house itself together with a collection of barn conversions; it lies along a private gravel drive which loops off Main Street, through the Manor conversions, before rejoining the Main Street at the eastern edge of the village. This gravel drive is un-metalled and single track and preserves a very rural and open feel at its two junctions with Main Street, giving little or no clue to the conversions beyond (see below).

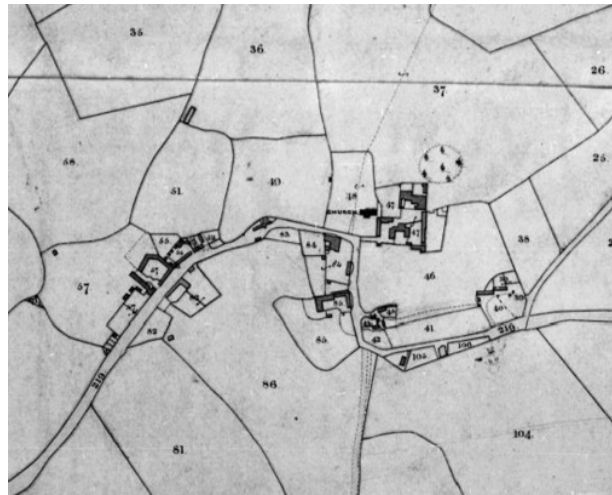


Eastern entrance to Manor conversions

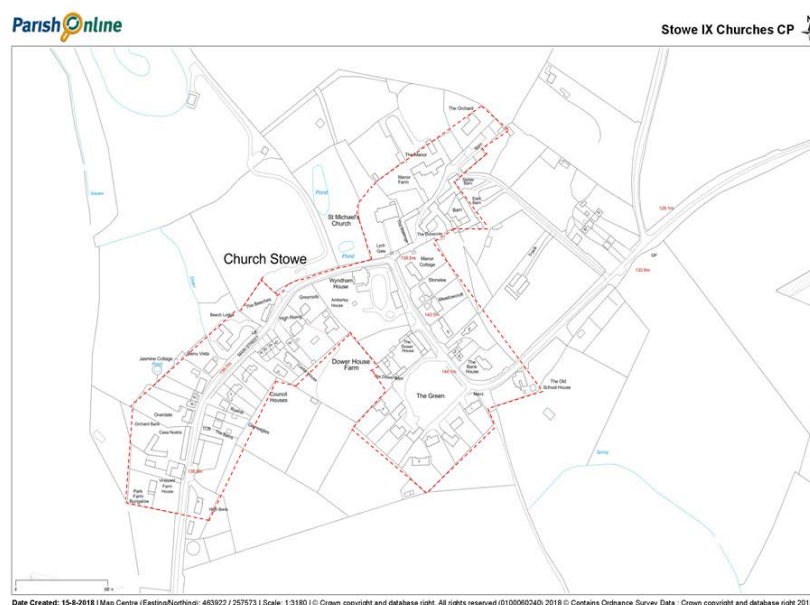


Western entrance to Manor conversions

With the sole exception of 'The Green', the current street layout again pre-dates 1839 as a comparison of the Tithe Map of that date, with the latest version of the 'village confines' shows:



1839 Tithe Map, Church Stowe



Current 'village confines' map, Church Stowe

Although small, Church Stowe is home to no less than 8 listed buildings with a further listed barn on the north-eastern approach road to the village; the locations and full details of these are provided in Appendix 4.

Church Stowe Views

Views in and around Church Stowe are those of a quintessential small English village, with the countryside seeming to reach into the village as one enters, and with sweeping views over the surrounding hills and fields revealing themselves through gaps in the building line, thus maintaining intimate contact with the countryside throughout. Views at various points within the village are illustrated below.



Future Development Guidelines

- Any development should be in keeping with the linear character of the settlements.
- DDC's 'Settlements and Countryside Local Plan' identifies Church Stowe as a 'other village'. Any development will be best restricted to limited infill within the current boundaries along the Main Street lines, preferably with new-build properties being set back from the road with stone walls nearer the verge to preserve the essence of the Parish vernacular.
- Upper Stowe is classed as a 'small settlement/hamlet' and as 'open countryside', so that any development will be judged against open countryside policies.

Community & Economy

Amenities for the Parish are situated in Church Stowe, and comprise the Old School Rooms and associated small playing area with swings which is cared for by volunteers; these are owned by the church and managed by church trustees. The Old School Rooms provide the setting for a range of social activities including Mums & Tots, Table Tennis, coffee mornings, and as a meeting room for groups such as the WI.

There is no school within either of the villages and education is provided by primary schools situated in Weedon, Flore, Nether Heyford, and Bugbrooke, and secondary schools in Bugbrooke and Daventry.

There is no public transport within either village, the nearest bus routes in Nether Heyford and Weedon Bec provide transport to both Daventry and Northampton, whilst the nearest railway stations are found at Northampton and Long Buckby.

Businesses within the two villages consist of units at the Old Dairy Farm in Upper Stowe, together with a number of homeworkers spread across the two villages.

As well as still being a working farm, The Old Dairy Farm unobtrusively houses, in converted farm buildings, a café/tea room together with a small number of craft shops. The businesses here operate from existing, mainly stone or brick built farm buildings, thus maintaining the village feel, as shown.



The Old Dairy Farm Entrance

Farming remains important, and probably still represents the major economic activity across the Parish. Other than the two villages and a few small woods, the vast majority of the parish is actively farmed, with arable and non-intensive livestock (mainly sheep grazing) accounting for most of the land usage. The farming activity is managed by a number of farms spread over the Parish and beyond.

