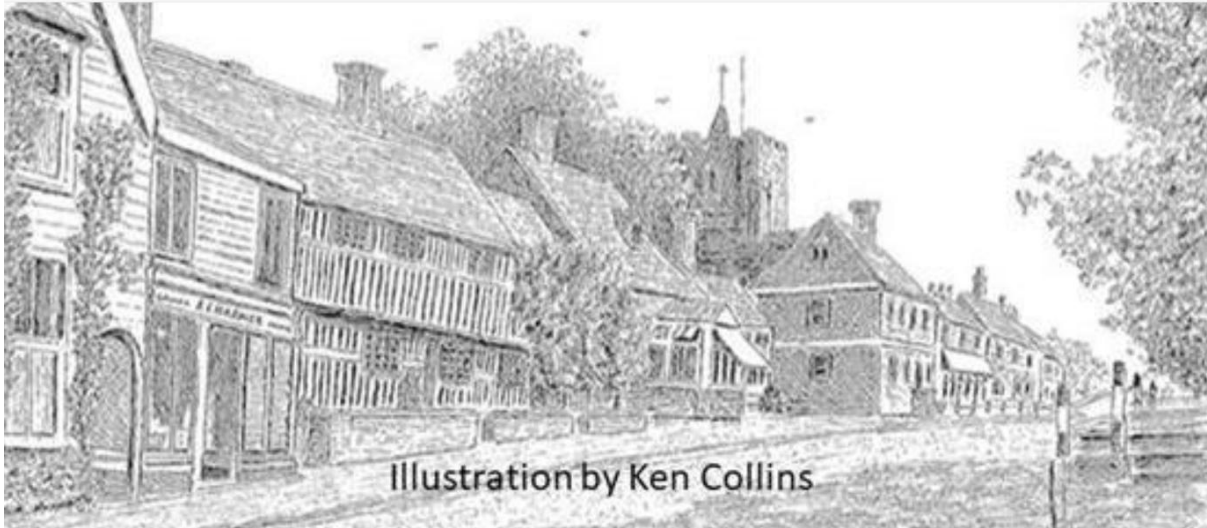


Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan 2024 to 2038



Submission Version

April 2026

**Prepared by the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan Steering
Group on behalf of Staplehurst Parish Council**

Foreword

Staplehurst Parish Council is the qualifying body responsible for the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan (SNP), the first of which was made on 7 December 2016 and was intended to run until 2031, but by 2020 it became clear that it would need revising sooner.

A Neighbourhood Plan Review Group comprising parish councillors and residents was formed to review the existing plan and decide what needed to be updated. The Group has been meeting regularly since January 2021, working with the Parish Council (PC) and its appointed Planning Consultant. This is the Pre-Submission Version Neighbourhood Plan, which will be subject to consultation. Following this, comments will be considered, and the Review Group will publish the Submission Version document, to submit to Maidstone Borough Council. The Submission Version Plan will be subject to a second round of formal consultation, followed by an Independent Examination to check the legality of the document. The final step in the process will be a local referendum which, if successful, will lead to the making of the new neighbourhood plan.

Once the Plan has been ‘made’ the Parish Council will need to ensure that the SNP is being interpreted and used in the way intended, and it will become a work of reference to the Council’s Planning Committee. It covers the whole of the Staplehurst parish. The Parish Council will maintain a watching brief on any changes to planning policies, both at national and local planning authority levels.

The Parish Council has a role in ensuring that the SNP policies are being adequately considered, where relevant, in decisions to determine the outcome of planning applications in the parish.

I would like to thank all those who have assisted in developing this Pre-Submission Version neighbourhood plan.

Cllr Adele Sharp

Chair of Staplehurst Parish Council

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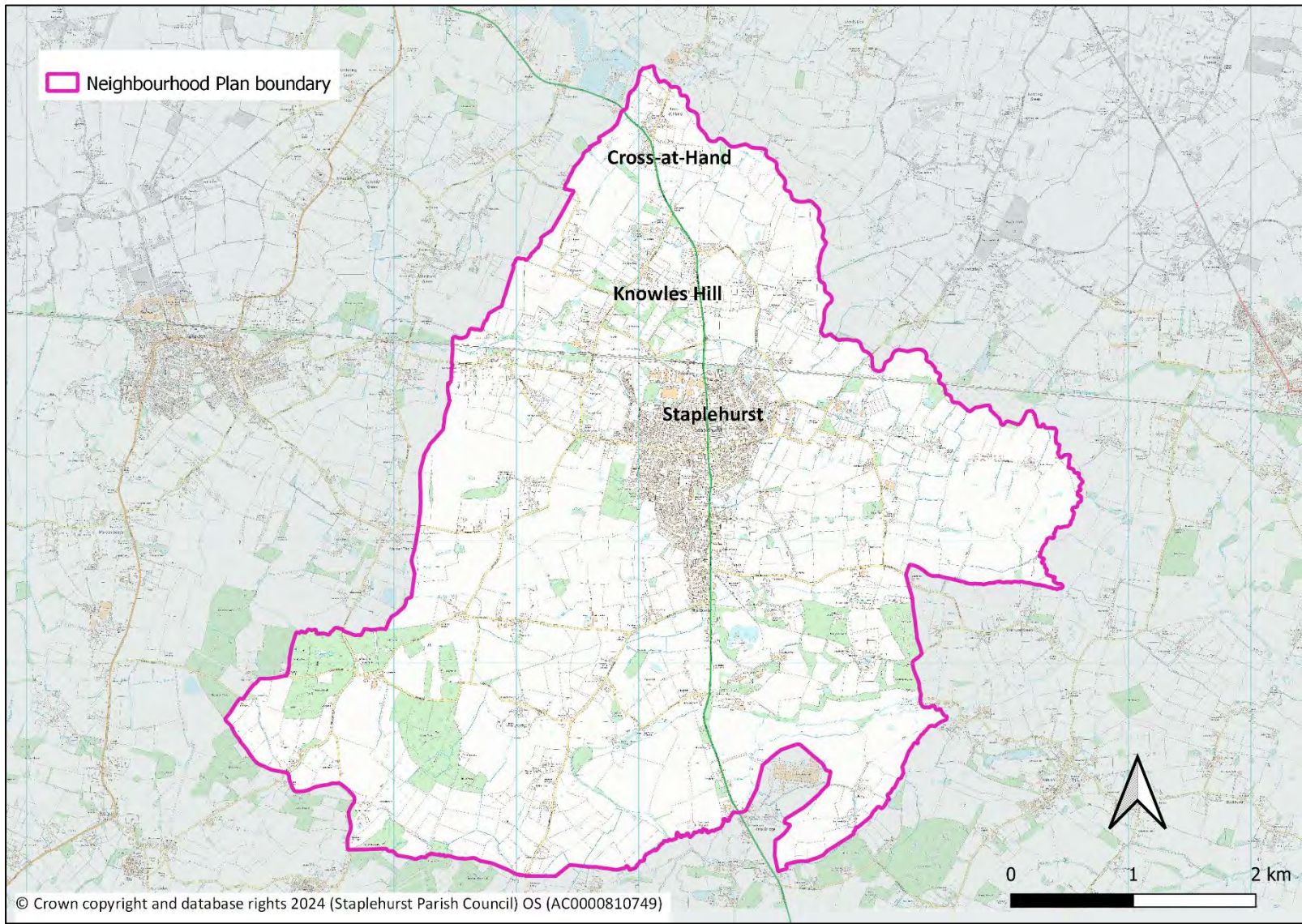
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan 2024 to 2038 (SNP). Once adopted, it will replace the existing SNP (2016 to 2031). It sets out planning and land-use policy for the village and wider parish, over the period 2024 to 2038, forming part of the development plan for the borough of Maidstone. Maidstone Borough Council (MBC), as the local planning authority, designated the Staplehurst neighbourhood area on 14 January 2019. The neighbourhood area shares its boundary with that of the Parish (*Figure 1*).
- 1.2 This document replaces the existing SNP, which was made in September 2016.
- 1.3 The SNP has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Parish Council, as the Qualifying Body, set up a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group comprising local councillors and volunteers from the community, to lead on the preparation of the Plan. In consultation with the community, local businesses and others, the Steering Group has reviewed the vision and framework for the future of the designated area and set out how that vision will be realised through planning land use and development change over the period 2024 to 2038.
- 1.4 The SNP policies form part of the development plan for Maidstone borough and must be considered by any interested parties wishing to submit planning applications for development within Staplehurst parish. The policies also set out how land should be considered, in planning terms, locally, and is a material planning consideration in the determination of applications, alongside the policies of the local development plan.
- 1.5 The process of producing the SNP has sought to involve the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance in Staplehurst parish. Within each section there is a summary of what the policy seeks to achieve and a justification, providing the necessary understanding of why the policy is needed and how it should be applied. The policies themselves are presented in the green boxes against which planning applications will be considered. To understand the full context for any individual policy, it should be read alongside the supporting text and evidence documents that have been compiled to underpin the SNP.
- 1.6 Beneath each policy is a conformity reference, listing the relevant policies in the MBC adopted Local Plan and Local Plan Review documents and the paragraphs of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF, December 2024) that the policy conforms to.
- 1.7 The Plan sets out the Community Infrastructure Priorities and a framework for monitoring and implementation. Projects and other aspirations are recorded separately by the Parish Council but may contribute to the overall vision for the parish.

