

Whiteshill & Ruscombe

Gloucestershire, United Kingdom



Neighbourhood development Plan 2015 – 2031

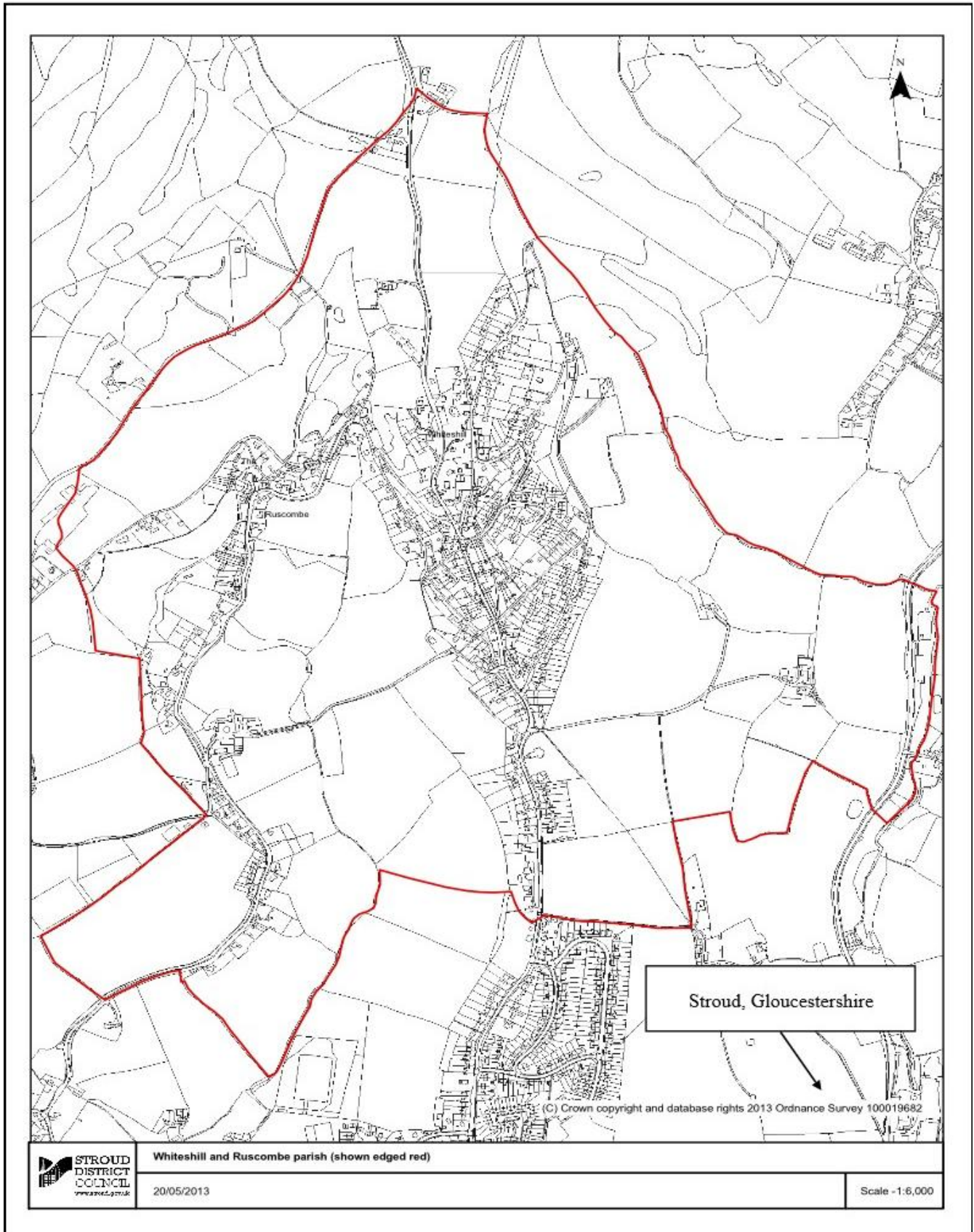
Made on 27th October 2016



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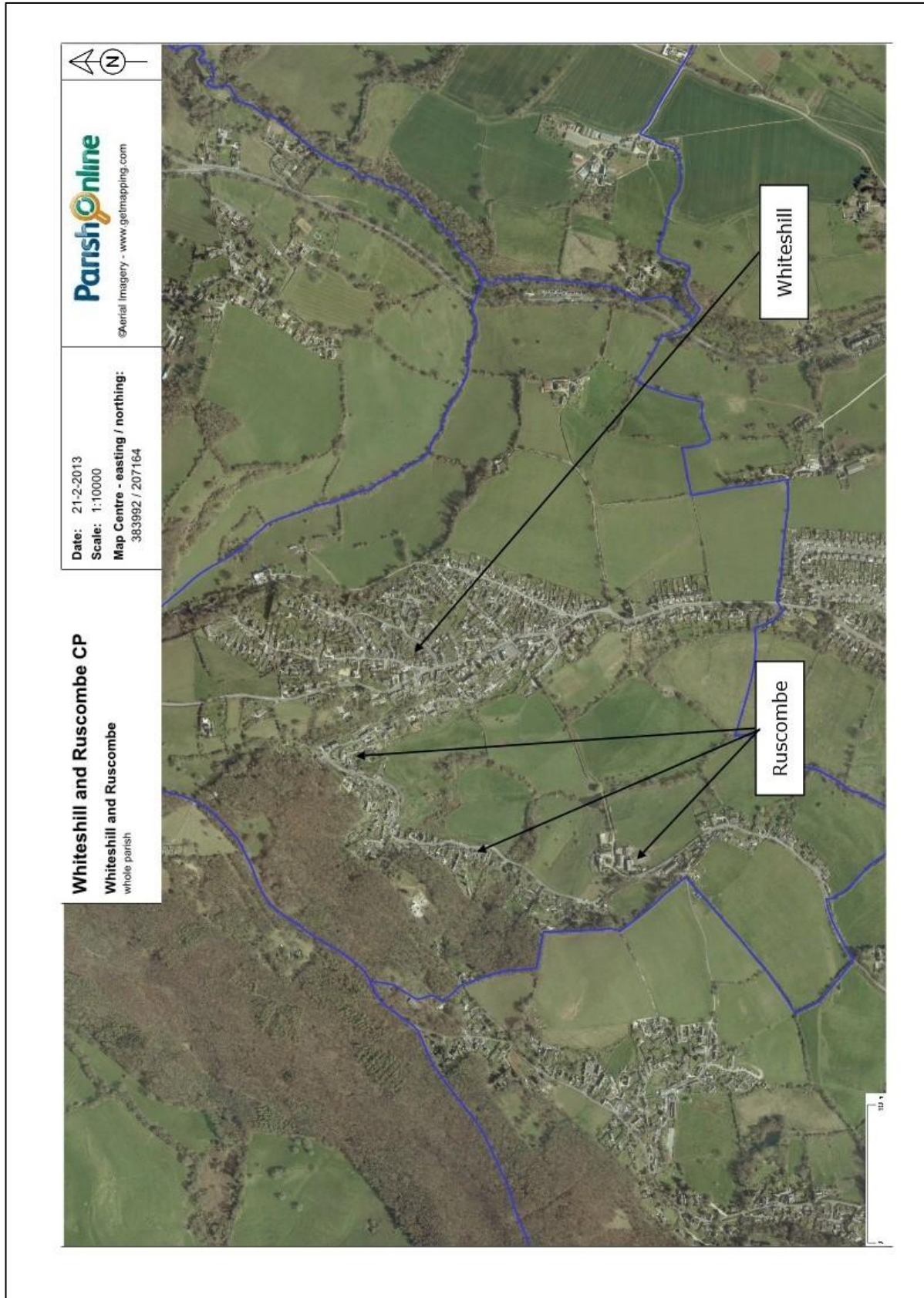
Neighbourhood Development Plan - Designated Area



Whiteshill and Ruscombe

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Aerial View of Whiteshill and Ruscombe – Designated Area Location



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1. Foreword

The Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is for, and has been developed by, the parishioners of Whiteshill and Ruscombe. It has enabled the residents of the parish to consider the current status of the Parish and how they would wish to see development take place over the coming years. It aims to establish guidelines that will be used to determine the manner in which any future development takes place in our parish.

In 2013 a Neighbourhood Development Plan - Steering Group was established comprising representatives from the parish council and parishioners. Evidence has been collated from previous parish plans, open day events within the parish, and a NDP questionnaire distributed to every parish property. In addition a "housing needs survey" was carried out with the help of Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) to identify the local housing needs.

Based upon this evidence a plan has been produced, that reflects the wishes expressed, to see the parish develop in a managed and sustainable manner whilst maintaining and preserving a beautiful place to live.

Once the completed plan has undergone an independent examination and Stroud District Council has determined it meets the basic conditions, the plan will proceed to a local referendum to ensure it has the support of the majority of eligible voters in the community.

Once finalised the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan will become, together with Stroud District Local Plan, the starting point for deciding where and what type of development should take place in our Parish.

The natural environment within which this parish lies creates a desirable and healthy living space for all to enjoy. With the community's effort and future support we aim to build on our strengths and make this parish a location that all ages can thrive in.