Future Development Guidelines

- **Businesses established within Stowe Nine Churches should be 'good neighbours' – not adversely affecting the community with unreasonable working hours, pollution of any kind, or generating unreasonable extra traffic volumes.**

Open Spaces

A number of open spaces important to the Parish have recently been designated through the 'Parish Annexe' initiative under DDC's Community & Settlements policy:

THE GREEN – CHURCH STOWE this large, open 'village green' was created alongside Main Street as an adjunct to the small, modern collection of new build stone houses which are set around it. It is owned & managed by the owners of those properties and helps to preserve the small rural village feel of the rest of the settlement.

OLD SCHOOLROOMS PLAYGROUND – CHURCH STOWE provides a safe place for children of all ages to play. It is well used and highly valued for both Parish and private functions. The playground is a grassed area which belongs to the Church. On the side not bordered by the road, it is adjoined by open fields and looks across the valley to Upper Stowe.

WAR MEMORIAL – CHURCH STOWE - This is a grassed area which surrounds the Parish War Memorial and adjoins the Old School playground, and commemorates the fallen from the two settlements. It is situated between the Old Schoolrooms playground and the start of the footpath locally known as the Gravel Path. It is a highly prized part of the Parish. The grass is mown by parishioners on a voluntary basis.

ST. JAMES' CHURCHYARD – UPPER STOWE -Part of the churchyard which surrounds the Church has been turned into a wildflower meadow by volunteers to encourage both wildflowers and wildlife. It has brought together a large number of people who meet regularly to look after the projects which have been introduced over the past two years. A haymaking day takes place once a year to remove all the grass from the meadow and is well supported by everyone. It is adjacent to farmland and affords views to the west towards Stowe Lodge.

These open spaces contribute to the sense of the countryside proximity and have been designated for their visual and amenity value; their locations are shown in the map at Appendix 2.

The designation of these Open Spaces under the Parish Annexe initiative means that no additional Open Space Guidelines are proposed.

Trees

Trees and hedges are an important part of the Parish landscape giving enjoyment in their own right, but also softening the hard edges of the built environment. Both settlements can be seen clearly from the A5 when approaching from both the North and South. Oak and Ash trees predominate in field boundary hedges.

There are several woods on agricultural land which faces towards Weedon below Church Stowe. Ramsden Corner is a 3.2 hectare biological Site of Special Scientific Interest right on the boundary of the parish on the Preston Capes Road. It is managed by the Wildlife Trust. A stream runs through this valley site which is made up of grassland, woodland and scrub. A large variety of birds can be seen on the site. Other woods in this area are Stowe Wood, Woodhill Plantation (also known locally as the Tin Shack), Park Barn, Birch Poles and Warners Wood. There has been an increase in tree planting over the past few years and this should be encouraged.

The Lodge Plantation is situated on the south side of the Preston Capes Road. This was originally the site of an ironstone quarry which was closed in the late 1800's and is planted mainly with Larch with some Beech and Ash trees. You can still see gullies where the tram which took the ironstone out of the quarry down to Nether Heyford used to run. A large avenue of Lime Trees runs next to the Plantation.

The Earthworks next to The Larches is also now planted with trees. A large Lime tree stands in the churchyard at St. Michael's church. On the opposite side of the road a large Cedar tree (TPO) stands in the garden of Wyndham House.

As one enters **Church Stowe** from the A5 a 'tunnel' effect is produced by trees on either side of the road; this is highly valued by parishioners and should be preserved. There are a varied number of trees within the village both in species and age. The Parish has planted several oak trees in Oaktree Hill. The old sandstone quarry situated to the right of Sandy Lane as you leave the village is now overgrown with a large amount of self-set trees. Within the village there are visually significant trees within private gardens.

Upon entering **Upper Stowe** from the A5 (Leys Hill), there are several mature Ash trees in the roadside hedge, and a mixture of Chestnut, Ash, Maple and Cherry have also been planted by parishioners. The drive leading to Stowe Fields is planted with a mixture of native trees on the left hand side and Silver Birches on the right hand side.

Three small areas of native woodland have been planted during the last 30 years in the valley below Francis Row which faces Cold Higham. These are a rich addition and have the potential to become an increasingly important feature of the village landscape. A plantation of Spruce trees planted at the bottom of Francis Row next to the footpath were originally planted as Christmas trees but are now mature trees.

The southern boundary of the parish which runs along the brook from Geesebridge on the Litchborough Road has a mixture of mature Willow, Oak and Ash growing along its length.

A Chestnut tree is planted in the triangle by St. James' Church which has a circular seat around its base that was made to mark the Millennium. Native Lime trees have been planted in the hedge along Northfield Lane during the past few years and there is a large Ash tree as you enter the village. A large fir tree is situated by the junction of Northfield Lane and Main Street.

Tree Preservation Orders

Trees covered by Tree preservation orders are as follows:

- DA 12: 3 limes in Field off Main Street, Church Stowe (Mr Lucas's field), PLUS 2 sycamore, 1 Beech, 1 Horse Chestnut, 1 Ash, 2 Lime, 1 Corsican Pine along entrance road into Church Stowe ("the green arch")
- DA 244 Cypressus in the grounds of 'The Knoll', Upper Stowe

- DA377 Weeping Ash in the grounds of 'The Barns', Church Stowe
- DA 430 Beech Tree within the grounds of 'Beech Lodge', Church Stowe PLUS Five trees in or around the grounds of 'Wyndham House', Church Stowe including Cedar tree, two Yews and a further 2 Yews

The Parish is situated in a landscape with many attractive views. Trees and hedges are important elements in the landscape: they help encourage wildlife and are visually satisfying in their own right and should be maintained and managed appropriately.