Figure 1: Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan designated area



THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy

- 1.8 The SNP has been prepared in accordance with the NPPF (most recently revised in December 2024). It states:

Para 29: *“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. **Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies** (Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area).”*

Para 30: *“Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, **the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict;** unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently.”*

Local Planning Policy

- 1.9 The Development Plan for Maidstone borough comprises:

- [Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review 2021-2038 \(adopted March 2024\)](#)
- [Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review \(LPR\) 2021-2038 Policies Map](#)
- [Retained policies from the Maidstone Borough Local Plan \(2017\)](#)
- [Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030 as amended by Early Partial Review \(2020\)](#)
- [Kent Mineral Sites Plan \(2020\)](#)
- Several ‘Made’ Neighbourhood Plans

There are also several Supplementary Planning Documents that are a material consideration in planning considerations. MBC introduced a Community Infrastructure Levy, which took effect on 1 October 2018.

- 1.10 The LPR states that across the borough, between 2021 and 2038, provision is made through the granting of planning permissions and the allocation of sites for a minimum of 19,669 new dwellings and 119,250m² employment floorspace.
- 1.11 Staplehurst village is classified as a ‘Rural Service Centre’ within the settlement hierarchy. Alongside Coxheath, Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham and Marden, Staplehurst is considered a secondary focus for housing development with the emphasis being on maintaining and enhancing its role and the provision of services to meet the needs of the local community. Suitably scaled employment opportunities will also be permitted. Further detail on the strategic vision for Staplehurst is set out in LPR Policy LPRSP6(F) – Staplehurst (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2: Policy LPRSP6(F) – Staplehurst, LPR (text/spelling is as printed in the Local Plan Review)

At the rural service centre of Staplehurst, as shown on the policies map, key services will be retained and supported.

- 1) In addition to minor development and redevelopment of appropriate sites in accordance with policy LPRSP5, approximately 710 new dwellings will be delivered on sites H1(48) to H1(50), and 127 on LPRSA066 and LPRSA114.
- 2) Four pitches are allocated for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in accordance with policies LPRGT1(10) and LPRGT1(11).
- 3) One existing site is designated as an Economic Development Area in order to maintain employment opportunities in the locality (policy LPRSP11a).
- 4) Key infrastructure requirements for Staplehurst include:
 - a) Improvements to highway and transport infrastructure including junction improvements, a variety of measures to improve sustainable transport infrastructure, and improvements to pedestrian and cycle access in accordance with individual site criteria set out in policies H1(48) to H1(50) LPRSA066 and LPRSA114;
 - b) Provision of 0.5 form entry expansion at Staplehurst Primary School;
 - c) Improvements to open space which improve overall quality, and address forecast deficits of 2.4Ha amenity, 1.8Ha play, 9.1Ha sports, 1.6Ha allotment, and 51.9Ha natural/semi-natural green space.
 - d) Improvements to health infrastructure including extension and/or improvements at Staplehurst Medical Centre.
 - e) The loss of local shops, community facilities and green spaces will be resisted, and new retail development, community services and open space will be supported to meet local needs in accordance with policy LPRSP11c.

- 1.12 The remaining settlements in the parish are classified as 'Countryside' and as such, their quality and character should be protected and enhanced whilst at the same time allowing for opportunities for sustainable development that supports traditional land-based activities and other aspects of sustainable development in rural areas and makes the most of new leisure and recreational opportunities that need a countryside location. The individual identity and character of settlements should not be compromised by development that results in unacceptable coalescence. Local Plan Policy LPRSP9 (Development in the Countryside) sets the strategic context for developments in such areas.
- 1.13 At a meeting of the Maidstone Borough Council's cabinet on [22 October 2025](#), it was approved to commence work on the preparation of a New Local Plan. The timetable for the New Local Plan will be published in due course.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1.14 The SNP Review has been guided by the need to engage as widely as possible with the local community. Arrangements have been made to reach those people who are often more difficult to involve in formal consultations. Apart from the statutory requirements for public consultation at various stages, measures to draw in a range of contributions has included presentations, a parish survey, mapping workshops and exhibitions. These will be set out fully in the Consultation Statement, which will be submitted along the Submission Version SNP. A timeline of key activity is summarised in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Summary of key activities and engagement