Rebecca Charley
Chair Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council



Village Party on the Playing Field

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2. Acknowledgements

- 2.1 The Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) provides the opportunity for the Parish to influence future development in ways that meet local needs while retaining the character of the villages and high quality environment that residents clearly value.
- 2.2 The production of the Plan has necessarily been a lengthy and complex exercise and would not have been possible without the involvement of the parishioners who have engaged with the process throughout its development. They have voiced their opinions, made suggestions, shared their knowledge and expertise and given up much of their time. This effort has helped to shape a Plan that aims to ensure that Whiteshill and Ruscombe continue to thrive as vibrant communities providing an excellent quality of life for all residents.
- 2.3 At the start of the project an NDP Steering Group was formed that included the following parishioners:
- Kris Atkins, Michael Bailey, Keith Davitte, David Hall, Chris King, Ian Nie, Nicholas Quayle, Dilys Warren, Elspeth Williams, Rev. Brian Woollaston.
- 2.4 The NDP Steering Group would like to thank all those volunteers who helped with the various surveys during the course of the project and would particularly like to thank the following individuals for their input into the creation of the Plan and support during its development:

The members of the NDP Working Group:

Kris Atkins
Keith Davitte
Chris King
Dilys Warren
Elspeth Williams

For their significant contribution to specific aspects of the Plan:

Michael Bailey
Charlie Curnow
Nick Quayle

Helen Dunn (Clerk to Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council – whose contribution and guidance throughout the process has been invaluable.)

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) - for all their support and guidance from the very early days of the project through to the completed neighbourhood development plan.

Elin Tattersal	(Assistant Chief Executive)
Barbara Pond	(Community Assets and Enterprise Adviser)
Karen Phimister	(Rural Housing Enabler for Stroud District)
Marilyn Cox	(Rural Adviser - for all her help setting up the initial Street and Landscape Character Surveys that we conducted at the commencement of the project).

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Ricardo Rios (Neighbourhood Planning Officer – Stroud District Council) for the guidance and support he has given on all matters related to neighbourhood planning.

The NDP Steering Group would also like to thank Gloucester Citizen for their kind permission to reproduce the late 1970s Aerial View of Whiteshill & Ruscombe. We would also like to thank parishioner Graham Birt for making the picture available to us.

All maps with the exception of those hand drawn by the Steering Group are © Crown Copyright and database rights 2012. Ordnance Survey 0040086531.



Ruscombe Valley looking towards Stroud and Rodborough Common

Whiteshill and Ruscombe

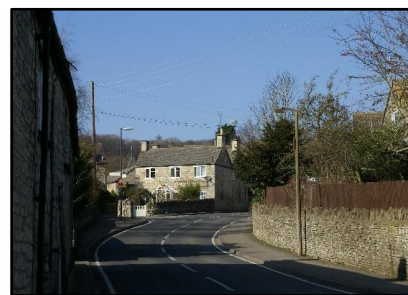
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3. Introduction

- 3.1 The Localism Act introduced Neighbourhood Planning during 2011. It has given communities the right to shape their future development at a local level. In doing so it enables the wishes of communities to be taken into account by the Local Planning Authority, as enshrined within the Localism Act.
- 3.2 Although there is a wealth of previous experience in relation to the community-led planning, including the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Plan of 2011, Neighbourhood planning is different and legally has more force.



Whiteshill & Ruscombe viewed
from Selsley Common



Main Road, Whiteshill viewed
from The Star Public House

(See web site for larger pictures and locations)

- 3.3 Neighbourhood planning represents a real opportunity to influence growth, shape change and to address particular concerns based on local knowledge and a democratic consensus. Whilst Whiteshill and Ruscombe are not immediately faced with the prospect of having significant development taking place within the parish, a large number of residents have expressed concerns that encroachment of housing from Stroud would destroy the character of the parish. Concerns have also been raised that indiscriminate development of the “open countryside” surrounding the existing built environment of the parish would destroy the scenic beauty that represents the gateway to the Cotswold AONB in this area.
- 3.4 Once a NDP has been approved subsequent planning decisions must be made in accordance with the policies and aspirations embedded in that Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Recognising the opportunities presented, formal approval to proceed with the creation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan was given by the Parish Council on 11 April 2013.
- 3.5 One of the first steps taken, with the help and advice of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC), was to hold an initial 'Parish Consultation Event' in the Village Hall in the summer of 2013. This event resulted in a Steering Group being established that was charged with the ongoing responsibility of initiating and supporting the formulation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Whiteshill and Ruscombe. Another important decision taken was to create a dedicated website (wr-neighbourhood-plan.co.uk), which is regularly updated. The evolving NDP has therefore been available for scrutiny and comment by the parishioners of Whiteshill and Ruscombe and other interested parties throughout the duration of the project.
- 3.6 In recognising that a NDP cannot take place in isolation from the Stroud District Local Plan the following documents have a significant bearing on the Whiteshill and Ruscombe NDP:

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Housing and Communities Evidence:

- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.
- Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment.
- Objectively Assessed Housing Needs Survey.
- Local Plan call for sites.

Employment:

- Stroud District Employment Land Study.
- Employment Land Availability Report.
- Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

3.7 Since the beginning of 2013, we have worked on establishing a substantial “evidence base” of information that has been used to support our NDP.

- Street Surveys covering every thoroughfare in the parish.
- Landscape Character Assessment Surveys again covering the entire parish.
- A “Natural Environment Survey” that helped identify locations within the designated area that contained flora and fauna of specific interest.
- Boundary Surveys documenting the natural environment within which the villages of Whiteshill & Ruscombe are located.
- A “Housing Needs Survey” carried out by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC).
- A formal “Landscape Appraisal” that backs up our own surveys. This formal survey has been carried out by chartered Landscape Architect Charles Potterton CMLI BA, Dip LA and licentiate Landscape Architect Katie Lea LMLI BA Hons, Dip LA.
- A “Neighbourhood Development Plan Questionnaire”, produced by the Steering Group. This questionnaire gave residents of Whiteshill & Ruscombe the opportunity of expressing their views on a variety of issues relating to neighbourhood planning. The responses from the questionnaire will be used to formulate the visions and objectives of our Plan.
- A “Local Businesses & Trade Survey” that provided additional information concerning the local economy and allowed the business sector to express their opinions on what developments would have the greatest impact on the local economy.

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3.8 In addition to the above surveys the Steering Group, aided by volunteers from the community, has accumulated information relating to Whiteshill and Ruscombe covering the following topics:

- What would constitute “Sustainable Growth” for Whiteshill & Ruscombe?
- “The Local Character” of Whiteshill & Ruscombe.
- “Community Assets, Facilities & Services” available in Whiteshill & Ruscombe.
- “Business, Enterprise & Employment”.
- “Transport, Roads and Communications”.
- “Heritage, Listed Buildings & Buildings of Interest”.
- “The Natural Environment of Whiteshill & Ruscombe and the surrounding area”.

3.9 This information has been used to inform the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Whiteshill and Ruscombe.

The Next Steps and the Referendum:

3.10 The stage has now been reached where the help of Stroud District Council is needed in taking the NDP forward to be incorporated into the planning process for the parish. This will involve further consultation with parishioners and statutory authorities, including other parish councils which are adjacent to Whiteshill and Ruscombe. In addition discussions will be held with Stroud District Council about the need to produce a “Strategic Environment Assessment” and a “Habitats Regulations Assessment”.

3.11 Subject to the ultimate approval of the NDP by Stroud District Council and an independent examiner, the local referendum which follows will be the ultimate test of parishioners' support for the Plan. The referendum will require returns which show a minimum of 51% of parishioners who vote in agreement with policies. Unless challenged in the courts the NDP will then be brought into force by Stroud District Council.

3.12 The aim is to reach this stage by the end of 2016.

Plan Monitoring and Reviews:

3.13 The Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) covers the same period of time as the Local Plan which currently ends in 2031. To ensure that the objectives and policies continue to be appropriate and relevant throughout this time, the Plan will be subject to regular monitoring and review. This will be carried out every 5 years, by the NDP Review Group, a sub-committee of the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council.

3.14 As part of the monitoring and review process, consideration will be given to ensuring that the plan continues to meet local needs, for example, by repeating the Housing Needs Survey periodically.

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Conclusion:

- 3.15 The importance of a Neighbourhood Development Plan in determining the manner Whiteshill & Ruscombe develop over the coming decades cannot be overstressed. Your Parish Council together with the Neighbourhood Development Plan - Steering Group are fully committed to the protection of our local environment combined with the sustainable growth of the community. To be successful the continuing widest possible support from the whole community is required.

Notices:

- 3.16 This document should be read in conjunction with the;
- Basic Conditions Statement
 - Consultations Statement
 - Green Horizons Document
 - Sustainability Appraisal.
- 3.17 Please note that within this Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and associated documents the term “open countryside” shall be deemed to mean “common land, fields, farmland and woodland”.
- 3.18 “Green spaces” shall be deemed to mean “recreational areas” such as the Playing Field.
- 3.19 In addition, where relevant within this NDP we have provided further clarification of certain terms or phrases to ensure their meaning is fully understood.
- 3.20 For an in-depth Glossary of the terminology used within the planning system, please refer to the Stroud District Council web site:
http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/plan_strat/Submission_Draft.pdf
Appendix 4 Page 173.



Looking South-East from the farm track beyond Field Road towards Stroud.

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4. History and Local Characteristics

- 4.1 The villages of Whiteshill and Ruscombe lie some three miles north of the town of Stroud in the county of Gloucestershire. As well as being part of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the location of Whiteshill and Ruscombe also benefits from ready access to the Cotswold Way to the north of the villages.
- 4.2 Ruscombe has a longer history than Whiteshill being recorded as a distinct settlement in the fourteenth century. In the nineteenth century, despite the proximity to Stroud, Whiteshill and Ruscombe were regarded as secluded communities which had earned a dubious reputation on both social and moral grounds. The influence of St Paul's Church and Ruscombe Chapel was seen as a key factor in transforming that image. For a long time the villagers were regarded as being very independent, suspicious of 'outsiders' and even hostile at times. Although interesting historically those times are long gone. The villages now pride themselves on being welcoming to 'newcomers' who are encouraged to immerse themselves into village life and the many activities on offer



Ruscombe Chapel



St. Paul's Church, Whiteshill

- 4.3 Following the building of St Paul's Church in 1841, Whiteshill was designated as a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1844. However it was not until 1894 that civil parish status was acquired allowing Whiteshill to have its own parish council. Originally known as Whiteshill Parish Council it was more appropriately named the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council in 1986.
- 4.4 The parish is not blessed with an abundance of fine buildings, but there are pockets of note with ten Grade 2 listed buildings which are recognised to be of 'special interest' located within Whiteshill and Ruscombe. There are other buildings which are not listed but which feature prominently in the village landscape and which help to create a 'sense of place' and identity. Amongst the latter is the Whiteshill Primary School which with its 91 pupils on roll in the academic year 2015-6 is regarded as a vitally important ongoing feature of the village.
- 4.5 The aerial view of Whiteshill and Ruscombe at the start of this document clearly shows that the built environment is almost entirely enveloped by farm and woodland areas which represents the defining feature of the parish distinguishing it from the surrounding built environment. There are several farms of varying size which account for the greater majority of green-field sites. These farms with their concentration on livestock farming, make an indispensable contribution to the

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scenic beauty and rural environment of both Whiteshill and Ruscombe. They abound with flora and wildlife. The Landscape Character Assessments carried out by the community as part of this project emphasise how important the surrounding natural environment is to retaining the character of the parish.

