

LAND NORTH WEST OF STONEHOUSE (WITHIN STANDISH PARISH)

POSITION STATEMENT

PREPARED BY PEGASUS GROUP ON BEHALF OF ROBERT HITCHINS LTD AND REDROW HOMES

P20-0573_05A | MAY 2021







EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Position Statement has been prepared to demonstrate that a sustainable urban extension to Stonehouse at Great Oldbury can be delivered in the plan period.

Land north west of Stonehouse is a proposed allocation in the emerging Stroud Local Plan and is located immediately adjacent to and to the north of the emerging neighbourhood of Great Oldbury (2015 Local Plan allocation West of Stonehouse) and west of the Bristol-Birmingham railway line, within the parish of Standish.

An emerging concept masterplan has been prepared informed by extensive environmental investigations and the public consultation that took place earlier this year.

The Proposed Allocation PS19a as identified on the policies map, is for a strategic mixed-use development, including employment, residential and community uses and this Position Statement addresses the majority of the proposed allocation as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan. References to the Site in this Position Statement are to this part of the allocation.

It is anticipated that housebuilding could commence in Spring 2025 with development completed by the middle of the plan period.

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May 2021 Project code P20-0573

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01 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement outlines details of the proposed urban extension to Stonehouse. It presents a summary of the baseline survey work undertaken, the emerging masterplan including land uses and sets out an expected delivery programme.
- 1.2 The objective of the scheme is to deliver housing in accordance with the allocation, including a primary school, associated works, infrastructure, open space and landscaping.
- 1.3 The Site forms part of a proposed allocation in the Stroud District Local Plan Review (Pre-Submission Draft Plan, Regulation consultation, May 2021), under Policy PS19a. Policy PS19a allocates the Site (and additional land to the east of the Site, as a strategic mixed-use development, to include up to 5ha of employment, 700 dwellings, a primary school, landscaping and green infrastructure.

02 EMERGING MASTERPLAN

- 2.1 The emerging illustrative masterplan which has been informed by ongoing baseline survey and assessment work shows how the number of dwellings, primary school, open space, including sports pitches, community orchard, greenspace, parks and recreation, play space, natural green space and allotments can be accommodated; and two points of access provided from the south, via the Land West of Stonehouse Sustainable Urban Extension
- 2.2 The green infrastructure is intended to offer opportunities for leisure and informal recreation uses as well as areas managed for nature conservation purposes.

KEY - ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

SITE BOUNDARY
[25.06Ha]

LAND USES

- PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL
- PRIMARY BUILT FORM
- SECONDARY BUILT FORM
- 1FE PRIMARY SCHOOL
- OPEN SPACE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE INCLUDING PARKS & RECREATION/AMENITY GREEN & COMMUNITY ORCHARD
- PITCHES & OUTDOOR SPORT
- POTENTIAL CHANGING FACILITY
- ALLOTMENTS (CIRCA 0.55HA)
- PROPOSED DRAINAGE INFRASTRUCTURE

POTENTIAL CONSTRAINTS

- EXISTING TREE GROUPS/HEDGEROWS (SUBJECT TO SURVEY)
- CONTOURS AT 0.5M INTERVALS

MOVEMENT

- POTENTIAL ACCESS
- ENHANCED STREET WITH POTENTIAL TO ACCOMMODATE A BUS ROUTE
- INFORMAL STREET
- PEDESTRIAN PRIORITISED STREET
- PRIVATE SHARED DRIVES
- EXISTING PROW
- PROPOSED FOOTPATH LINK/PROW DIVERSION
- EXISTING TRACK

PLAY SPACES

- NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUIPPED AREA OF PLAY (NEAP)
- LOCAL EQUIPPED AREA OF PLAY (LEAP)





03 DELIVERY

- 3.1 It is anticipated that the Site could deliver around 100 dwellings per annum.
- 3.2 The Local Plan is expected to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in September 2021 for examination. An appointed Inspector will then examine the Draft Local Plan to determine whether it is a sound plan and can be adopted by the Council, or whether modifications need to be made. The examination process is likely to involve a number of public hearing sessions during 2022.
- 3.3 It is assumed that outline planning permission will be granted in summer 2023, with the first reserve matters submitted in summer 2024. House building would commence in spring 2025 with the first completions by March 2026.
- 3.4 The Site is within the control of highly experienced employment and residential developer/promoters with a proven track record of delivering strategic sites in Stroud and indeed across Gloucestershire who have brought forward a number of mixed-use developments in the County (including the West of Stonehouse {Great Oldbury} Strategic Allocation under the adopted Stroud Local Plan).