Date	Milestone	Key activities
2023	Parish Council agree to review the Neighbourhood Plan	- Steering Group established - Evidence gathering commenced
2024	Evidence and engagement	- Health-check review of existing SNP is undertaken - Community Survey issued - Housing Needs Assessment completed - Evidence gathering and further community engagement - Residents' Survey completed - Open presentation at Community Centre for residents to offer views on emerging plan - SEA/HRA Screening prepared
2025 to 2026	Pre-Submission Version (Regulation 14) Plan published Regulation 16 Plan published Examination Referendum	- Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) consultation - Plan amended appropriately into Submission Version and submitted, with supporting documents to MBC - Regulation 16 consultation run by MBC Plan independently examined - Plan finalised for Referendum - Plan 'made' and forming part of the strategic development plan

1.15 Discussions with officers at MBC have taken place on each of the topic areas covered by the SNP. In addition, communication with local groups and neighbouring parishes has taken place.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 1.16 The SNP has been screened by MBC to ascertain whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required. The screening document was subject to consultation with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. The Screening Determination Statement, dated 18 December 2024, concluded that the SNP is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and therefore does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- 1.17 In addition, the screening determined that the 'appropriate assessment' stage of the HRA process (that ascertains the effect on integrity of the European Site) does not need to be undertaken. This conclusion was sent to Natural England for consideration and their response indicated agreement.
- 1.18 A copy of the Screening Determination statements will be available on the Parish Council website.

2. ABOUT STAPLEHURST

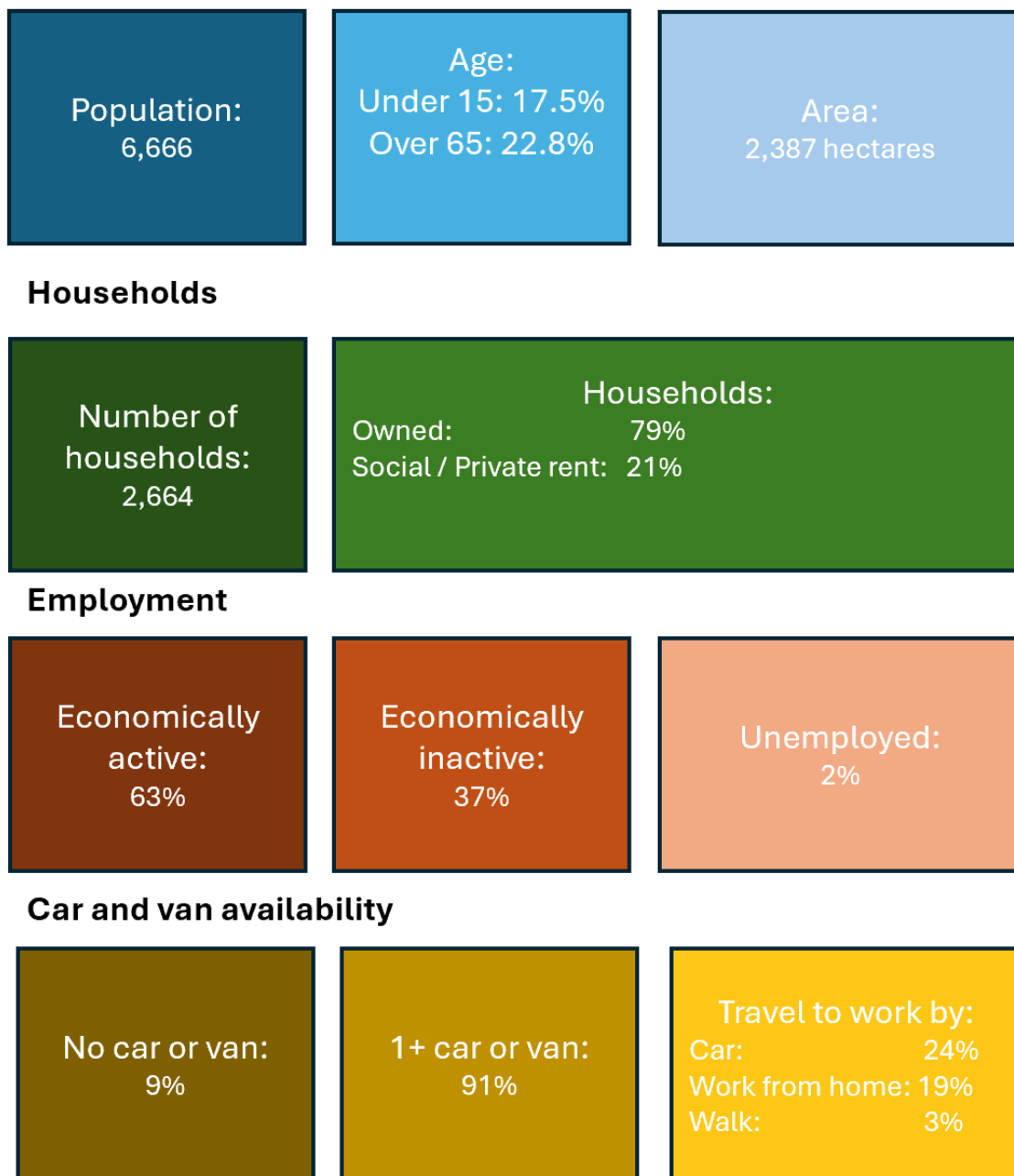
- 2.1. Staplehurst is a rural parish located in the borough of Maidstone in Kent, approximately 8 miles south of the town of Maidstone, 17 miles east of Royal Tunbridge Wells and 18 miles west of Ashford. The village lies on the route of a Roman road, which is now incorporated into the course of the A229, which runs north-south directly through the centre of the parish and Staplehurst village.
- 2.2. The name Staplehurst comes from the Old English 'stapol' meaning a 'post, pillar' and 'hyrst', as a 'wooded hill'; therefore, 'wooded-hill at a post', a possible reference to a boundary marker at the position of All Saints' church atop the hill along the road from Maidstone to Cranbrook.
- 2.3. The main settlement is the village of Staplehurst itself, which has a number of community services and facilities including a primary school, village hall, health centre (The Mote Medical Practice – Staplehurst) and local shops. There is a railway station, with trains running into London Charing Cross and Cannon Street via Tonbridge. North of Staplehurst village are the smaller settlements of Knowles Hill and Cross-at-Hand.
- 2.4. From a landscape perspective, the parish lies within the Staplehurst-Headcorn pasturelands to the east and the Low Weald fruit belt to the west. The parish is home to a number of designated heritage assets and the main part of the village itself is designated as a conservation area.