- 4.6 The importance of the environment has a high profile in village affairs. For example the 'Adopt a Footpath' scheme, again with volunteer help, helps to ensure ready and manageable access to all parts of the local countryside with its myriad of rights of way. The Ruscombe Brook Action Group has been invaluable in helping to improve the quality of water in the brook running down the Ruscombe Valley. The Village Orchard, on part of the playing field, initially planted in December 2005, is another example of how people and nature can work together and also revive traditions of the past. An allotment association sited at the far west of Ruscombe provides for those seeking a greater degree of self-sufficiency.
- 4.7 Whiteshill and Ruscombe are not just reactive but also very proactive stemming from a strong community spirit. The creation of a village playing field, from land purchased in 1977 was a major initiative. The playing field and separate children's play area more than compensate for the tiny, but well kept, official village green located at the top of the village of Whiteshill.
- 4.8 The Village Shop and community café, located adjacent to the children's play area, were opened in 1997 and are run entirely by volunteers. The café is the meeting place for many people, including a group of elderly residents who are picked up each month (again by volunteers) to attend a coffee morning with their friends.
- 4.9 Activities take place at several other venues within the parish, mainly in the Village Hall and the original Guide and Scout Hut. The latter is also the venue for the Whiteshill Playgroup, another major asset. St Paul's Church, as well as fulfilling its main functions, offers the largest venue for concerts and other special events.
- 4.10 Major celebrations are invariably accompanied by something which leaves a permanent legacy for the community. The Golden Jubilee of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II was commemorated by new place signs which ensure that distinctive local place names are not forgotten. To commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee a circular walk was created, of some four and a half miles with specially designed marker signs, which links into the historic footpaths of Whiteshill and Ruscombe.
- 4.11 All of these events and activities that take place within the villages are publicised in the quarterly parish magazine, the Warbler.
- 4.12 In moving forward there is an unflinching determination to both conserve and enhance the distinctiveness of Whiteshill and Ruscombe as desirable places to live. The Neighbourhood Development Plan working in conjunction with the Stroud District Plan aims at achieving that.

Marker

Village
Shop



Way

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5. Visions and Objectives

5.1 The Vision

- 5.1.1 Whiteshill and Ruscombe will continue to thrive as vibrant and distinctive villages, remaining physically separate from Stroud, and providing an excellent quality of life for current and future residents.
- 5.1.2 Any future development will reflect the needs of the community, while preserving the character of the parish and the landscape in which it is set.

5.2 The Objectives

- 5.2.1 The Neighbourhood Development Plan aims to achieve this through the following objectives:
 - Support sustainable development that is in keeping with the character of the built and natural environment.
 - Sustain and improve community facilities for all.
 - Encourage and support enterprise development and opportunities for employment in the parish.
 - Promote the improvement of paths and roads so they are fit for purpose, and safe for all users.
 - Conserve the scenic qualities of the landscape of Whiteshill and Ruscombe.
 - Conserve and enhance the natural environment, protecting the open countryside and enhancing wildlife habitats.
 - Conserve the open spaces that separate Whiteshill and Ruscombe from other settlements.

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6. Policies

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The policies that support the Visions and Objectives detailed above have been divided into six main headings. Each of these sub-sections re-states the overriding objective for that section and then documents the relevant justification, evidence and associated community feedback. In addition each section references the various plans, documents, strategies and legislation that have been used to support the policies developed for Whiteshill and Ruscombe.
- 6.2.2 Finally each section details the policies that, once finalised will become, together with Stroud District Local Plan the starting point for deciding where and what type of development should take place in the Parish.

6.2 Built Environment

6.2.1 The Objective

- 6.2.1.1 Support sustainable development that is in keeping with the character of the built and natural environment.

6.2.2 Justification

- 6.2.2.1 The built environment that forms the parish of Whiteshill and Ruscombe is defined and characterised by the surrounding farm and woodland that separates the settlements from the ever spreading conurbation of Stroud and surrounding parishes (Neighbouring Parishes).
- 6.2.2.2 The topography of the land upon which the parish sits has been the dominant factor in determining how these two settlements have developed over many centuries.
- 6.2.2.3 Ruscombe has evolved as a horseshoe of properties following the lines of springs such as 'Double Spout', 'Middle Spring', and 'Village Spring' which still flow from the porous rocks today. The land above this spring line rises sharply through woodland to the crest of the hill whilst the land below the line slopes down through marshy and unstable subsoil towards the watercourse of Ruscombe Brook. The later settlement of Whiteshill on the other hand, straddles the crown of high ground that lies between the Painswick and Ruscombe valleys and represents a more compact and larger settlement.

6.2.3 Evidence

- 6.2.3.1 The Neighbourhood Development Plan Street Surveys carried out in 2014 showed the following:

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- That the majority of the built environment located within Whiteshill and Ruscombe comprises residential dwellings that have a mixture of styles ranging from traditional Cotswold stone cottages to modern developments.
- Development was gradual from the 17th and 18th centuries up until the 1930s when there was a notable expansion at the top end of Whiteshill with the building of council properties. That estate was extended after the Second World War and now comprises approximately 45 dwellings. A small number of council properties were also built in Ruscombe.
- The second half of the twentieth century saw many houses and bungalows constructed in Whiteshill on infill sites.
- Ruscombe too has witnessed new houses being built amongst the older cottages. In both villages some of the new developments, extensions and alterations having blended in more successfully with the local character than others, both in terms of design and building materials. An analysis of planning applications covering the period from 2004 to 2014 inclusive indicates that some 16 new properties were developed and just under 100 existing properties had extensions constructed (these figures do not include those extensions covered by “permitted development” legislation).
- Despite the variety of styles introduced over the centuries, the villages of Whiteshill and Ruscombe have succeeded in retaining a unique character and “sense of place” as defined in the NDP Evidence - Street Survey section (see the NDP web site).
- Development of “brownfield” and “in-fill” sites within Whiteshill and Ruscombe over the past twenty or so years has reduced the number of obvious locations that fall into these categories. However, there remain a number of properties within the parish where the size of the plot would permit further development.
- The more likely scenario relating to “brownfield” sites concerns the re-development of previously developed sites through the demolition of existing properties.

6.2.4 Community Feedback

- 6.2.4.1 Community Feedback has been achieved, initially from responses to Street and Landscape Character surveys carried out by parishioners during 2013 / 2014. These surveys were followed up by the NDP Questionnaire 2014, distributed to every property. Responses from these surveys have been used to develop the following policies.
- 6.2.4.2 The overwhelming feeling of the community is a wish to preserve the rural landscape of fields, woods and hills that characterises a parish set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as classified in the 1949 Act of Parliament.

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- 6.2.4.3 Government and local district council guidelines state that AONBs must be conserved as far as possible whilst supporting a prosperous rural economy.
- 6.2.4.4 The community believes that the landscape and public vistas need to be conserved. This belief is endorsed by the Potterton Associates Limited - Landscape Appraisal which emphasises the importance of public vistas and conserving the AONB together with green-field sites (Report pages 7, 9, 10).
- 6.2.4.5 Consultation with local residents revealed the following key issues relating to the Built Environment within Whiteshill and Ruscombe:
- Open countryside between settlements in the parish and those in neighbouring parishes should be retained (96% agreed).
 - Priority should be given to development of “brown-field” and “in-fill” sites rather than “green-field” sites (97% agreed).
 - Whiteshill and Ruscombe should provide a range of housing to meet local needs (84% agreed).
 - All new building in the parish should be in keeping with the surroundings of the immediate vicinity (92% agreed).
 - New developments should comprise small numbers of houses (94% agreed).
 - New buildings should be individually designed to reflect the character of the area (94% agreed).
 - New buildings should include provision for off-street parking (98% agreed).
 - The use of sustainable energy sources should be encouraged in all new developments (94% agreed).
 - Any new housing developments comprising 4 or more properties should consist of at least 50% affordable homes (61% agreed).

(Note: these percentages relate to respondents to Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan Questionnaire 2014).

Types of Housing

- 6.2.4.2 The community supports the precept that when several houses are to be built on a given site a suitable mix of homes should be offered ranging from accommodation for single people to family homes see Local Plan CP7. When a development constitutes 4 or more properties then 30% should be in the form of affordable housing.
- 6.2.4.3 It should be noted that there are 43 existing houses in the parish providing social and affordable rented accommodation offered by Stroud

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District Council and a Housing Association. This represents nearly 9% of the total number of dwellings in Whiteshill & Ruscombe.

- 6.2.4.4 It is important that new houses should have a provision for off-street parking. In line with NPPF (Para 39), local parking standards for residential and non-residential development should only be imposed where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage local road network as is the case in Whiteshill & Ruscombe due to the narrow roads and lanes.
- 6.2.4.5 New housing developments must be well designed with individual characteristics and harmonise with the existing housing stock and neighbouring buildings. We would refer developers to Policies CP7 and CP8 of the Local Plan.
- 6.2.4.6 New houses in the two villages should be designed with sustainability in mind including low energy and low water consumption; where possible, they should aim to source their energy from renewable supplies. Any additional street lighting should be low key, in order not to add to existing light pollution, and should conform to the guidelines set down by the Institute of Lighting Engineers.