Planning Permission granted Summer 2023

1st Reserve Matters submitted Summer 2024

Commence Housebuilding Spring 2025

Development completed
(assuming 2 outlets at 50 dwellings per annum each) Spring 2032

04 SUMMARY OF BASELINE INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 The following section summarises the environmental baseline studies which have been undertaken in order to inform the emerging master plan for the proposed development and the preparation of a planning application.
- 4.2 The topography of the Site rises gradually towards the north east and then forms a plateau. Field boundaries are comprised of hedgerows and trees as well as the unsurfaced access track to the east which provides vehicular access to Stagholt Farm and fields. A number of Public Rights of Way (footpaths) cross components of the Site. The Site, and land extending to the east of the Site up to the railway line are proposed for development in the emerging Stroud District Council (SDC) Local Plan Review as Stonehouse North West Policy PS19a.
- 4.3 The Site is not in, or adjacent to, an environmentally sensitive area.
- 4.4 The nearest statutory designation is the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which runs along the B4008 approximately 0.5km to the east of the Site with a railway and its associated cutting and fields intervening.
- 4.5 The Site lies within the Severn and Avon Vales National Character Area (NCA 106). At the county level the Site is within the Settled Unwooded Vale landscape character type, located within the Vale of Berkeley landscape character area (SV6A). At the District Level the Site lies within the Rolling Agricultural Plain Landscape Character Type and sub type LCT5a 'Escarpment Foothslopes' (Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment, 2000).
- 4.6 The Site lies predominantly within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of fluvial flooding) which means that the Site comprises land which has been assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual possibility of flooding.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

- 4.7 Access to the Site would be via the West of Stonehouse allocation in the adopted Local Plan (Policy SA2 and planning ref. s.14/0810/OUT). Access to the West of Stonehouse allocation is gained via Grove Lane, near to the A419 Chipmans Platt roundabout to the southwest of the Site and via the B4008 and Oldends Lane which crosses over the railway line to the east of the Site.
- 4.8 The Site lies within immediate walking and cycling distance of both existing and planned employment and is well placed to utilise the bus services coming forward at Great Oldbury which will ensure at least a 30-minute frequency to Stonehouse, Stroud and Gloucester and 60-minute frequency to Cam and Dursley.
- 4.9 The Site is well positioned to benefit from the recent capacity improvements on the A419 Corridor. The A419 is a 'Main Movement Corridor' as defined in the 'Stroud Sustainable Transport Strategy' (November 2019), where it is envisaged that an integrated package of initiatives can be delivered with a focus on sustainable travel modes.
- 4.10 New pedestrian and cycle links will connect the development to the surrounding network of routes ensuring residents will have good access to key local facilities which will encourage sustainable travel.
- 4.11 A Transport Assessment scoping report setting out the assessment parameters has been produced and submitted to Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) in its capacity as the local highway authority, and Highways England which is responsible for the strategic road network.
- 4.12 The traffic impacts of the proposed development will utilise outputs from the Stroud Local Plan Traffic Modelling (March 2021) which includes 2040 future year forecasts including the allocation on land north west of Stonehouse. A request to GCC and SBC has been made for obtaining the modelling following the 'Stroud Modelling Forecasts Third Party Access Protocol'. Traffic flows output from the model forecasting will be input into individual junction capacity assessments to model in detail the operation of the surrounding local highway network in the weekday AM and PM peak hours.
- 4.13 The Site is not subject to any nature conservation designations. It does lie within the Impact Risk Zone for the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) / Special Area of Conservation (SAC) / Ramsar and the Upper Severn Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located just over 5km west of the Site and, if necessary, financial contributions towards on-site mitigation measures within the Severn Estuary SAC / SPA / Ramsar (as set out within Stroud District Council's 'Strategy for Avoidance of Likely Significant Adverse Effects on the Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar Site' (December 2017)).
- 4.14 A suite of surveys has been undertaken at the Site including a Phase 1 habitat survey, Badger survey, Great Crested Newt survey (GCN) of off-site ponds (where access was granted), breeding and wintering bird surveys, Water Vole/Otter surveys, reptile surveys, Dormouse surveys and bat activity & automated surveys.