Photos of Staplehurst



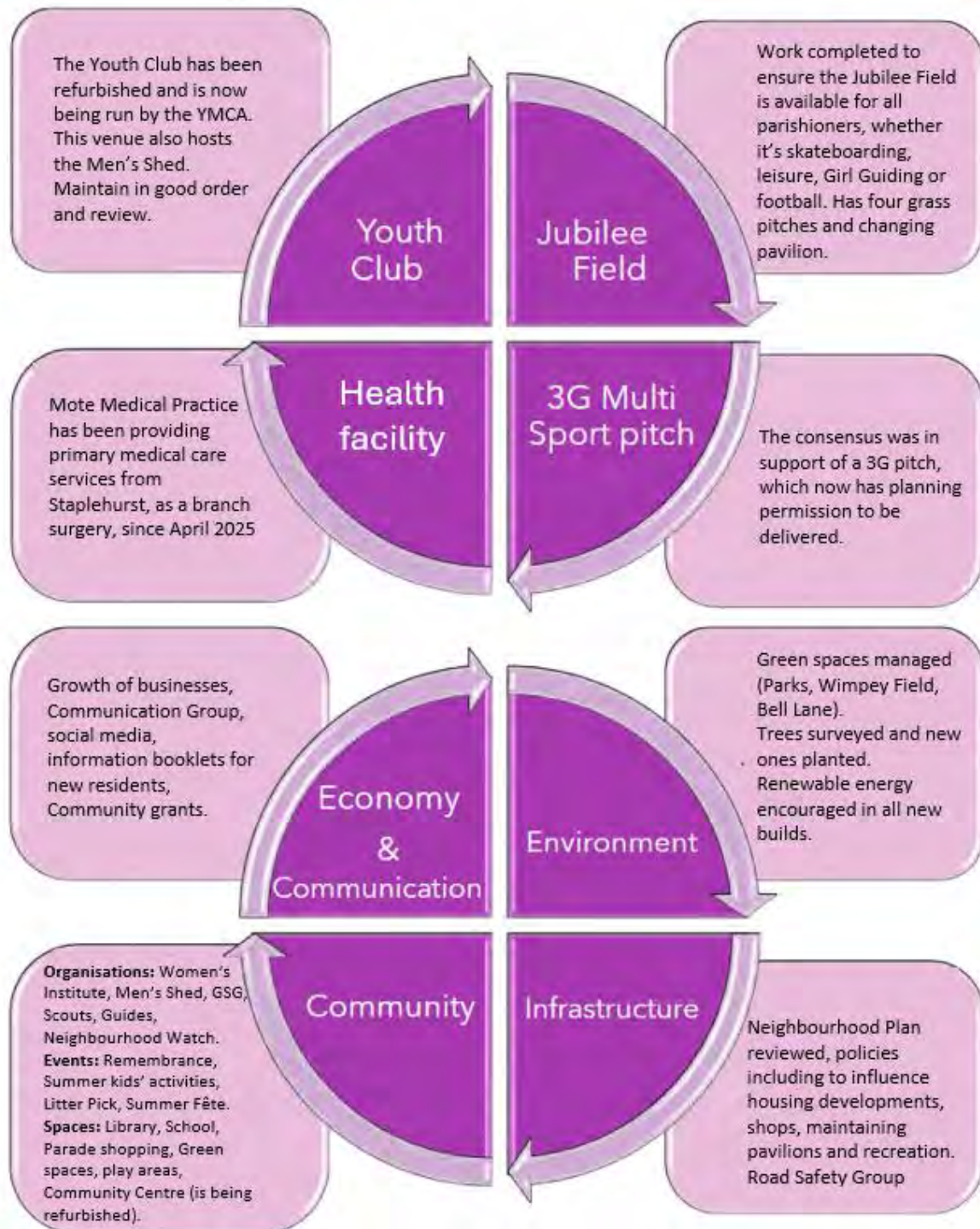
A PROFILE OF STAPLEHURST, (CENSUS, 2021)

Figure 3: Headlines from the 2021 census



3. WHAT IS THE PLAN SEEKING TO ACHIEVE?

- 3.1 Inspired by the resident survey, the following priorities have been identified for enhancing village life. From supporting local facilities to promoting sustainability and fostering community spirit, there is a commitment to making Staplehurst a thriving, connected, and welcoming place for everyone:



OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 3.1. The following objectives have been identified. Some can be supported through planning policies, while others, which sit outside the scope of planning, will be pursued by the Parish Council and other partners.
1. **Sustainable development and housing:** There are well designed affordable community focused homes of the right size and tenure to support growth and adaptation to serve all phases of life, promoting health and wellbeing. The architecture uses passive energy and low carbon building materials and there is increased biodiversity and reduced carbon emissions for existing and proposed development.
 2. **Biodiverse environment and green spaces:** Natural environments, open spaces, biodiversity and wildlife are restored, enhanced, protected and accessible for all. There is a network of ecological corridors that connects through the village, smaller settlement and to the wider countryside. Space for a wide range of active and passive recreation, for all ages. Light pollution is minimised where possible, to encourage dark skies and tranquillity.
 3. **Safe and active travel:** The railway provides a welcoming gateway to the village. Walking (and wheeling) and, where possible, cycling is encouraged, particularly for shorter journeys, which will help reduce congestion. There is the infrastructure to support electric cars with fewer miles travelled by vehicle. Safe routes to access amenities and the station. Welcoming streets where people connect on their journey. Whilst public transport provision falls outside the scope of the neighbourhood plan, a reliable and frequent service is supported.
 4. **Preserved heritage:** The parish's unique historic buildings are preserved or enhanced. They are appreciated alongside contemporary architecture as part of our daily activities.
 5. **Connected and supported communities:** There are facilities for all needs – for health, social and wellbeing, local food produce, education, culture, retail, sport and recreation. They are inclusive spaces that connect and bring people together linked to active travel and green spaces, carparking and electric vehicle charging.
 6. **Thriving local economy:** Established local businesses are doing well and new businesses are emerging. There is a focus on retaining a vibrant village centre and improving links to the railway as a key gateway.