Woodlands, Tree Preservation Orders and SSI are shown in maps at Appendix 1 and 2.

Tree Guidelines

- Any development on the approach roads to the Parish should avoid damaging the visual integrity of the avenues of mature hedgerow trees. Replacement of damaged or diseased trees should be encouraged. The 'tunnel' on the approach to Church Stowe is highly valued by parishioners and should be protected.
- Mature trees should be retained wherever possible, and tree roots protected during groundwork.
- Where retention is not possible, replacement trees of similar species should be planted.
- Plant native species to retain landscape character and benefit wildlife within the Parish; local native broadleaf trees include Ash, Lime, Sycamore, Chestnut and Oak.
- Hedgerows and trees should be conserved, maintained and re-planted as necessary. Native species are encouraged rather than fast growing evergreens. Local species include Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Crab Apple, Field Maple Hazel and Ash.

Environment & Wildlife

Wildlife habitats including hedgerows, woodland, trees, shrubs streams, open areas and verges in and around the Parish should be maintained and improved. Within the two settlements these include gardens, churchyards and open spaces.

Outside the villages there are a variety of native species of trees and shrubs planted along the verges which maintain a diversity of wildlife.

Such areas cannot work in isolation as wildlife cannot thrive in a small island of protected land. The trees and hedges that are a feature of the villages and the approach roads are therefore of the utmost importance to all forms of wildlife.

Environment Guidelines

- **Developers, landowners and householders shall protect existing wildlife environments and create new habitats, for example in the form of copses, hedgerows, ditches, ponds. (Advice is available from Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust).**
- **The sensitivity of the local water catchment to pollution and the wildlife corridors provided by the brooks, ditches, ponds and roadside hedges should be considered when assessing the impact of new developments in and around Church Stowe and Upper Stowe.**
- **Landscaping measures that protect existing wildlife environments and help create new habitats in the form of copses, hedgerows, ditches and ponds, and open spaces of rough grassland should be encouraged.**

Buildings & Design

Overview

Stowe Nine Churches, in common with many Parishes in the County, has developed visually in a haphazard way, particularly through the latter part of the last century. In hindsight, decisions made have resulted in some inappropriate materials and design.

Fortunately, the juxtaposition of buildings and some of the more imaginative development has preserved the feel of a small, attractive, rural Parish, particularly within the core of each settlement centred on the churches. The original questionnaire on the Village Design Statement confirms that residents appreciate the way in which the Parish has been preserved and enhanced and wish to continue in this vein in the future.

The community supports the policy contained within DDC's Community & Settlements Plan which prevents residential development in the open countryside other than the replacement of an existing dwelling, the conversion or reuse of existing buildings essential for the purpose of agriculture or forestry, or as determined under "Paragraph 79".

The Parish contains a number of listed buildings and although each settlement is different in building style, there are consistencies across both settlements by way of building materials, repeated use of local stone or sympathetic coloured materials as well as fencing and hedges. The colour palette across the Parish is predominantly of natural hues with high use of Northamptonshire stone.



Neither settlement has a mains gas supply or mains sewage. The plethora of overhead cables for telephone and electricity services has a negative visual impact on the village both in themselves and the many poles required to support them.

Many properties, particularly in Upper Stowe are bounded by stone walling. These are either free standing stone walls or stone walled buildings on boundary. This is an important feature of the settlement, however the use of wooden fences and hedges of native species are also prominent.





The way entrance gates interact with stone boundary walls is visually important. Traditionally the openings are small and allow pedestrian access only through gates of timber construction. This traditional style has an attractive simplicity and should be encouraged. Larger properties with car access directly from the street often have wooden “5 bar” gates.



Building & Design Guidelines

- **Stowe Nine Churches is a small rural Parish consisting of two settlements with their own individual linear character and developers should aim to respect that.**
- **Whilst we would not wish to restrict innovative design, all new building as well as extensions to existing building should respect their neighbours with regard to style of building, material, architectural detail, size and setting.**
- **A majority of the properties in the Parish are one or two storeys and any new building or extensions should reflect this.**
- **On a rising site, new houses, or extensions to existing properties, should not dominate over their neighbours or spoil the views across, into and out of the settlements.**
- **Extensions and alterations should respect the site and building size, style etc. of the original building, be no taller than the existing property and not appear to dominate. Extensions to existing buildings and any proposed development must protect neighbouring space and privacy, and demonstrate that this is not detrimental to visual links to the countryside.**
- **Buildings and extensions should reflect the existing shape and contours of the surrounding properties.**
- **Building materials and external colour schemes/washes should favour natural sandy/stone coloured tones to respect not contrast with neighbouring house colours.**
- **Plastic windows and doors tend to dominate the appearance of all but modern designs. Other materials should be considered as replacements or used on extensions, in keeping with the style of property and surrounding buildings.**
- **Construction of conservatories to be in materials that reflect the existing property and the size of the conservatory not to exceed one third of the existing property footprint. Privacy of neighbouring properties should be respected.**
- **Property conversions should be avoided if there is any detrimental impact to neighbours views or privacy. In all cases sufficient onsite parking should be of paramount importance.**
- **Modern electronic communications and climate considerations are changing work patterns and many more residents work from home. Any new power or other services should be buried under ground. Outbuildings should respect the privacy of neighbouring properties and their views. All new or adapted business within the parish will be expected to be a good neighbour.**
- **Parking for vehicles must be provided within the curtilage of the site of any new dwelling and weight given to its impact on the design of the building and the streetscape, ensuring that vehicles do not dominate the street scene. This provision should be additional to any garaging.**
- **Any new garages should not be forward of the main building.**