ECOLOGY

- 4.15 The Site is dominated by agricultural fields of negligible ecological value with the features of greater ecological value (the hedgerows, stream and trees) being situated at the Site margins. These features would be retained and safeguarded wherever possible with any losses offset through compensatory planting based around native species of greater number/length/extent.
- 4.16 No evidence of Great Crested Newts, Dormouse or Otter/Water Vole was identified during the surveys. Whilst no reptiles were recorded during the specific surveys, an incidental sighting of a Slow-worm was recorded at the Site margins and habitats for this faunal group could be enhanced through creation of a greater extent of suitable habitat in open spaces post development. The wintering and breeding bird surveys have not identified any assemblages or species of particular ornithological note within the Site. Provision of suitable habitats for nesting and foraging birds will be provided post-development and enhancements accrued by provision of nesting boxes and appropriate new planting. As expected, bats have been identified using boundary features for foraging and navigation with some boundary trees recorded as having potential to support roosting bats. If any of the trees with bat roosting potential are due to be lost to the proposals further survey would be conducted to determine whether any bats are present and appropriate compensatory mitigation provided. The boundary features would be incorporated into open space/Green Infrastructure and foraging and navigation opportunities maintained and enhanced through creation of new habitats such as ponds/SUDs

features and wildflower grassland together with new tree/hedgerow planting based around native species. Further enhancements for roosting bats could be achieved through the provision of roosting boxes within the scheme, e.g. retained trees. Badger setts have been recorded at the Site margins and this species likely uses the fields and hedgerow for foraging. These setts would be retained and safeguarded or works that result in any direct impacts/disturbance conducted under licence from Natural England, as necessary.

GROUND CONDITIONS

- 4.17 A non-targeted intrusive investigation has been undertaken and identified a consistent natural ground profile beneath the site concordant with recorded geological mapping. The Site is considered geotechnically suitable for the proposed development.
- 4.18 Localised contamination of the herbicide Pendimethalin was recorded within surface topsoil, however its natural biodegradation means that no remedial action is considered necessary and does not preclude topsoil from being used in the proposed development. There is no perceived risk to controlled waters.

NOISE

- 4.19 A baseline assessment of the existing noise levels across the Proposed Development area has been undertaken and no issues have been raised at this stage. Minimal mitigation will be required for the Site.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND HERITAGE

- 4.20 An archaeological desk-based assessment has been undertaken for the Site, along with a geophysical survey and a trial trench evaluation. These investigations confirmed the presence of an Iron Age enclosure and round-house in the northern part of the Site. A large but shallow Medieval pit was recorded in the central part of the Site, the function of which is uncertain. All the archaeological features had been truncated by historic and repeated agricultural activity and are not considered to be of any more than local significance.
- 4.21 A built heritage assessment was also undertaken for the Site. Three built heritage receptors were identified in particular ranging from high to low sensitivity. However, it is considered that the proposed development will result in no significant effects to these assets.

AGRICULTURAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 4.22 An assessment of the effects of the non-agricultural development on the soils and other agricultural factors of the Site has been undertaken. The Site extends to approximately 25ha and is agricultural land in arable and grassland use.
- 4.23 National and Local Plan policies seek to protect the “best and most versatile” agricultural land from irreversible development; the best and most versatile agricultural land is defined as land in Grades 1, 2 and subgrade 3a. The land at Stonehouse has been surveyed by Reading Agricultural Consultants and is all classified in subgrade 3b.
- 4.24 The land is managed by two separate holdings with grassland and arable crops being grown. For one of the holdings affected the area of land required exceeds 20% of the overall holding and is a significant impact. monies raised from the sale of the land could be used to mitigate the loss of land, at the discretion of the owners.
- 4.25 Overall, there is no planning policy impediment (with regard to agriculture) to the proposed development.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT

- 4.26 A landscape and visual impact assessment of the Site has been undertaken. The Site is not within any landscape designation and is therefore considered to be of low landscape value in a district context. The Site has limited features of value other than its surrounding hedgerow boundaries.
- 4.27 The Site is well contained by field hedges with hedge trees and no hedgerow would be lost other than to form the proposed access. The development would provide an opportunity to incorporate new green infrastructure that would extend the existing network of green corridors and open spaces.
- 4.28 A number of public rights of way cross the Site linking with a broader local network of footpaths. These are retained and their connectivity with the wider landscape conserved. These footpaths provide robust connectivity with the immediately adjoining Great Oldbury residential development area. Although walkers of these footpaths will experience some loss of rural character to their immediate context, long distance views of the ascending escarpment will generally be retained.
- 4.29 Views out from the elevated escarpment within the AONB are panoramic with the Site being seen as a small area within a wide and panoramic view that extends west of the River Severn. The site is seen in the immediate context of the Great Oldbury settlement and wider Stonehouse settlement area. The magnitude of change likely to be experienced in views out from the AONB due to the panoramic nature of the views is assessed to be negligible.
- 4.30 In terms of landscape character the development would result in a loss of rural openness to site from development but new built form would be seen in the immediate context of Great Oldbury. This has been identified to limit harm to the wider rural landscape character from the loss of openness. Mitigation in the form of new green infrastructure has been identified to be effective in reducing landscape and visual effects as it will be seen to naturally extend and emulate the existing local green infrastructure which can be seen to successfully mitigate the effects of the Great Oldbury development.
- 4.31 Overall, the development of the Site is assessed to not give rise to unacceptable landscape and visual effects and to protect the setting of the Cotswolds AONB.