4. SPATIAL STRATEGY

POLICY S1: PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

POLICY S1: PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- A. Development proposals within the defined settlement policy boundary (as shown on *Figure 5*) will be supported where they comply with other development plan policies. Development proposals which make use of brownfield sites will be particularly supported.**
- B. Development proposals outside the defined settlement policy boundary (*Figure 5*) will only be supported where they involve development supported in such locations in national and local planning policies and which meet the following criteria:**
- i. it does not individually or cumulatively result in physical and/or visual coalescence of – and it enhances the separate identities of – the individual communities of Staplehurst and Cross-at-Hand (*Figure 4*); and**
 - ii. it maintains and, where possible, enhances the natural and built appearance and character of the area; and**
 - iii. it is of a scale and nature appropriate to the character and function of the area; and**
 - iv. where appropriate, bring redundant or vacant agricultural/farm buildings or historic buildings of heritage value back into viable use consistent with their conservation in a manner that does not cause harm in terms of additional traffic; and**
 - v. it is capable of connecting to the primary movement network hierarchy (see Policy S13).**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: all; Maidstone Local Plan Review: LPRSP6(F), LPRSP9, LPRSP10, LPRGT1(7), LPRSP14(A), LPRSPA066, SPRSA114, LPRHOU1, H1; NPPF (2024): 29-31, 61, 76, 83, 84, 96, 98e, 109, 110, 124, 125, 131, 142, 145-151, 153-160, 187, 203

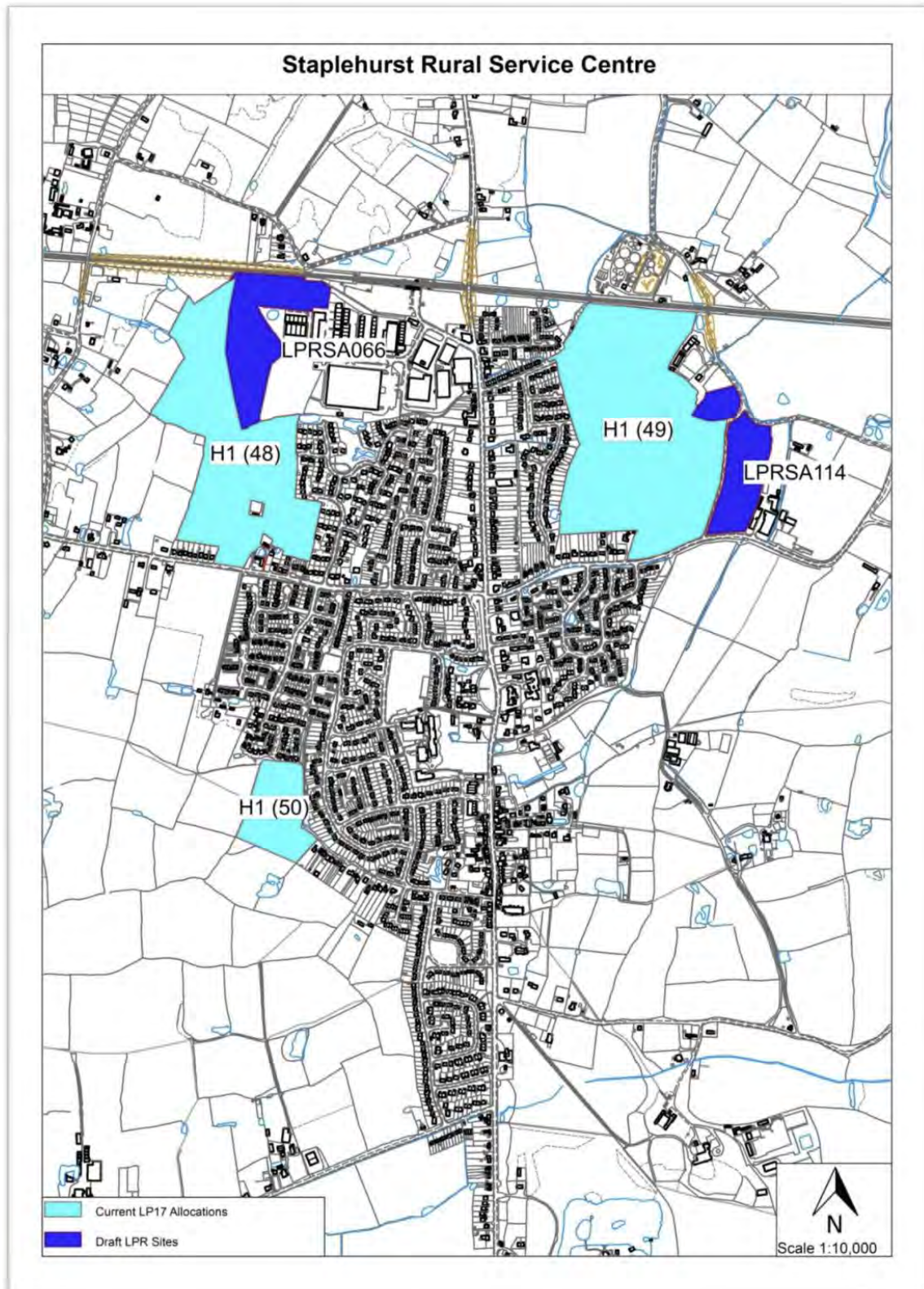
Purpose

- 4.1. This policy sets out the SNP approach to the location of development within the parish. It emphasises the importance of new development being directed to the most sustainable locations, near to local services and amenities, which will help to protect the character and identity of the parish and help to avoid coalescence notably between the main village and the outlying hamlets.

Justification

- 4.2. The LPR allocates approximately 527 new dwellings within Staplehurst village in addition to approx. 250 in the previous Local Plan (2017) (Appendix A):
- 4.3. *Figure 4* shows these on a map (both those already built out and those in allocated in the LPR).