6.2.5 Community Feedback – Housing Needs Survey

- 6.2.5.1 With assistance from GRCC (Gloucestershire Rural Community Council) a Housing Needs Survey was conducted that identified a potential need of 5 affordable dwellings over the coming 5 years.

6.2.6 Non-Designated Local Heritage Assets

- 6.2.6.1 There are a number of buildings of local heritage interest which add to the attractiveness of Whiteshill & Ruscombe but which are not protected by statutory listing.
- 6.2.6.1 Non-designated local heritage assets will be defined against the criteria set out in [Appendix C](#) and will be recorded on the parish asset register and with Stroud District Council.

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6.2.7 Potterton Associates Ltd. Extracts from Landscape Appraisal

6.2.7.1 Land Parcels Map

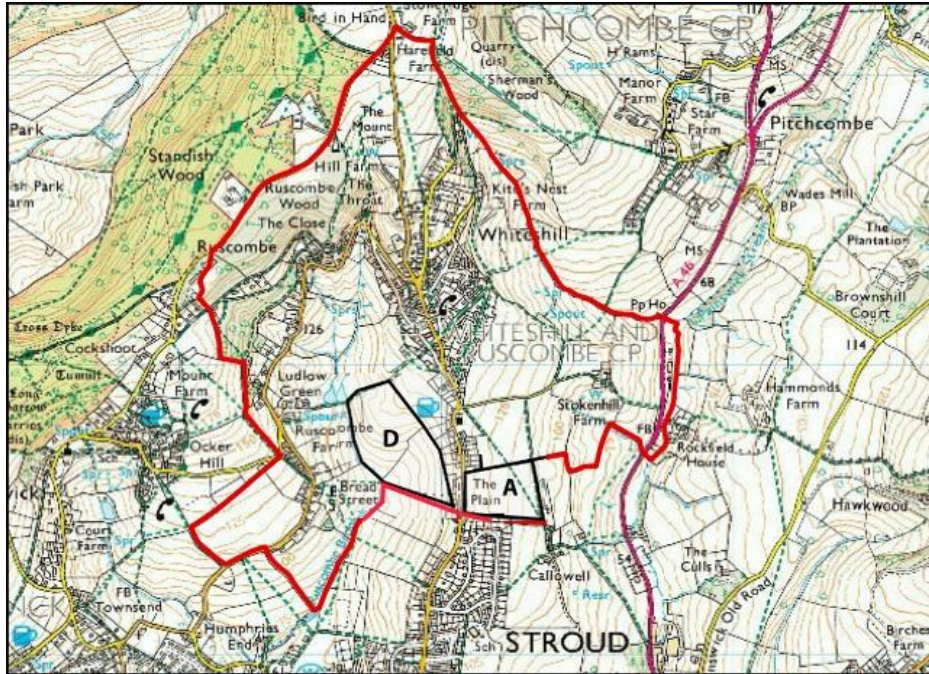


Diagram – Land Parcels Map

- 6.2.7.2 **Area Ref A: The Plain - Landscape Appraisal Conclusion:**
This is a critically important open field as it forms the actual gateway to the AONB in this area. This land parcel displays many of the characteristics of a piece of common land and is currently performing a critically important role providing separation between Whiteshill & Ruscombe and the remainder of Stroud. We do not think this land parcel is suitable for any development.
- 6.2.7.3 **Area Ref D: Ruscombe Valley - Landscape Appraisal Conclusion:**
The Ruscombe Valley is an area unsuitable for any development. The introduction of development away from the higher sides down into the valley would impact on the distinctive sense of place that the Valley possesses and condition of the landscape. The primary characteristic of built development only along roads in the higher parts of the valley, with the sides of the valley left undeveloped – a distinctive quality of the landscape of the Parish, would be destroyed.

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6.2.8 W&R-BE1: Built Environment - Open Spaces Policy

W&R-BE1: Built Environment: Open Spaces

1. Development on brown-field (previously developed) or in-fill sites within existing settled areas will generally be supported.
2. Proposals to convert / demolish and re-build existing under-utilised or disused buildings including the on-site re-cycling of demolished material will be supported.
3. The parcel of land identified as Area A on the Potterton Associates Landscape Appraisal Map, "The Plain", performs an important role providing separation between Whiteshill & Ruscombe and the remainder of Stroud and as such development in this area of open countryside should conserve the role and function of this locally valued area.
4. The parcel of land identified as Area D on the Potterton Associates Landscape Appraisal Map, "Ruscombe Valley", is an area that also performs the important role of separating Whiteshill & Ruscombe and the rest of Stroud. In this location the following uses are considered to enhance the area without compromising its important role and function:
 - a) sustainable farming enterprises,
 - b) recreation,
 - c) essential community facilities.

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6.2.9 W&R-BE2: Built Environment - Building Standards and Design Policy

W&R-BE2: Built Environment: Building Standards and Design

1. New development should conform to the criteria defined in any district wide Design Guidance or Building Standards Policies contained within the Stroud District Council Local Plan and should contribute positively to the character of the two villages, maintaining the overall shape of the villages and their sense of place.
2. Developments of more than one property should be individually designed and in a fashion that respects the character of the surrounding area and the scale and nature of other properties in the immediate locality.
3. Design of new build, conversions and extensions should reflect the character of nearby buildings and their setting, including scale of development and choice of materials.
4. Sustainable construction and design features which complement the character of the area will be supported.
5. All "Spoil" generated as a result of new build, conversions and extensions should be retained on site and used for landscaping where appropriate.
6. The inclusion of bin and recycling storage facilities will be encouraged in all new build properties to stimulate sustainable waste management within the parish.

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6.2.10 W&R-BE3: Built Environment - Heritage and Social Policy

W&R-BE3: Built Environment: Heritage and Social

1. Designated heritage assets including listed buildings, monuments and conservation areas will be preserved and enhanced where possible in accordance with their significance and their importance to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place.
2. Non-designated local heritage assets will be defined against the criteria set out in Appendix C. Planning applications for demolition, development or substantial alterations of buildings or structures defined as local heritage assets will be expected to show what consideration has been given to retaining;
 - a) The asset itself.
 - b) Its most distinctive and important features.
 - c) The positive elements of its setting and immediate surrounds.
 - d) The contribution the asset and its setting makes to the character of the local area
3. Developments that constitute 4 or more properties, or cover an area of 0.16 ha or more, will where viable provide at least 30% of the net units proposed as affordable housing.



View across Land Parcel Area A
from The Plain, Whiteshill



View across Land Parcel Area D
from Ruscombe Road, Ruscombe

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6.2.11 Associated Projects (these do not form part of the Neighbourhood Plan.)

- 6.2.11.1 Details of Associated Projects relating to the Built Environment: Heritage and Social are outside the scope of this Neighbourhood Development Plan and will be taken forward by the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council.
- 6.2.11.2 The following Associated Projects concerning the Built Environment have been identified during the evidence gathering exercise for the Neighbourhood Development Plan project:
- Evidence gathering indicated that there were two requests for more accessible housing. In addition, the Housing Needs Survey indicates that residents in 11 households would like to move to a smaller residence. In addition refer to Pre-Submission Consultation - Comment W&R-LF5 concerning suitable accommodation.
 - Given that a suitable site(s) can be identified, proposals for the development of a small number of one/two bedroom residencies for the specific use of older existing residents of Whiteshill and Ruscombe who wish to move from their current larger family homes but at the same time would like to remain within the parish, will be supported.
 - Concerns were raised over the policy that looks to convert / demolish and re-build existing under-utilised or disused buildings where valued locally significant undesignated heritage asset might be destroyed. The Parish Council will institute a project that will review the Parish Assets list and aim to include all properties of merit in the list for protection.
 - Concerns were also raised over the varying levels of broadband access being experienced throughout the parish. During the autumn of 2015 evidence has been gathered by the Parish Council concerning the range of broadband speed currently being achieved and this information will be passed on to the relevant authorities.

6.2.12 Definition of Exception Sites

- 6.2.12.1 Rural exception sites are sites for affordable housing development in rural locations where market housing would not normally be acceptable because of planning policy constraints. Homes can be brought forward on these sites only if there is a proven unmet local need for affordable housing and a legal planning agreement is in place to ensure that the homes will always remain affordable, will be for people in housing need and prioritised for those with a strong local connection to the parish.

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6.3 Local Facilities

6.3.1 The Objective

6.3.1.1 Sustain and improve community facilities for all.

6.3.2 Justification and Evidence

6.3.2.1 Community facilities are important as they encourage wellbeing and social cohesion, contributing to the enjoyment of life and the sustainability of the community. Opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities should be available to residents of all ages.

6.3.2.2 Many of the retail establishments that existed in Whiteshill and Ruscombe have vanished in recent years. The facilities that remain include the volunteer run Community Shop, St Paul's Church, The Star Inn, Whiteshill Primary School, Whiteshill and Ruscombe Village Hall, the Scout Hut, playing field, and Ruscombe Chapel and School Room. Most of these are located close together near the Main Road providing a focus for village activity.

6.3.2.3 Many offer a range of services to the community:

- The Village Hall hosts keep fit, yoga, art and ballet classes, Mother and Toddler Group, Whiteshill Wives Club, and the Community Choir. It is the venue for Parish Council and other meetings.
- The Community shop incorporates a café, and is involved in many local events. The café overlooks the playing field with its enclosed children's play area. These are well used. Many football teams hire the pitch, despite the lack of washing or changing facilities.
- The Star Inn provides opportunities for social interaction, hosts charity quizzes and raises money for local causes.
- Cubs and Beavers meet at the Scout Hut. The building also provides a home for the Playgroup.