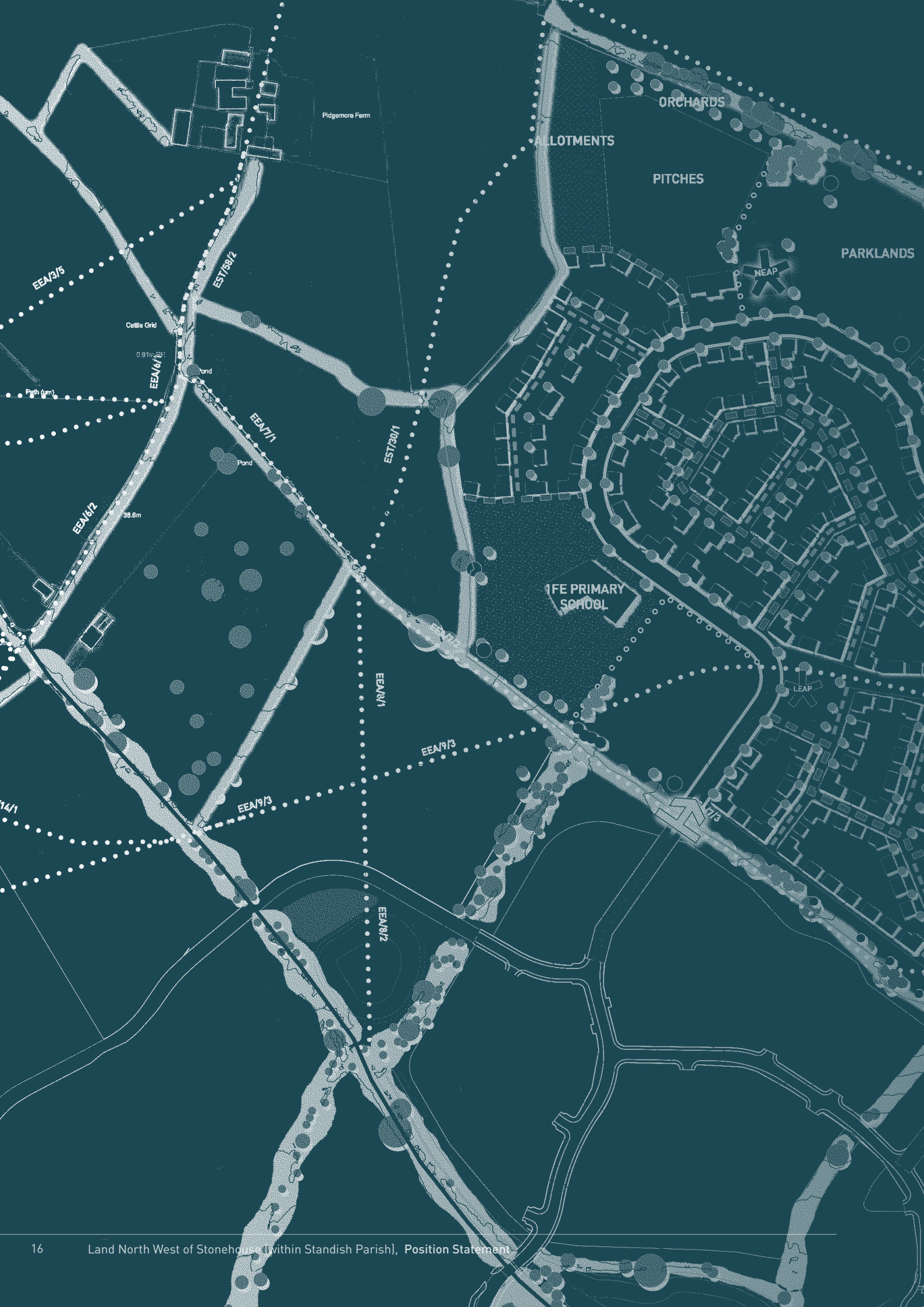
HYDROLOGY, DRAINAGE AND FLOOD RISK

- 4.32 A surface water drainage strategy has been developed that incorporates a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS). The proposed SuDS will ensure that flood risk resulting from pluvial events (rainfall) will be managed on-site and that flood risk will not be increased elsewhere as a result of the development. The restricted surface water flows from attenuation ponds will discharge to the adjacent watercourse (existing land drainage ditch / Colliers Brook) replicating the existing drainage patterns for the site.
- 4.33 A 40% allowance in accordance with Environment Agency guidance for climate change has been included in the SuDS design to take in to account the predicted increase in rainfall intensity over the lifetime of the development.
- 4.34 The Environment Agency flood maps for planning reproduced identifies the site to be predominantly located within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of fluvial or tidal flooding). An area located in the southeast corner of the site adjacent to Colliers Brook (ordinary watercourse) falls within Flood Zone 2 /3. This area will not be developed and will form part of the public open space. All habitable built development will be located within Flood Zone 1 in accordance with the NPPF sequential approach.
- 4.35 A Water Framework Directive Assessment has been carried out to demonstrate that the proposed development, with mitigation, will not result in an deterioration of the status of the existing watercourses and that it will not compromise the WFD objective of achieving 'Good' status for the River Frome by 2027.
- 4.36 A site specific FRA has been produced in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, Planning Practice Guidance, and EA advice notes, and demonstrates that the proposed development will be safe from flood risk and that it will not increase flood risk elsewhere.

AIR QUALITY

- 4.37 Stroud District Council no longer has any designated Air Quality Management Areas. Monitoring data from long-term sites operated by the Council confirm that air quality across the District was good in 2019 (data for 2019 were unaffected by changes to traffic flows brought about by Covid-19 restrictions), and the air quality objectives were met at all locations. Air quality for future residents of the proposed development is therefore expected to be acceptable.
- 4.38 During construction, a range of measures will be put in place to ensure that dust and emissions from construction activities are minimised. With these measures in place, the effects on existing properties in the area surrounding the proposed development, and the effects on new properties occupied prior to completion of construction of the wider site, will not be significant.
- 4.39 The air quality effects of additional traffic emissions generated by the proposed development once operational are unlikely to be significant. This judgement takes account of expected continued future improvements in air quality (as low and zero emission vehicles enter the national fleet), the build out rate of the proposed development (approximately 100 per year, with the first property being occupied no sooner than 2026), and the initiatives proposed to ensure that the development encourages sustainable travel modes (minimising emissions from private car use).







SUMMARY

- 5.1 Appraisals have been undertaken to establish the parameters relating to the environment which are present at the Site, namely landscape, visual amenity, ecology, archaeology and cultural heritage, agricultural resources, flood risk, surface water drainage, noise and ground conditions. It is recognised that all of these environmental aspects require careful attention in developing a design for development at the Site.
- 5.2 The evidence confirms the suitability of the Site for the proposed development which is being brought forward by two highly experienced developers and can be delivered by the mid part of the plan period.

-  DESIGN
-  ENVIRONMENT
-  PLANNING
-  ECONOMICS
-  HERITAGE

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