Building & Design Guidelines cont/d

- Pathways, driveways and parking areas should be constructed of materials that reflect the natural surroundings and allow for proper water drainage.
- Kerbside collections under modern waste management systems require several bins to be stored at each dwelling. Provision should be made between collections to accommodate these at the property.
- Any new boundary erected should be in keeping with those existing. The removal of any boundaries, walls, hedges or fencing to give an open plan effect, should at all times be discouraged.
- Wooden gates are to be preferred to modern wrought iron gates and where driveways need to be gated, a wooden “5 bar” gate should be used if possible.
- Planting in gardens should be sympathetic to the surroundings and consideration given to the impact on neighbouring properties. High, fast growing trees should be avoided and in all cases views of the surrounding countryside should be protected.
- A majority of the houses in the Parish are heated by oil or LPG because there is no mains gas in the village. Oil tanks and LPG holders are common features in the village and should be screened where possible and placed in appropriate places to comply with current legislation.
- External lighting should comply with the Dark Sky Policy (see Landscape section).
- Care should be taken when fitting modern equipment to old houses. Aerials can sometimes be hidden by fitting on rear elevations but should always be fitted as subtly as possible; the overall aim should be to be discrete. Additions to chimneys such as bird cowl should blend in with the existing roof and skyline. Distinctive wind cowls, prominent lining caps, auxiliary extracts (chimneys for wood burners) and overlarge bird baskets could alter the appearance of the property and may need planning/listing building consent.
- Energy generation equipment should be carefully placed & screened where possible. Noise and light pollution should be avoided.
- Residents should be encouraged to use solar panels that are integral to the roof tiles wherever possible.
- The boundaries between properties in the Parish are well spaced and any new building or extensions should reflect this.
- The visual links to the countryside within the village should be preserved.
- Green spaces and agricultural land should be protected from infilling to maintain the linear layout of the village and the feeling of space that this provides.

Listed & Important buildings

There are 14 Grade I & II Listed Buildings within the Parish; each of these are detailed together with a picture and information concerning their listing in Appendix 4.

The buildings referred to below are those which do not have Listed Building status but are nevertheless considered important by the village in design terms. Pictures of these Important Buildings are also included within Appendix 4:

- The Closed Church of England School

Owned by the church and locally known as The Old School Rooms, this building provides the only community meeting place in the Parish. A small play area is situated along side.

- The Old Dairy Farm Centre

A small cluster of buildings housing local businesses as well as a restaurant.

Other important features

These are also pictured within Appendix 4:

- War Memorial
- Radar Memorial

Highways & Street Furniture

Roads & Streets

The north-east boundary line of the Parish is formed by the A5, originally the old Roman road of Watling Street. Both Church Stowe and Upper Stowe have two points of entry from this main road and both are examples of linear settlements with just one main road running through the centre. In both cases this is known as Main Street.

Francis Row in Upper Stowe, accessed near the church, runs parallel to Main Street and has a dead end.

The two through Main Streets converge to the south-west of the Parish and lead directly to Preston Capes and Farthingstone. From the Preston Capes road there are junctions to Everdon and Weedon Bec.

Access to both settlements is via country lanes, rather than roads, edged with grass verges and hedges and in some places the lane is only single track. All of the roads are unrestricted in terms of speed limits.

Church Stowe has a ninety-degree bend by St Michael's Church, and another sharp bend near the Old Schoolrooms.



When entering **Upper Stowe** from the A5, there is a sharp right-hand bend and further on, a blind bend when leaving the hamlet.



These all restrict visibility in terms of traffic and pedestrian movement.

Over the past few years residents, particularly in Upper Stowe, have been concerned about the increasing volume and speed of traffic passing through the Parish, and this was reflected in the VDS launch survey. The roads through both settlements are used as 'cut-throughs' when there are traffic problems on the nearby M1 or A5.

The varied usage on these single track lanes includes: cars, trailers, caravans, horseboxes, tractors and other large agricultural machinery, delivery vehicles, school buses, coaches, horse-back riders, cyclists, walkers and, on occasions, flocks of sheep.

With the introduction of satellite navigation, Upper Stowe in particular, has seen an increased number of HGV vehicles passing through the village, having been misdirected.

Both settlements, especially Upper Stowe, have limited pavements, often on one side of the road only.

Parking

The Parish is not served by any public transport, and so residents are very dependent on their cars and the level of car ownership for many properties is high.

The majority of houses are provided with adequate off-road parking and garaging, but some of the older properties have no off-road parking, necessitating residents and their visitors to park on the road. On-road parking in both settlements is limited, more so in Church Stowe, and with the narrow roads, this can lead to difficulties, particularly when larger vehicles and tractors need to pass through.

In addition, with the growth of on-line shopping, the frequency of home delivery services has risen considerably.

Each settlement has a church with regular Sunday services. As there is no off-road parking at either, parking can often cause problems, particularly when special services are held at Christmas, Easter and at weddings or funerals.

Monthly coffee mornings, social events and other scheduled meetings can cause parking problems outside the Old Schoolrooms in Church Stowe where no off-road parking provision exists.

Public Footpaths

Rural footpaths were originally brought into use to reach places of work and adjacent villages. The Parish is intersected by a network of public footpaths and Rights of Way and by permitted footpaths made available, courtesy of local landowners. These are used almost exclusively for recreational purposes and are much valued by local residents and visitors.