6.3.2.4 While the facilities and services provided in Whiteshill and Ruscombe are clearly valued by the community, some of the buildings are in need of updating and can be difficult to heat and costly to maintain.

6.3.3 Community Feedback

6.3.3.1 Analysis of the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan Questionnaire 2014 showed strong support for safeguarding key village assets. The following percentages of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that these facilities should be retained:

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Whiteshill Primary School	97%
Playing field	98%
Children's play area	98%
Village hall	98%
Village shop	98%
Star Inn	95%
St Paul's Church	90%
Scout Hut	92%
Ruscombe Chapel	78%
Ruscombe School Room	76%

- 6.3.3.2 However, only 40% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that facilities for younger people in the parish are adequate. Suggestions for additional facilities included a youth club or centre (27 comments) and a wider range of both physical and social activities for older children (17 comments). Several people suggested that a purpose built hall could provide improved facilities to meet cultural and social needs.
- 6.3.3.3 36% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that facilities for senior residents are adequate. Around 19% of the population of Whiteshill and Ruscombe are aged 65 or over.
- 6.3.3.4 Comments strongly suggest that older people need more opportunities for social interaction: there were 24 suggestions for clubs, including lunch, social and cultural activities.



The Playing Field & Children's Play Area are highly prized local facilities

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6.3.4 W&R-LF1: Local Facilities Policy

Part 3: Development that would maintain or enhance existing local facilities will be supported.

Part 4: Replace ‘encouraged. (Demographic Evidence)’ with ‘supported’

W&R-LF1: Local Facilities Policy:

1. Developments that enhance the vibrancy and vitality of the parish will be supported.
2. Development will be expected to safeguard local facilities, amenities or services. In addition, new development should not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the use of local facilities or restrict access to them.
3. Development that would maintain or enhance existing local facilities will be supported.
4. Developments that provide additional local facilities in line with local need will be supported. (Demographic Evidence)



The Star Inn



Customers enjoying the café
in the Village Shop



Whiteshill & Ruscombe
Primary School

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Village Hall



Ruscombe Chapel and School Room

6.3.5 Associated Projects (these do not form part of the Neighbourhood Plan.)

- 6.3.5.1 Details of Associated Projects relating to Local Facilities are outside the scope of this Neighbourhood Development Plan and will be taken forward by the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council.
- 6.3.5.2 The following Associated Projects concerning Local Facilities have been identified during the evidence gathering exercise for the Neighbourhood Development Plan project:
- Promote the need for more social, cultural and recreational activities for older residents. Consult with them to explore options.
 - Promote the need for more activities for young people, including children over 7 years, and teenagers. Consult with them to explore their suggestions.
 - In the event that existing facilities (village hall, scout hut, chapel schoolroom, and St. Paul's Church) fail to fulfil the cultural, leisure, community, sport and other social needs then consideration will be given to the provision of an upgraded hub for village activities.

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6.4 Local Economy

6.4.1 The Objective

- 6.4.1.1 Encourage and support enterprise development and opportunities for employment in the parish.

6.4.2 Justification and Evidence

- 6.4.2.1 The early economic wealth of the area was founded on the wool trade with many of the residents of Ruscombe employed as part of a flourishing cottage based industry, where most of the spinning and weaving processes in the manufacture of cloth were carried out using hand looms.
- 6.4.2.2 At this time Whiteshill & Ruscombe formed a self-contained community which was well served, even up until as late as the 1960s, by businesses located within the parish that provided all the necessary services and employment.
- 6.4.2.3 Whilst local farming, building trades and the professions have by-and-large continued to survive all other retail establishments within the parish have gradually ceased to exist.
- 6.4.2.4 The majority of the present day working population is employed in the service industries with a substantial proportion in managerial or professional roles. There are very few opportunities for employment in the villages with nearly all travelling outside the parish to their place of work. The numbers of self-employed are significantly above the national average and include a wide range of occupations with an increasing number working from home. Current statistics show that 34.43% of the working population aged between 16 – 74 falls into this category. Whiteshill and Ruscombe have a reputation for producing skilled craftsmen and that tradition continues across many trades today.
- 6.4.2.5 With the ever increasing traffic congestion and cost of travel, combined with the advent of the Internet and the gradual introduction of super-fast Broadband, the stage may be set yet again for a change in the dynamics of employment in the parish, with more people starting new businesses and working largely from home.
- 6.4.2.6 Research shows that around one-fifth of England's population, nearly 10 million people, now live in rural areas. There are more than 505,000 businesses operating in those rural areas, representing 28% of all businesses in England. These businesses contributed £211 billion to the UK economy in 2010.
- 6.4.2.7 The following statistics are from the "Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) "Rural Community Profile for Whiteshill & Ruscombe" dated October 2013(Full Report) :

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Description	No of people aged 16-74	Percentage of people aged 16-74	England Average
Economically Active Residents	636	72.50%	69.90%
Economically Inactive Residents	241	27.50%	30.10%
Full-time Employees	287	32.70%	38.60%
Part-time Employees	141	16.10%	13.70%
Self-employed	164	18.70%	9.80%
Working 49+ Hours per Week	82	13.30%	13.30%
Working from Home	55	6.30%	3.50%
Employed in the Public Sector (percentages based on 620 people in employment)	195	31.90%	28.20%

- 6.4.2.8 The largest employment sector for residents is in the Health and Social care sector, in second place is the Education sector and the third sector is in Retail. However it also highlights that over 25% of all residents in employment are self-employed with 8.65% of those in employment working from home.
- 6.4.2.9 National research from DEFRA in 2011 highlights the most common reasons for slow growth of businesses in a rural setting are:
- lack of business premises
 - slow internet connections
 - spread out and fragmented business communities
- 6.4.2.10 In addition to farming mentioned above, Whiteshill and Ruscombe has a small but thriving economy.
- 6.4.2.11 Following the demise of all other retail outlets in the parish, the establishment of a village shop in 1998, adjacent to the playing field, ranks amongst one of the major achievements of the community. The community shop continues to survive, run entirely by volunteers, selling a range of grocery goods, confectionery, newspapers, freshly baked bread and also houses a popular cafe. In 2012 the shop was placed in the Vibrant Village of the Year in the best community facility category.
- 6.4.2.12 The only remaining Pub in the village, The Star Inn, attracts local residents and has recently been renovated to include bed and breakfast facilities which encourages small scale tourism and leisure activities e.g. walkers from The Cotswold Way which passes just north of the parish.
- 6.4.2.13 Other local businesses include building and construction companies, livery stables and small private businesses providing a variety of services.

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6.4.3 Community Feedback

- 6.4.3.1 The Neighbourhood Development Plan Questionnaire 2014 showed that 73% of residents agree that small business development within the community should be encouraged.

6.4.4 W&R-LE1: Local Economy Policy

LE1: Local Economy Policy:

1. Enterprise development which is of a size and scale that does not demonstrably have a significant adverse effect upon the character, infrastructure and environment of the plan area will be supported.

6.4.5 Associated Projects (these do not form part of the Neighbourhood Plan.)

- 6.4.5.1 Details of Associated Projects relating to the Local Economy are outside the scope of this Neighbourhood Development Plan and will be taken forward by the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council.
- 6.4.5.2 The following Associated Projects concerning the Local Economy have been identified during the evidence gathering exercise for the Neighbourhood Development Plan project:

Investigate the possibility of:

- Setting up some small business units.
- Setting up a Community Business Hub (networking office space and facilities to include good Wi-Fi hotspots).
- Encourage the installation of a fast and efficient digital infrastructure including superfast broadband to promote local business and commercial connectivity to markets at home and abroad.

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6.5 Transport and Communications

6.5.1 The Objective

- 6.5.1.1 Promote the improvement of paths and roads so they are fit for purpose, and safe for all users.

6.5.2 Justification and Evidence

- 6.5.2.1 Whiteshill and Ruscombe is a rural parish situated about 3 miles from Stroud and 8 miles from Gloucester. Junctions 12 and 13 of the M5 are around 6 miles away. The local transport infrastructure is characterized by narrow lanes and an intricate network of footpaths. Whiteshill is bisected by one busier road (The Plain, Main Road, Edge Road) which links to the A4173 Gloucester - Stroud road. Many people use this route as their main route between Gloucester and Stroud in order to avoid the bottleneck at the junction of the A4173 and the A46.
- 6.5.2.2 The Main Road carries a considerable amount of traffic, particularly during rush hours. It should be noted that Whiteshill and Ruscombe are located in a north/south corridor which local traffic between Brookthorpe and Stroud resorts to when the M5 corridor or other major roads are congested. The use of this north/south corridor may well become more frequent as Stroud District, including Stonehouse, accommodate projected growth. This has implications for quiet road characteristics in the area which need to be identified and safeguarded.
- 6.5.2.3 Many residents have no off-road parking. Parked vehicles render the road too narrow for 2 vehicles to pass and can block drivers' views. This however can have the desirable effect of slowing traffic down. The location of Whiteshill Primary School on Main Road contributes both to traffic volume and to numbers of parked cars. Traffic calming measures, including humps and a 'gateway' plus a 20mph speed limit have been introduced.
- 6.5.2.4 Pedestrian safety is a concern as many of the narrow lanes have no pavements. This is also an issue on the Main Road north of the crossroads with Kitesnest and Ruscombe Road where the road is busy and steep with bends that obscure visibility.
- 6.5.2.5 Local footpaths abound and are well used. The paths link different areas of the community, with some houses having no other access. They also provide access to a wider path network including the nearby Cotswold Way.
- 6.5.2.6 Whiteshill is on the bus route to Stroud and Gloucester. There are half-hourly buses during the day, but none during the second part of the evening. A reduced service operates on Sundays. Ruscombe is served by 3 or 4 buses a day to Stroud via Randwick; no buses currently run on Sundays. Stroud is on the main railway line to London Paddington, and Gloucester station provides access to destinations nationwide.