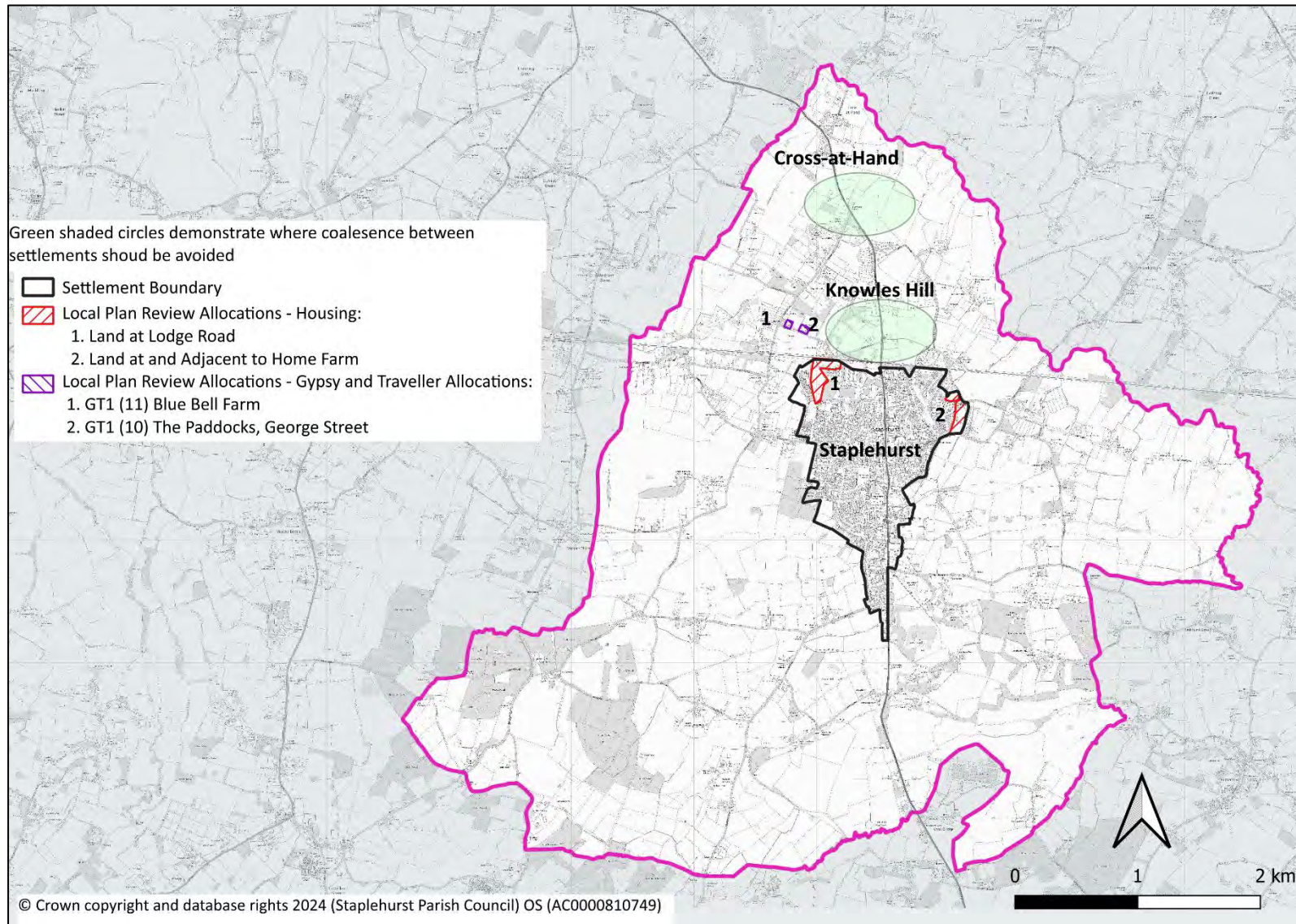
Figure 4: Map showing Maidstone LPR proposed expansion of Staplehurst (Local Plan 2017 and LPR 2021-2038 allocations)



4.4. The LPR does not identify a housing figure to be delivered through the SNP itself. This is because MBC consider that housing supply in the parish will be addressed adequately at the strategic level through the strategic allocations and associated windfall (unplanned housing). The SNP therefore does not allocate sites for housing. Instead, it sets out a series of principles to support MBC's proposed growth strategy. These principles will be relevant in terms of influencing the strategic allocations and windfall development and also any other development that might be proposed speculatively. The principles are:

- retaining the identity and character of the individual settlements within the area - This would be achieved by ensuring that development does not result in unacceptable coalescence between settlements. In the parish, this is particularly important for the settlements of Staplehurst and Cross-at-Hand. There is a smaller area of housing known as Knowles Hill, which falls between the two main settlement areas.
- prioritising the use of previously developed (brownfield) sites (LPR Policy LPRHou 1) – MBC maintains a record of such sites, available to view on their [Local Plan Monitoring webpage](#).
- providing new dwellings in the period to 2038 on sites in accordance with MBC's LPR;
- ensuring that the overall quantum of development does not put an unacceptable strain on infrastructure capacity;
- supporting small-scale residential developments (windfall) that are sympathetic to their surroundings;
- ensuring that new developments include a mix of housing to meet the needs of local people, considering the current and projected demographic of the parish;
- ensuring that new development is well-connected to the rights of way network, improving and adding to this where possible, to provide pedestrian and cycle links; and
- providing well-designed dwellings that are sympathetic to the character of the settlement.

Figure 5: Settlement boundaries, site allocations and areas where coalescence to be restricted



5. HOUSING MIX

POLICY S2: MEETING LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS

POLICY S2: MEETING LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS

- A. Other than in development designed to meet an identified specialist housing need, the mix of housing sizes, types, tenures, and affordability in proposed development should, in so far as is reasonably practicable and subject to viability, assist in meeting needs identified in the most recently available Local Housing Needs Assessment and informed by the most recent Staplehurst Housing Needs Survey. In particular, the following provision will be supported:
- i. proposals that deliver an appropriate mix of affordable housing, based on a 75:25 split between affordable housing to rent and affordable housing for sale (intermediate housing). Affordable homes should be tenure-blind and well-integrated with market housing.
 - ii. proposals that deliver a higher percentage of smaller dwellings (1-2 bedrooms) aimed at those wishing to downsize and/or first-time buyers.
 - iii. proposals that enable greater affordability uplifts and prioritise local residents when it comes to allocating housing (such as the use of First Homes or social housing). Proposals that enable an uplift of up to 50% to the discounts provided on any First Homes element of the development, to assist single occupants on median and lower quartile income, will be particularly supported. Where such an uplift is demonstrated to be unviable, proposals should provide at least a 30% discount. Such proposals should seek to prioritise those with local connections to Staplehurst parish (see Glossary) and key workers.
- B. Residential development that could reasonably be expected to meet the needs of older people (by virtue of its size and location) should demonstrate how it has reflected the [Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation \(HAPPI\) principles](#) and the guidance contained in the RTP1's "[Dementia and town planning: Creating better environments for people living with dementia](#)".
- C. Subject to the other policies of this plan, proposals for self- and custom build housing will be supported.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 1; Maidstone Local Plan Review: LPRSP10(A), LPRSP10 (C), LPRHOU9; NPPF (2024): 61-66, 71, 73

Purpose

- 5.1. This policy seeks to ensure that there is a range of general housing that is designed to be capable of meeting the specific housing needs of the parish.

Justification

- 5.2. It is important that any new residential development within Staplehurst parish addresses local housing needs.