There are no defined cycle tracks in the parish. A Parish Footpath Warden, appointed by the Parish Council, identifies and reports any problems.

Lighting

The Parish has no street lighting and so with little or no light pollution, most residents recognise the benefits of being able to appreciate the night skies. (See *'Dark Skies' Policy under Landscape and Setting*).

Street Furniture

Street furniture throughout the Parish is a mixture of designs and colours and in most cases generally follows the guidelines for rural areas.

There are a number of benches strategically placed around the Parish from which to enjoy the views and tranquillity. They are of a traditional design and made of wood. While all are serviceable, some have been maintained in a better condition than others. In Upper Stowe there is a Millennium bench around the tree on the small green in front of St James' Church.



There are two traditional red telephone boxes of the 'Jubilee Kiosk Number 6' type, one in each settlement. They currently house defibrillators and are owned by the Parish Council and maintained by local resident volunteers.



In the centre of Church Stowe there is a stone bus shelter with a slate roof and a bench inside. Metal railings enclose the children's swing area attached to the Old Schoolrooms in Church Stowe.



Each settlement has a notice board and grit bins placed in appropriate locations.



There is a war memorial in Church Stowe and, located off the A5 south of Upper Stowe, is the 'Birth of Radar Memorial'; illustrations & full details of these are provided within the 'Parish History' section.

Signage

The existing levels of road signage are considered more than adequate for a rural setting.

The village signs at the entrances to both villages are made of traditional cast iron and the unique nature of these is highly valued by parishioners.

All footpaths and Rights of Way are clearly marked.



As Church Stowe is approached via the northern road from the A5, there is an 'Unsuitable for through traffic' sign.



Highways & Street Furniture Guidelines

- Future development should take into consideration the inevitable increase in traffic.
- Consideration should be given to the impact of any new building on highway visibility.
- Passive measures should be encouraged to reduce traffic speeds and improve visibility.
- Where there is potential conflict between vehicles and pedestrians due to the inadequate provision of pavements and the narrow roads, particular consideration should be given to the need for additional safety measures.
- To reduce the problem of parking, any future development should have off-road parking sufficient for the size of the dwelling.
- All existing footpaths & Rights of Way should be protected, properly maintained and kept open.
- Wherever possible, utility providers should be encouraged to conceal all future installations underground.
- Any new planning applications should include measures to replace intrusive overhead cables.
- Private security lights should be carefully sited to avoid being a hazard to road users and an annoyance to neighbours.
- Any additional street furniture should suit its context, be in keeping with the character of the Parish, and be of good quality and design, made from traditional materials. Only essential signage and road marking should be used
- Our unique village signs, which are non-reflective, should be preserved and not be replaced for the normal standard signage used in the county.
- Any further road signage should be avoided but, where absolutely necessary, it should be carefully sited and use made of existing signposts.
- The effect of any development on road traffic speed and volume should be considered.
- New roads, footpaths and signs should comply with standards appropriate to their rural location as described in 'Rural England' (October 1995).
- Off street parking sufficient for anticipated occupancy should be included in any new development.
- Passive measures should be encouraged to reduce traffic speeds and improve visibility for emerging traffic at junctions.
- Where there is potential conflict between vehicles and pedestrians due to inadequate footway and narrow carriageway particular consideration should be given to the need for additional safety measures.

Highways & Street Furniture Guidelines cont/d

- **Street furniture should suit its context. Only essential signage and road marking should be used.**
- **'Rural Village' levels of lighting should be encouraged using white light at levels to reduce light pollution.**
- **Private security lights should be muted and carefully sited to light the required area without forming a hazard to road users or annoyance to neighbours.**

Conclusion

Stowe Nine Churches is a quiet rural upland community surrounded by beautiful countryside, including locally important water catchment, recreation and wildlife conservation areas.

We are privileged to live in Stowe Nine Churches and we are trustees of this environment as a whole. This includes the maintenance, preservation and integrity of the open areas, the surrounding countryside and the historic character of the two settlements that we have inherited.