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6.5.3 Community Feedback

- 6.5.3.1 Consultation with local residents revealed the following key issues relating to transport and communication:
- 6.5.3.2 Concern about traffic speeds and the need to enforce speed limits (85% agreed).
- 6.5.3.3 Monitoring of traffic has shown that major concerns remain about drivers using the route through Whiteshill as an alternative to the A46.
- 6.5.3.4 The need for regular, affordable bus services from the parish into Stroud and Gloucester (98% agreed).
- 6.5.3.5 The need to retain public footpaths within the parish (98% agreed).
- 6.5.3.6 The need to improve pedestrian safety on the Main Road above the Woodcutters. (82% agreed).
- 6.5.3.7 Concern as to how the road infrastructure would cope with increases in traffic accompanying any new developments in the locality. (99% agreed).

(Note: these percentages relate to respondents to Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan Questionnaire 2014).



The regular bus from Stroud climbs the Main Road through Whiteshill on its way to Gloucester

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6.5.4 W&R-TC1: Transport and Communications Policy

W&R-TC1: Transport and Communications Policy:

1. New developments will be required to mitigate any significant adverse impacts on the transport network.
2. New developments will be expected:
 - a) not to have a severe adverse impact on the existing road infrastructure; and
 - b) to contribute towards the provision of turning points and passing places as necessary where their scale and location would significantly increase traffic movements; and
 - c) to provide access to public transport facilities and services, where it is practical and appropriate to do so; and
 - d) to provide adequate provision for off-road parking where displaced parking demand is likely to result in highway safety; and
 - e) to provide ready access to local facilities by foot and by bicycle where it is appropriate and safe to do so.

6.5.5 Associated Projects (these do not form part of the Neighbourhood Plan.)

6.5.5.1 Details of Associated Projects relating to Transport and Communications are outside the scope of this Neighbourhood Development Plan and will be taken forward by the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council.

6.5.5.2 The following Associated Projects concerning Transport and Communications have been identified during the evidence gathering exercise for the Neighbourhood Development Plan project:

- Seek to preserve the existing regular, affordable bus services from the parish into Stroud/Gloucester.

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- Speed limits throughout the parish will be enforced.
- Opportunities will be sought to improve pedestrian safety, particularly on the Main Road north of the crossroads with Kitesnest and Ruscombe Road.

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6.6 Landscape Character Policy

6.6.1 The Objective

- 6.6.1.1 Conserve the landscape and scenic qualities of Whiteshill and Ruscombe.



Cotswold AONB Rural Landscape

6.6.2 Justification

- 6.6.2.1 Lying entirely within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) the parish of Whiteshill and Ruscombe is particularly notable for its natural beauty, landscape setting and views, assets which are highly valued by parishioners as well as people from the surrounding area and visitors. The landscape character of the parish undoubtedly contributes to its sense of place and parishioners' quality of life.

6.6.3 Evidence - Designations

- 6.6.3.1 The parish's landscape importance is recognised through its inclusion within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The southern and western boundaries of the parish form a significant and valued gateway into the AONB from Stroud. Being within the AONB means the parish has the highest level of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

6.6.4 Evidence - Landscape character

- 6.6.4.1 The Cotswolds AONB Character Assessment places the parish within Area 8 High Wold Valley, specifically allocated as area 8B which is part of the Painswick and Slad Valley.
- 6.6.4.2 The key characteristics of this area evident within the parish include:
- Steep, convoluted valley sides dissected by minor watercourses.
 - Extensive areas of predominantly broadleaved woodland cloaking sections of the valley sides.
 - Areas of open pastoral farmland extend between the wooded slopes, and along valley bottoms.
 - Pasture comprises improved grassland, together with occasional remnants of unimproved and calcareous grasslands.
 - Stone built villages occupying secluded locations in valley bottoms and sides.
 - Occasional farmsteads and isolated buildings.

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- Limited road network within valleys.
- Incised and inaccessible wooded slopes.
- Sheltered, visually contained and intimate setting.
- Rich pastoral and secluded rural character.

6.6.5 Evidence - Stroud District Landscape Assessment

6.6.5.1 This report supports the AONB Character Assessment, identifying the area that the Parish sits within as 'Secluded Valleys'. Key characteristics of this area evident within the parish include:

- Enclosed, secluded character.
- Steep sides, concave narrow valley form.
- Steep upper slopes forming and abrupt break of slope with Wold Tops landscape.
- Complex interlocking valley / ridge forms.
- Extensive bands of deciduous ancient woodland along valley rims.

6.6.5.2 Key priorities for action identified for this character area include:

1. Ensure that careful and stringent planning controls on the siting and design of new development are provided to maintain the character of this landscape type and to protect the AONB landscape.
2. Encourage continued protection of important wildlife habitats.
3. Protect remnant pastures and small woodlands both on the valley sides and valley floors within more urban pressured areas.

6.6.6 Evidence - Local Plan

6.6.6.1 The Stroud District Local Plan seeks to:

- Minimise the impact of development on biodiversity and sensitive landscapes by prioritising sites that lie outside of the Cotswolds AONB, focusing development on brownfield sites within the Stroud Valleys.
- Limit development in order to 'protect the separate identity of settlements and the quality of the countryside (including its built and natural heritage).' (Core Policy CP15).
- Avoid the coalescence of towns and villages and to retain their individual character. These areas should be protected to retain visual and physical separation.

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- Protect the built and natural heritage through: Policy ES7 – Landscape Character; Policy ES8 – Trees, hedgerows and woodland; (Policy ES13 – Protection of existing open space).
- Within the Cotswolds AONB, or on land that affects its setting, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural and scenic beauty of the landscape whilst taking account of the biodiversity interest and the historic and cultural heritage. (Policy ES7 – Landscape Character).
- Ensure 'development seeks where appropriate to enhance and expand the District's tree and woodland resource.' (Policy ES8 – Trees, hedgerows and woodland).
- Protect areas of open space'. Within the parish there is a designated 'Area of Outdoor Play Space. (Policy ES13 – Protection of existing open space).
- Recognise the contribution of water resources to landscape character.

6.6.7 Evidence - Rodborough Catchment Zone:

- 6.6.7.1 Half of the NDP Designated Area lies within 3km of Rodborough Common that is the most extensive area of **semi-natural dry grasslands** surviving in the Cotswolds of central southern England, and represents CG5 *Bromus erectus* – *Brachypodium pinnatum* grassland, which is more or less confined to the Cotswolds. The site contains a wide range of structural types, ranging from short turf through to scrub margins, although short-turf vegetation is mainly confined to areas of shallower soils.
- 6.6.7.2 Details concerning how the SDC Local Plan's Habitat Regulations Assessment mitigates the threat to this site can be access from the Stroud District Council web site or from the Whiteshill & Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan web site.

6.6.8 Community Feedback

- 6.6.8.1 Consultation with local residents revealed the following key issues relating to transport and communication:
- Views and vistas across open countryside should be retained (93% agreed).
 - That the 'village feel' and the sense of place should be retained (99% agreed).
 - Open countryside between settlements in the parish and those in neighbouring parishes should be retained (96% agreed).

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- The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) should be protected as far as possible (98% agreed).
- Maintaining the green uncluttered landscape within the parish should be encouraged (97% agreed).

(Note: these percentages relate to respondents to Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan Questionnaire 2014).



Ruscombe Pond, Ruscombe Valley

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6.6.9 W&R-LC1: Landscape Character Policy

Note: Refer to associated document for Whiteshill and Ruscombe – Green Horizons

W&R-LC1: Landscape Character Policy:

1. New development will be expected to be in keeping with existing settlement patterns, maintaining the shape of the villages within the landscape and protecting their distinctive identity and landscape character.
2. Development will be supported where it:
 - a) conserves and enhances the landscape and scenic beauty of the parish and the key characteristics of this part of the Cotswold's AONB; and
 - b) safeguards open countryside and cherished public views from inside and outside of the parish as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment; and
 - c) does not adversely impact on existing green horizons
3. Development should respect the fields and farmland to the south and west of the parish that serve as a genuine gateway into the Cotswold AONB.
4. Development will be expected to conserve landscape features such as hedgerows, dry stone walls, fields, woodlands and water courses.

6.6.10 Associated Projects - these do not form part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.6.10.1 Details of Associated Projects relating to the Landscape Character outside the scope of this Neighbourhood Development Plan and will be taken forward by the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council.

6.6.10.2 The following Associated Projects concerning the Landscape Character have been identified during the evidence gathering exercise for the Neighbourhood Development Plan project:

- PROW working party/Adopt a Footpath scheme.

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6.7 Natural Environment

6.7.3 The Objective

- 6.7.3.1 Conserve and enhance the natural environment, protecting open countryside and enhancing wildlife habitats.



6.7.4 Justification

Young Roe Deer

- 6.7.4.1 The parish of Whiteshill and Ruscombe is an area with a rich natural heritage and abundant natural beauty. It supports a range of distinctive habitats, which host many nationally and locally rare species of flora and fauna. The natural environment of the parish is a major attraction and inspiration to those who live, work in and visit the area.
- 6.7.4.2 Whiteshill and Ruscombe and the countryside surrounding it are valued both for the rural economy it supports and for the leisure, health, educational and wellbeing benefits it provides to the community.

6.7.5 Evidence - Designated Sites and Connectivity

- 6.7.5.1 The parish does not contain any sites designated at European or National level for biodiversity interest, however there are 4 sites of County level significance: three Key Wildlife Sites (KWS) and one unconfirmed site, as shown on the Whiteshill and Ruscombe: Key Wildlife Sites / Unconfirmed Sites / Strategic Nature Areas (KWS Map).
- 6.7.5.2 Much of the parish lies within the Whiteshill Strategic Nature Area (SNA); the boundary of which is also shown on the [\(KWS Map\)](#). This county level designation indicates broad areas where hot-spots of significant habitat exist and acts as a target area where these habitats can best be restored, enhanced or created.
- 6.7.5.3 There are several further KWS's and areas of significant habitat, as well as National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the vicinity of the parish. It should be noted that as a predominantly rural environment, connectivity between habitats is excellent, either directly where sites are continuous or via the network of mature hedgerows, watercourse corridors and roadside verges that exist across the parish. The open countryside separating settled areas of the Parish and neighbouring parishes is particularly important in this regard.