- 5.3. Policy LPRSP10(A) (Housing Mix) of the LPR states that *“a sustainable range of house sizes, types and tenures (including plots for custom and self-build) [will be sought] that reflect the needs of those living in Maidstone Borough now and in years to come”*. It suggests that developers will need to access a range of evidence sources, including the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2021 (SHMA), to help shape their proposals. Local stakeholders, including parish councils, may often be able to provide targeted information that assists an applicant to submit a locally relevant scheme. Neighbourhood plans can also be used as a mechanism to allow some flexibility and local context while contributing to the overarching strategic needs of the borough. Where affordable housing is proposed or required, the housing register will provide additional guidance.
- 5.4. To add additional local detail to the LPR Housing Mix policy, a Housing Needs Survey (HNS) for Staplehurst Parish was prepared by consultants (CNB Housing Insights) in December 2023, which can be found in the Evidence Base. The key output of the HNS is to provide an overall assessment of housing need and affordable housing need in the parish. It draws on census data and other national datasets as well as primary evidence gained from a community survey.
- 5.5. Within Staplehurst, there is a predominance of detached and semi-detached dwellings in the parish when compared to the borough and wider area. The majority of homes are owned outright.
- 5.6. The household composition reveals the largest household group to be married couple households with dependent children, and a low proportion of younger single person households of all ages. The second largest groups are single person and families all aged 66 or over which together formed 25% of all residents.
- 5.7. The population projection reveals a future aging population, which may not be consistent with the parish housing stock and supply in years to come. However, there is also significant projected growth of people aged 25-59 years.
- 5.8. The parish has higher house prices and rents than the wider borough. The supply of market 1-bedroom flats and houses generated by the stock is small. Availability of properties on the private rental sector is limited, and prices are high, which means that households unable to become homeowners have few options and restricted choice.
- 5.9. The combination of high entry level prices and shortage of entry level housing, coupled with parish prices being higher than the district average, sets up the conditions that drive affordable housing need experienced by many households especially younger households or those with a single income. Further, the gap between average prices of 2 to 3 and 3 and 4-bedroom homes being large, will challenge many younger households and growing families to be able to afford to upsize within the area.

- 5.10. In terms of affordable housing, the HNA suggests the following broad mix should be supported: a 50:50 split between social and affordable rent and affordable home ownership. This is slightly different to the SHMA, which indicates a 75:25 split (rented affordable Housing; 25% of affordable need arising from demand for affordable home ownership products). At least 25% of homes should be aimed towards 1 and 2-bedroom flats for newly forming households.
- 5.11. The introduction of First Homes presents an opportunity for planning authorities to require higher discounts on these affordable homes (intermediate housing) for sale, where the need can be evidenced locally. Within the Parish, the HNS reveals that there would be a benefit to raising discounts on some or all of any First Homes delivered and this could prioritise local people and keyworkers.
- 5.12. In light of the fact that the HNS provides only a snapshot of need, it should be considered alongside the findings of the MBC SHMA.
- 5.13. The Parish Profile considers that the community is ageing. The [“Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation \(HAPPI\)”](#) has, since 2009, developed a series of principles for good design of housing generally. Many of the principles are recognisable from good design generally - good light, ventilation, room to move around and good storage - but they have particular relevance to the spectrum of older persons’ housing which needs to both offer an attractive alternative to the family home and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs. The ten principles are:
- Space and flexibility
 - Daylight in the home and in shared spaces
 - Balconies and outdoor space
 - Adaptability and 'care ready' design
 - Positive use of circulation space
 - Shared facilities and 'hubs'
 - Plants, trees, and the natural environment
 - Energy efficiency and sustainable design
 - Storage for belongings and bicycles
 - External shared surfaces and 'home zones'
- 5.14. Good design to deliver these criteria is particularly important for smaller dwellings, including smaller homes (in terms of bedroom numbers), apartments and bungalows. Such developments must ensure that it is aimed at meeting the needs of older people as well as the younger working population.
- 5.15. Housing should be designed to support the needs of those living with disabilities. The Royal Town Planning Institute’s guidance [“Dementia and town planning: Creating better environments for people living with dementia”](#) should inform planning applications.

Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople

- 5.16. The parish houses a number of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities (see Appendix A) and welcomes their integration with the settled community.
- 5.17. The allocation of sites for these communities is undertaken at the strategic level. The LPR allocates two additional sites:
- GT1 (11) Blue Bell Farm
 - GT1 (10) The Paddocks, George Street
- 5.18. MBC is preparing The Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document (GT DPD) and this will form part of the Maidstone Development Plan. It will set out the spatial strategy and strategic policies for meeting Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation needs over the plan period by identifying, safeguarding and allocating sites within the borough. It will also include more detailed site allocation policies and development management policies to be used in assessing applications for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation. Further information can be found in the [Preferred Approaches Consultation \(Regulation 18b\)](#), October 2024.

6. CHARACTER, HERITAGE, AND DESIGN

POLICY S3: CHARACTER AND DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

POLICY S3: CHARACTER AND DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

- A. Development proposals should incorporate a high quality of design, which responds and integrates well with its surroundings, meets the changing needs of residents and minimises the impact on the natural environment. The scale, character, and siting of the proposal should respect the landscape and its features, valued views into and out of the settlement, the local streetscape and heritage assets. It should reflect the variety of architectural styles found locally, using materials that are in keeping with those used in existing buildings in the immediate locality. Innovation in design will be supported where this demonstrably enhances the quality of the built form in a local character area.
- B. Development proposals should demonstrate how they have sought to address the following matters as they are appropriate to their scale, nature and location:
- i. the Kent Landscape Assessment (Areas 1, 19 and 25), the Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal and the key design principles for Staplehurst, included at Appendix B; and
 - ii. make a positive contribution to the visual appearance of the main highway approaches into the settlements (A229, Headcorn Road, Marden Road, Pinnock Lane and Frittenden Road). Improvements and enhancements should include, where appropriate, additional tree planting, the enhancement of roadside green spaces (for instance through planting), the reduction/consolidation of road signs and other street furniture and wider green infrastructure improvements that are identified as being necessary; and
 - iii. incorporate soft landscaping and other boundary treatments including the retention and enhancement of established trees and hedgerows, or the replacement of these if not possible; and
 - iv. promote the use of sustainable transport and active travel through adopting a [Healthy Streets](#) approach to street design in accordance with the Manual for Streets 2 (or as amended);
 - v. provide adequate vehicular access and space for cycle parking, with vehicular off-road parking for residents, visitors and service vehicles, in accordance with the [Kent and Medway Parking Standards](#); and
 - vi. there is no unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring uses through the loss of privacy, loss of light or visual intrusion on the views and surroundings that create the backdrop to an area; and
 - vii. traffic generation and parking does not severely impact vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- C. Where development sites abut open countryside, development on the rural boundary edge should mitigate any detrimental visual impacts on the countryside. This should be achieved through:

- i. the siting of lower density development at the rural boundary of the site in order to provide a gradual transition from the built form to open countryside;
- ii. the inclusion of meaningful and characteristic landscape buffers to help ensure an appropriate transition from built development to open countryside; and
- iii. a layout that clearly minimises the visual impact of any larger buildings on both the open countryside and existing village-scape.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 1; Maidstone LPR: LPRSP15, LPRHOU2, LPRQD4, LPRSP14(C), LPRQD1; NPPF (2024): 96, 103, 109, 129, 130, 131-140, 187, 203

Purpose

- 6.1. Good quality housing design can improve social wellbeing and the quality of life by improving the built environment, reducing crime, improving public health, easing transport problems and providing supportive neighbourhoods. The policy seeks to encourage development proposals within Staplehurst Parish to comply with the highest design standards and adhere to local design guidance. The policy and its supporting text add greater detail to the LPR policies, in particular Policy LPRSP15 – Principles of Good Design, which requires development to reflect local distinctiveness.