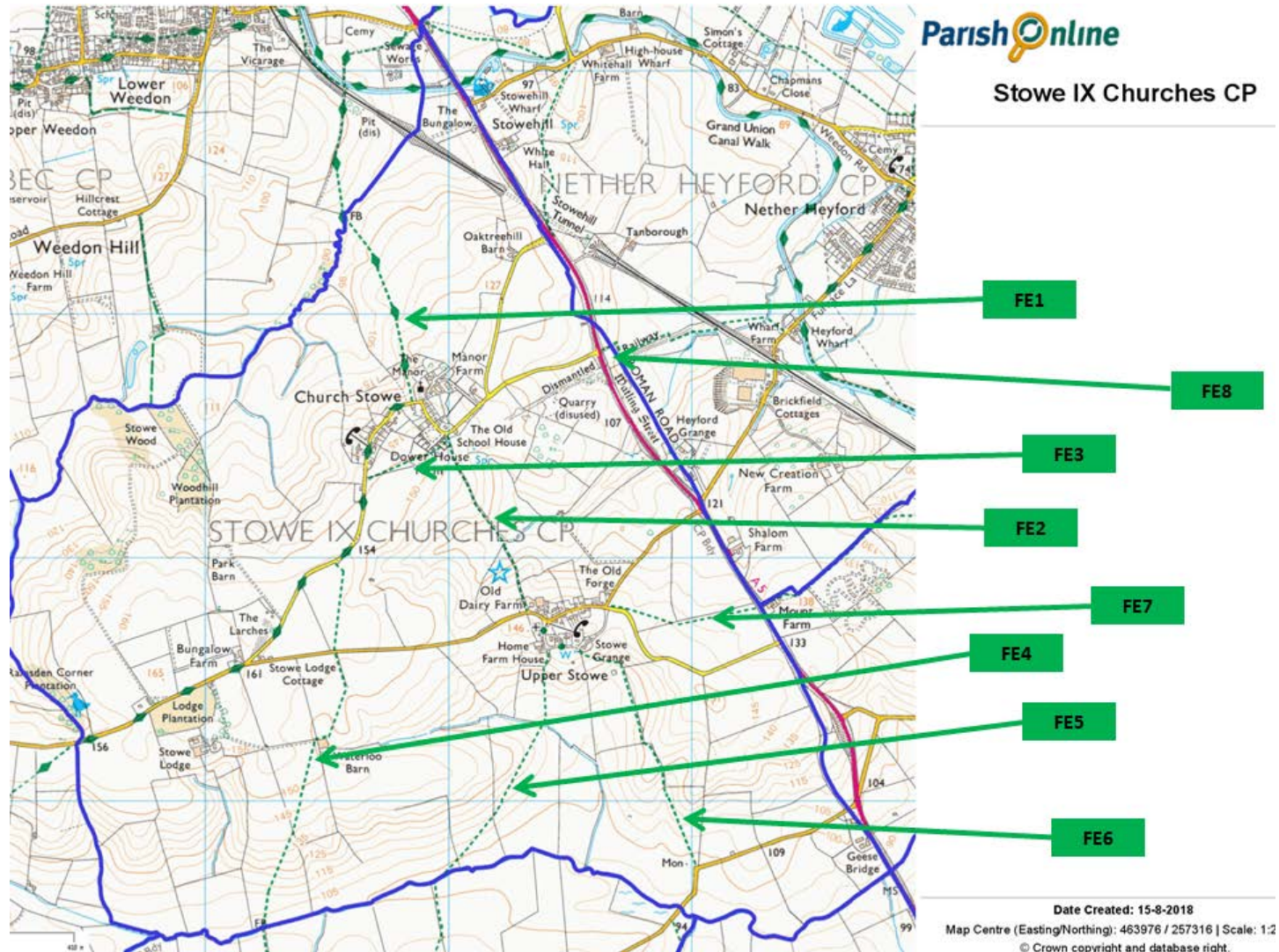
Church Stowe's designation within DDC's 'Settlements and Countryside Local Plan' as a 'other village', and Upper Stowe's designation as 'Open Countryside' will aid the retention of the overall character of the Parish.

This Village Design Statement lays down guidelines for developers and planners to assist them in ensuring that future alterations or development are of a high standard of design which comply with national and local policies and meet the economic, social and environmental needs of the local community.

We commend it to present and future residents, landowners, developers, builders, community groups and utility providers.