6.7.6 Evidence - Significant Habitat

- 6.7.6.1 Areas within the parish of significant, or "priority" habitat (that is, habitat

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recognised as a focus for conservation and enhancement under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)) are shown on the Whiteshill and Ruscombe: Neighbourhood Development Plan – Natural Environment Map - (NE Map). The areas shown are taken from historic surveys and therefore show only those areas of habitat recorded rather than a full inventory.

- 6.7.6.2 A key habitat of the parish is Lowland Calcareous (Limestone) Grassland- this is the lead priority habitat targeted in the Whiteshill SNA and the defining feature of the Ruscombe Farm Meadows and the Throat KWS's. A number of other Limestone Grassland sites have been noted within the parish and areas adjacent to the parish, the churchyard of St Paul's Church and the Community Orchard area within Whiteshill Playing Field are of particular note.
- 6.7.6.3 Other priority habitats that exist in the Parish include Ancient Woodland, Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Traditional Orchards, Marsh, Hedgerow (many classed as species rich) and Roadside Verges. Much of the Grassland / Pasture land at the head of the Ruscombe Valley and to the east of Field Road / The Plain is currently managed for biodiversity value under Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship schemes; the parish is within the Cotswold Target Area for this management method.

6.7.7 Evidence - Protected and UK BAP Priority Species

- 6.7.7.1 A number of protected and UK BAP priority species have been recorded at sites across the parish: data obtained from the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER) shows recent records of Great Crested Newt and other amphibians, Slow Worm and other reptiles and 5 species of bat within the parish, including Greater and Lesser Horseshoe, Noctule, Brown Long-Eared and Pipistrelle bats. Other notable species recorded by GCER include Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Common Linnet; BAP Priority birds that also feature on the "Red List" of species in decline / under threat, and BAP priority invertebrates such as the Small Heath and Small Blue butterflies.
- 6.7.7.2 A Garden Survey was undertaken in June 2013 by return of a questionnaire issued with the Parish newsletter. The results showed that the parish is excellent habitat for amphibians, with all gardens that have a pond recording frogs, 70% of gardens with a pond recording newts and 84% of all gardens recording toads. Bats were observed feeding / commuting by 80% of respondents and hedgehogs were observed by 42%. Slow worms were observed by 82% of respondents with Grass Snakes observed by 26%.
- 6.7.7.3 There are abundant anecdotal records from village residents and landowners: these include typical Limestone Grassland flora such as Bee Orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, small scabious, oxeye daisy, yellow rattle, birds foot trefoil, ragged robin and wild thyme and fauna such as the Great Green Bush Cricket and Speckled Bush Cricket in the Ruscombe Valley. Nesting Skylark (a BAP priority and Red-List species) are

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observed in Ruscombe hay-meadows and Barbastelle Bats (Near Threatened) have also been recorded during bat surveys by individuals.

- 6.7.7.4 Records have been made available by local Butterfly Conservation surveyors of recent moth trapping surveys in the Ruscombe Valley: many BAP priority moth species were recorded in 2013 such as Cinnabar, Pretty Chalk Carpet and September Thorn. Further community input to this evidence gathering exercise was gained through a wildflower survey undertaken by Whiteshill Cubs in 2013 which identified Grassland flora such as Cowslip, Meadow Vetch and Meadow Cranesbill.

6.7.8 Evidence - Other Environmental Aspects

- 6.7.8.1 The water environment of the Parish consists of two catchments- Whiteshill east of the Plain drains from a shallow slope to the Painswick Stream in the valley bottom, with abundant springs where the well-drained limestone subsoil changes to poorly drained clays. The Ruscombe Valley forms its own catchment draining to the Ruscombe Brook via much more steep valley sides and abundant springs. Water resources and quality comprises valuable biodiversity and wildlife corridor function. (Refer to Policy ES4 of the Local Plan).
- 6.7.8.2 The steep topography of the Ruscombe Valley has given rise to historic incidents of surface and foul sewer flooding. Ruscombe Brook Action Group (RBAG) was founded in January 2006 in response to sewage flooding regularly in the valley and other flooding issues at Puckshole. In recent years thanks to the efforts of RBAG working with authorities and the community, large sections of the sewer have been relined, some sections replaced, biodiversity improved and a £10k grill installed. Ruscombe Brook Action Group (RBAG), note these improvements to surface and foul drainage infrastructure have reduced flood risk in the Ruscombe Valley but it remains an area of concern in relation to any new development.
- 6.7.8.3 The aspect and elevation of the Parish results in low levels of light pollution away from street lighting. The dark night sky is an important visual amenity and any new development must be designed to mitigate for localised light pollution from indoor and outdoor / security lighting.

6.7.9 Community Feedback

- 6.7.9.1 It is clear that the Natural Environment of the parish is treasured by the community of Whiteshill and Ruscombe. The Neighbourhood Development Plan Questionnaire (2014) found that 98% of respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) that wildlife habitats within the parish should be protected, with 91% of respondents agreeing (or strongly agreeing) that green space and nature conservation areas should be extended wherever possible.

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- 6.7.9.2 It is also evident that open countryside is similarly valued where it forms a buffer between settled areas of Whiteshill and Ruscombe and neighbouring parishes, with 96% of respondents agreeing (or strongly agreeing) that this space should be retained. Areas of the parish identified through the Questionnaire (map exercise) as being of particular importance in this respect include sites 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (East of The Plain / South of Stokenhill) where 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed these sites should be protected from development and sites 16 and 17 (Ruscombe Valley / Bread Street), where 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed these sites should be protected (reference Questionnaire Map).
- 6.7.9.3 The Questionnaire suggests that development at brown-field sites or in-filling within the existing settled areas, should be prioritised over development at green field locations, with 97% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this position.
- 6.7.9.4 It is considered that the views expressed above are entirely compatible with delivery of the defined housing need for the parish, set out in the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Housing Needs Survey Report.

6.7.10 Natural Environment Maps

- 6.7.10.1 Key Wildlife Sites / Unconfirmed Sites / Strategic Nature Areas Map- (KWS Map):
- Ruscombe Farm Meadows, Ruscombe Wood and The Throat Meadows & Quarry (all Key Wildlife Sites (KWS)) and the Ruscombe Toad site (Unconfirmed).
 - Whiteshill SNA.
- 6.7.10.2 Neighbourhood Development Plan - Natural Environment Map (NE Map):
- BAP priority habitat areas.



Garden Tiger Mothsmall



Orange Tip on Cuckoo Flower



Privet Hawk Moth

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6.7.11 W&R-NE1: Natural Environment Policy

W&R-NE1: Natural Environment Policy:

New developments will be expected to:

1. Conserve the integrity of designated sites and areas of identified priority habitats; and
2. Conserve features of ecological connectivity such as hedgerows, field margins and roadside verges, and encourage the transit of flora and fauna between areas; and
3. Avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts on protected or priority species; and
4. Promote the restoration, enhancement or creation of priority habitat where appropriate; and
5. Adopt best practice in Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and water quality; and
6. Minimise light pollution upon the natural environment in accordance with the Institute of Lighting Engineers' advice.

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7. Associated Documents

Basic Conditions Statement (See separate document)

Consultation Statement (See separate document)

Green Horizons (See separate document)

Scoping Report (Available from Stroud District Council)

Strategic Environment Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment
(Confirmed by Stroud District Council as not being required following their
Scoping Report on the Whiteshill & Ruscombe NDP)

Sustainability Appraisal (See separate document)

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8. Evidence Base

Note: Full details concerning the following Evidence Base can be access on the Neighbourhood Development Plan WEB Site (wr-neighbourhood-plan.co.uk)

NDP: Public Consultations

NDP: Street Surveys

NDP: Landscape Character Assessments Surveys

NDP: Boundary Surveys

Potterton Associates Limited - Whiteshill & Ruscombe Landscape Appraisal

Summary of the latest available information on the demographic and socio-economic make-up of Whiteshill and Ruscombe

Rural community profile of Whiteshill & Ruscombe Parish produced by "Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) Rural evidence project October 2013.

Listed Building

Community Assets

Maps

Reference Sites

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Appendix A: Plans, Documents and Strategies supporting Policies:

Please note that all of the following documents can be accessed directly from the Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan web site: – (wr-neighbourhood-plan.co.uk)