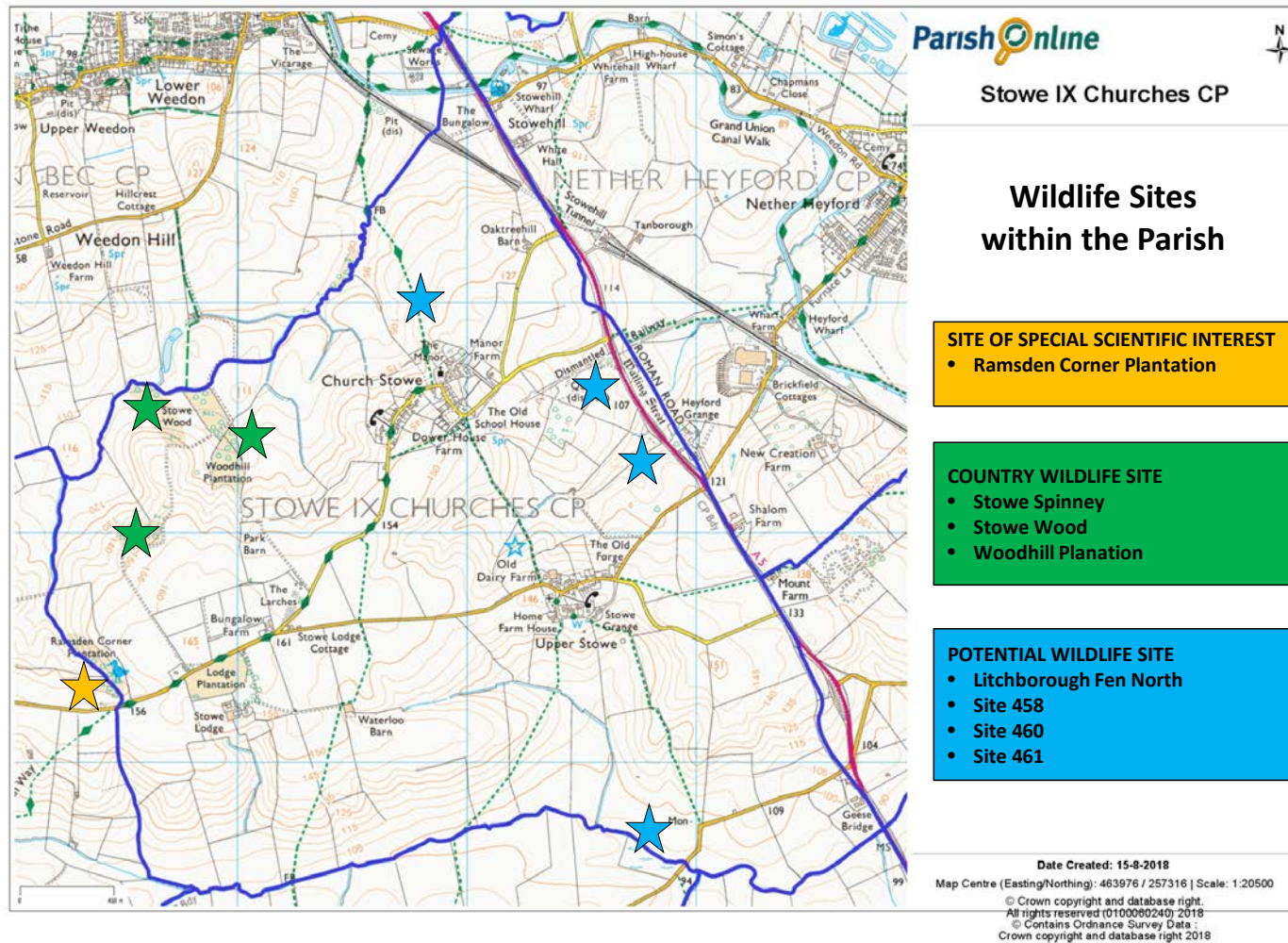
Appendix 1

Parish boundary including footpaths



Appendix 2

Wildlife sites within the parish of Stowe Nine Churches



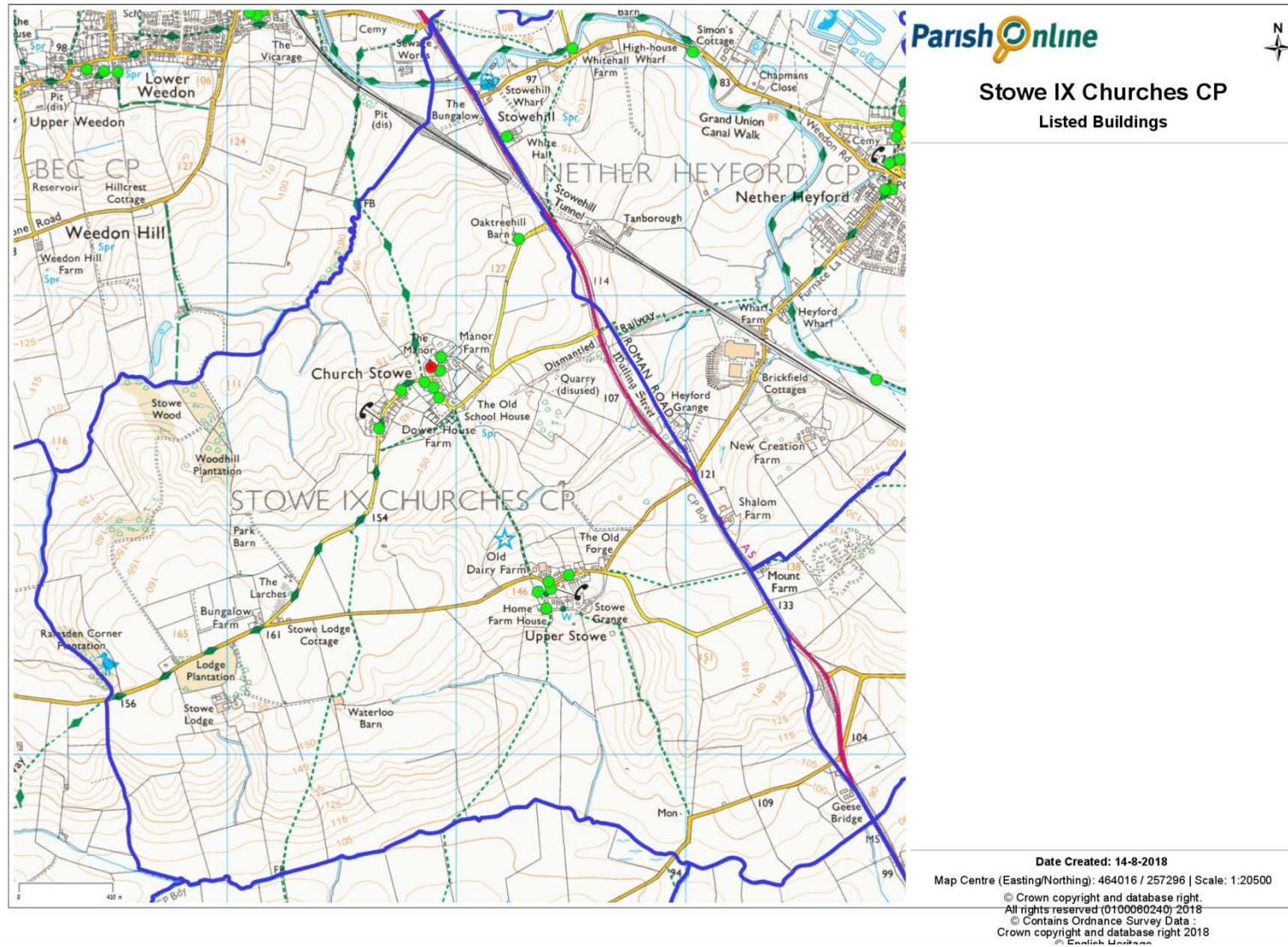
Appendix 3

Tree Preservation Orders within Stowe Nine Churches



Appendix 4

Listed & Important Buildings within Stowe Nine Churches



Grade I listed buildings

Church of St Michael

Saxon west tower, body of church rebuilt c.1639, and again in 1859, by Philip Hardwick.

Coursed squared limestone with ironstone dressings, some brick.

Roofs mainly tiles, rest of lead.



Grade II listed buildings

Wyndham House

C.18 with c.19 alterations. Coursed squared limestone with sandstone dressings, some brick to side and rear; slate roof, various brick stacks.

Built as a rectory for the village, the building was bought from the church in the 1950's. The village meeting room was knocked down and has since been replaced by a similar style extension.



Coach House to Wyndham House

C.18. Coursed dressed limestone, roof facing road is slate, old tiles to other slope, brick end stack.

Originally the coach house for the Rectory, the building was used for church activities for the village and is now a garage and workshop.



The Beeches

Cottage, formerly two; c.18.

Coursed ironstone and limestone rubble, thatch roof, stone end stacks.



Dower House Farmhouse

Farmhouse c.17.

Coursed limestone rubble with ironstone dressings, tile roof, brick end and ridge stacks.

At one time a home for the Curate and previously listed as the Dower House.



Dovecote at the Manor

C.18. coursed squared limestone with ironstone quoins and tile roof. Tall rectangular structure. Plank door. Stone coped gables with kneelers; gable to rear has weather vane. Interior: complete set of nestings. The building now forms part of a family home.



The Manor

House of early c.17 and mid c.18 with medieval origins and c.19 alterations. Coursed squared limestone and ironstone, tile roof, stone and brick ridge stack.



Vineyard Farmhouse

C.18. Coursed squared limestone with ironstone dressings, slate roof, brick and stone end stacks.



Oaktreehill Barn

c.1860.

Banded blue and white brick, coursed
Dressed limestone to gable ends with courses of blue and red brick. Tile roof.



Old Dairy Farmhouse

Farmhouse. Dated 1685 with C18 and C19 additions.

Coursed squared limestone, C19 courses above first floor windows, mostly ironstone; tile roof, blue brick end and ridge stacks on stone bases.



Church of St James

1855 by P.C. Hardwick. Coursed dressed ironstone, slate roof. Nave, chancel, vestry and north-west porch. Early English style.

Originally built as a Chapel of Ease to save residents of Upper Stowe having to travel to St Michaels in Church Stowe.



Leys House

House c.17. Coursed limestone and ironstone rubble with thatch roof, brick ridge and end stacks.



Cavalier Cottage

Dated 1653. Coursed squared limestone banded with ironstone, thatch roof, brick ridge and end stacks on stone bases.

C.20 extensions to rear and right side.



Home Farmhouse

Farmhouse, early c.18.

Coursed limestone rubble with some ironstone, ironstone quoins, pantile roof and brick end stacks.



Other important buildings

The Closed Church of England School

Owned by the church and locally known as The Old School Rooms, this building provides the only community meeting place in the Parish. A small play area is situated along side.



The Old Dairy Farm Centre

A small cluster of buildings housing local businesses as well as a cafe.



The War Memorial



The Radar Memorial



Appendix 5

Current Planning Policies

Any planning application must be assessed for compliance with "The Development Plan" before it can be approved or rejected. Any appeals against a decision are also decided by reference to the Development Plan.

The Development Plan has components at three levels : National, Local and Neighbourhood.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the default, top level , and most generic framework. Subject to certain conditions being met by the local authorities (such as demonstrating the existence of approved housing land supply to meet at least 5 year's local requirements) , more detailed planning policies can also be set by local authorities, allowing the national requirements to be tailored to local conditions.

For Stowe Nine Churches, the "Local Plan" is the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Document, adopted in December 2014, together with the remaining "saved" policies of the Daventry District Local Plan (1997). This sets out a vision and strategy for planned and controlled development of this area, including housing provision, commercial development and infrastructure such as transport links.

The Local Plan, in turn, allows neighbourhoods to further interpret and tailor local policies, through the creation of Neighbourhood Plans and Village Design Statements. Once approved at Daventry, Neighbourhood Plans become part of the Local Plan. Adopted Village Design Statements have the status of "supplementary planning documents / guidance". Both must be taken into account when determining the acceptability of any proposed development within those neighbourhoods.

The Joint Core Strategy, in Section 16, includes its strategy for the rural areas of West Northants.

Policy R1 classifies rural settlements outside the main urban areas into a "rural hierarchy" , comprising "Primary service villages", "Secondary service villages", "Other villages" and "Hamlets & small settlements".

As a general rule, development is preferred in the towns and their planned extension areas and is limited in the rural areas, to an extent dependent on position in the rural hierarchy. There are some specific relaxations, e.g. for local shops, rural tourism and recreation facilities.

Among some 64 policies "saved" from the **1997 Daventry Plan**, which continue to apply as components of the current JCS, several have particular relevance to Stowe NINE Churches:

Policy EN1 designates an area which includes the open country around Stowe NINE Churches as a "Special Landscape Area" and limits development within it to controlled re-use of rural buildings, agriculture, forestry and rural tourism & recreation.

Policy HS22 designates Stowe NINE Churches as a "**Restricted Infill Village**", allowing only new development which is within the existing confines of the village and not affecting open spaces of particular significance to its form and character, or renovation & conversion of existing property that is in keeping with the village's character.

Policy EM11 limits commercial development in Restricted Infill Villages to that of a scale and character reflecting the residential nature of the surroundings.

All the policies and supplementary documents in force mentioned above can be obtained online, from the Daventry Planning website.

<https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/living/planning-policy/>

Stowe Nine Churches Village Design Statement

The Parish Council would like to thank all those residents of Stowe Nine Churches who have contributed to the VDS, and particularly the following whose work was critical to the production of this document:

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