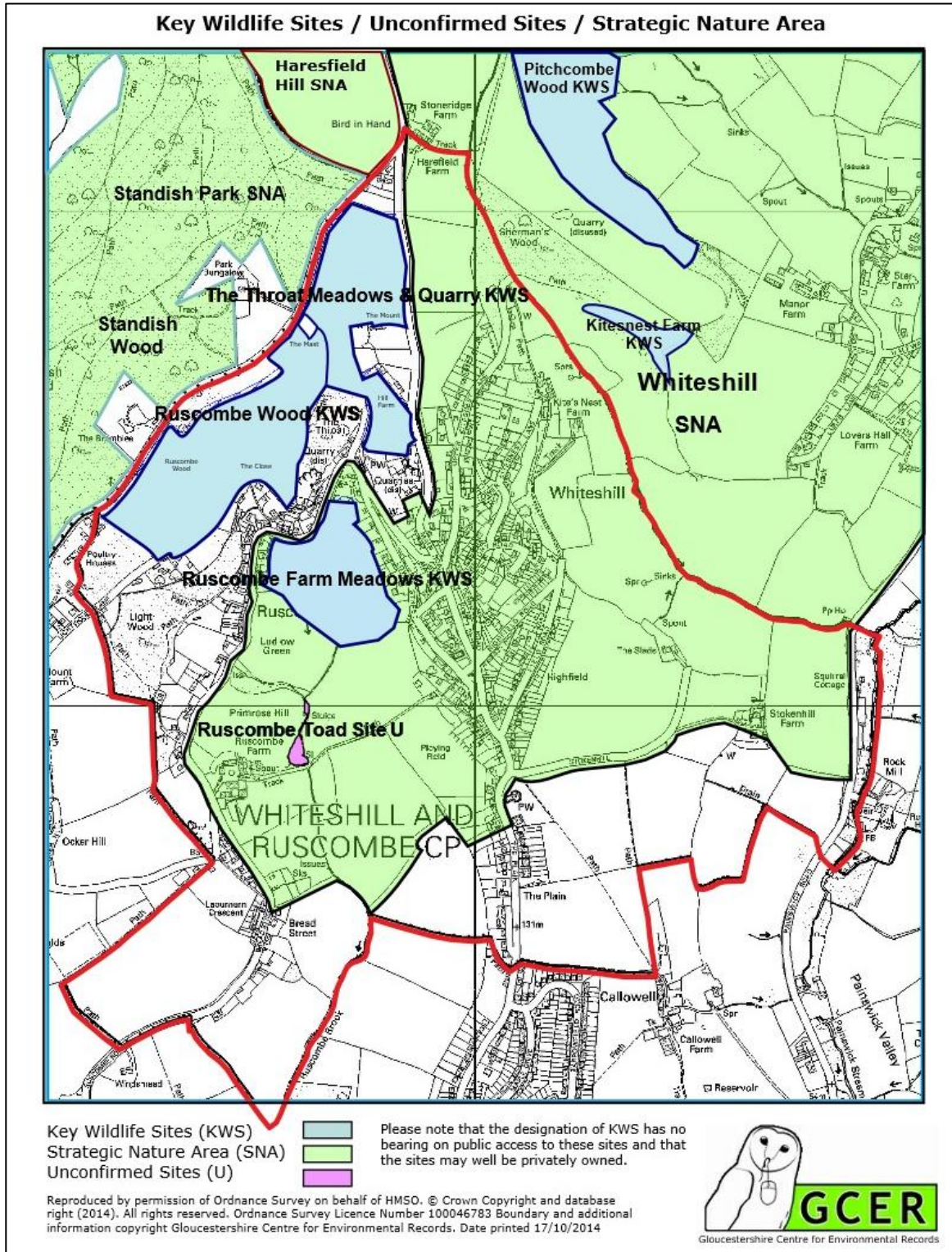
- A.1 Landscape Appraisal (Potterton Assoc. Ltd June 2014).
- A.2 Local Transport Plan for Gloucestershire 2015-2031.
- A.3 National Planning Policy Framework.
- A.4 Rural Community Profile for Whiteshill and Ruscombe (ACRE Rural Evidence Project, October 2013).
- A.5 Rural Proofing Guidelines Report - Web Site PDF.
- A.6 Statistics were sourced from a "Rural Community Profile for Whiteshill & Ruscombe" that was generated by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) from data provided by "Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) Rural Evidence Project October 2013 (Full Report).
- A.7 Stroud District Local Plan.
- A.8 Stroud District Council Open Space Study 2013.
- A.9 Stimulating Economic Growth in Rural Areas - Web Site PDF.
- A.10 Whiteshill Cub Scouts Group: Flora Survey (2013).
- A.11 Whiteshill and Ruscombe Garden Survey (2013).
- A.12 Whiteshill and Ruscombe Housing Needs Survey 2014.
- A.13 Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan - Local Economy Survey 2014.
- A.14 Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan - Street Surveys (2013) / 2014).
- A.15 Whiteshill and Ruscombe Neighbourhood Development Plan - Questionnaire 2014.

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Appendix B: Maps supporting Policies:

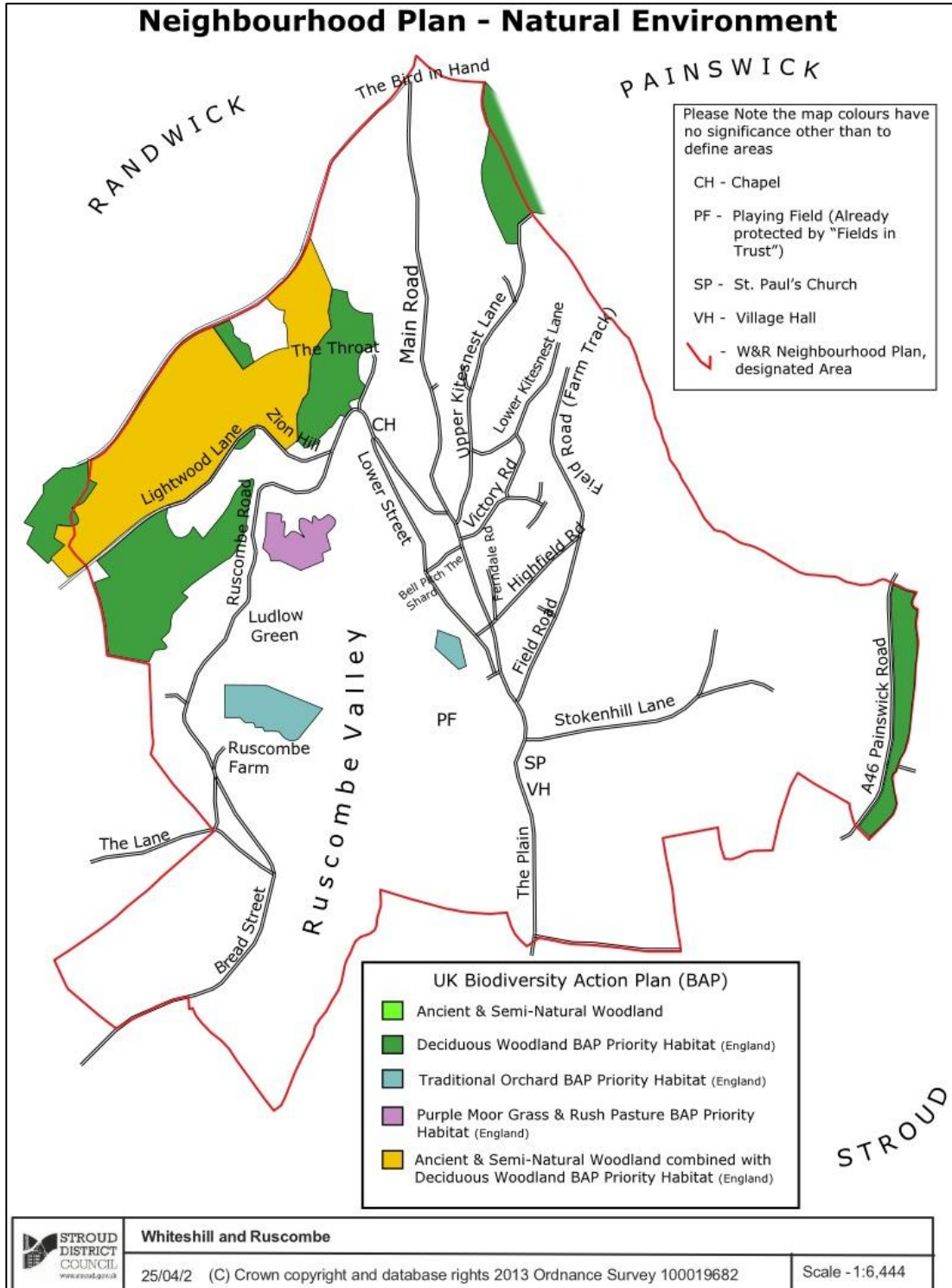
B.1 Whiteshill and Ruscombe: Key Wildlife Sites / Unconfirmed Sites / Strategic Nature Areas (KWS Map).



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B.2 Whiteshill and Ruscombe: Natural Environment (NE Map).



B.3 Further details concerning Key Wildlife Sites and Strategic Nature Areas can be found on the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records ([GCER](#)) web site.

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Appendix C: Local heritage assets criteria

Criterion	Description
Age	Generally, the older a building, site or feature, the more likely it is that this criterion will apply.
Rarity	The rarer a structure is, the more important its survival.
Architectural and aesthetic value	The intrinsic design value of an asset relating to local styles, materials or any other distinctive local characteristics. The visual contribution an asset makes to the character of Whiteshill and Ruscombe. Architectural value may include detailing, materials, craftsmanship and plan form. This criterion can include the best works of architects who were active locally. In some cases altered buildings may still be worthy of inclusion, especially if by an architect of importance.
Group value	Groupings of assets with a clear visual, design or historic relationship.
Evidential value	Where a building or site may contain, or be associated with, important evidence about its past history and use, the particular neighbourhood or the town as a whole, or about the lives of former residents and citizens. This evidence can be in the form of historical documents, historic fabric and features lying hidden behind more recent building façades and internal finishes, or buried remains.
Historic association	Where there is a clear association of a building or site with an important local person or community in the past, or with important local events, activities and industries.
Archaeological interest	This may be an appropriate reason to designate a locally significant asset if the evidence base is sufficiently compelling and if a distinct area can be identified.
Designed landscapes	Includes parks and gardens, and the landscape or garden setting of buildings, that are individually important or are important in relation to the buildings they relate to and to the local areas they are part of.
Landmark status	This can include assets that have a strong association with a historical event or a particular community, and others that stand out within an area because of their visual distinctiveness or prominence, and/or location. Both types can be an important part of the particular character and identity of an area or neighbourhood.
Social and communal value	This can include where an asset is seen as being of value to the local community, or to particular communities, or where it figures strongly in residents' memories and life experiences.
Degree of completeness	The asset should be reasonably complete, or at least should retain, or have the potential to retain, enough fabric and features for its character and importance to be understood and appreciated, either now or more fully in the future.

At least one criterion must apply to a local heritage asset.