Justification

- 6.2. Past generations of people and development have created the features that give Staplehurst its identity today. This process has been gradual, taking place over many centuries, and the settlement that exists today has a distinctiveness that derives from variety. The village contains heritage assets of all kinds, including characterful buildings, historic landmarks and archaeological features, both exposed and still beneath the ground.
- 6.3. Landscape Character: From a landscape perspective, the [Kent Landscape Assessment](#) (2004) describes the three main landscape character areas that the Parish falls within, as shown on *Figure 6* and summarised in *Table 2*. It provides guidance on how development should be considered to complement and enhance the landscape:

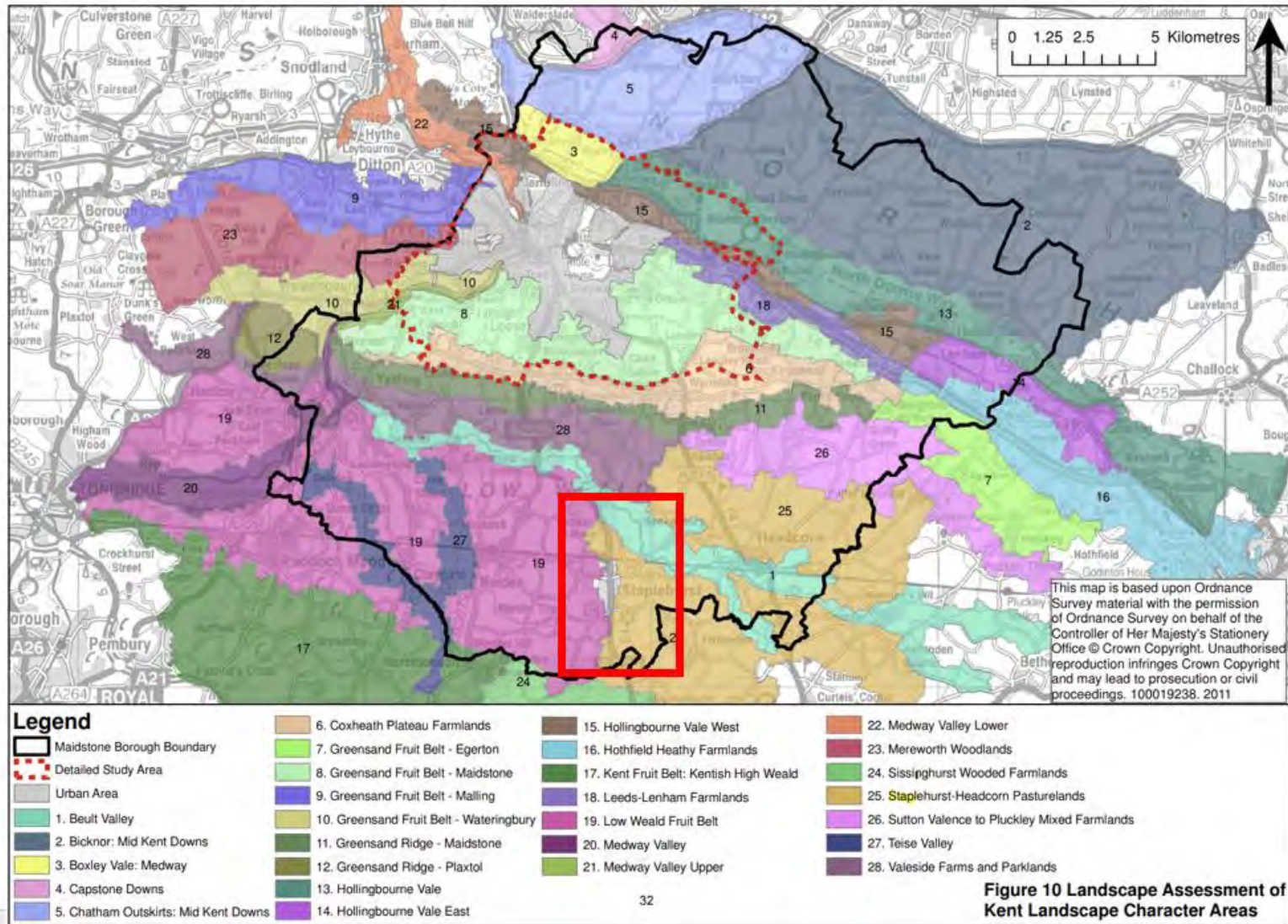
Table 2: Landscape character areas in Staplehurst Parish

Area	Description	Development considerations
1. Beult Valley (p.25)	Flat, low-lying land around incised river channel. Rural open landscape of mixed farming. Small slow flowing river of high ecological value. Sparse but historic settlement. Many historic bridging points. Frequent small ponds in upper floodplain. The River Beult is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.	• Create a riparian corridor with some open bankside and some intermittent woody riparian vegetation. • Create distinctive flora communities in ditches along the highway, in ponds, wet field boundaries and other wetland habitats such as riverbanks by sensitive management techniques. • Create interest at bridging points by revising bridging details to appropriate characteristics and form, by group plantings of willow and black poplar where appropriate and by enhancing open views of the immediate water course. • Create a wider riparian corridor by encouraging the non-intensive management of ditches and

		grasslands and by allowing occasional areas of regeneration of woody species. • Create small woodlands at the upper edge of the floodplain and large pastoral enclosures in the existing open fields.
19. Low Weald Fruit Belt (p.87)	Flat or gently undulating mixed, farmed landscape of dwarf fruit trees, arable, hops and pasture. Remnant alder or poplar windbreaks. Broad-verged lanes with ditches. Frequent groups of oasts.	• Conserve the rural elements of the landscape around the settlements. • Conserve the scale and tranquillity of rural settlements and hamlets. • Conserve and manage mature tree stock • Reinforce enclosure patterns. • Reinforce the ecological interest of ditches and watercourses. • Conserve and reinforce the attributes of rural lanes.
25. Staplehurst-Headcorn pasturelands (p.143)	Flat, low lying and wet, small scale intimate landscape of pastoral farming. Small to medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerow and hedgerow trees. Numerous field ponds. Winding historic lanes, broad verges and flowery ditches. Dispersed settlement including historic farmsteads and villages.	• Reinforce the ecological interest by enhancing the wildlife potential of wetlands, grasslands and ditches. • Reinforce the landscape structure by managing drainage ditches and wide verges to provide a full seasonal range of flora, and maintaining dense, tall hedgerows. • Reinforce existing areas of small-scale landscape. • Encourage the regeneration of small-scale woodland in naturalistic form along existing wetlands. • Reinforce the occurrence of large mature trees within hedged field boundaries and highways. • Reinforce small scale pastoral use.

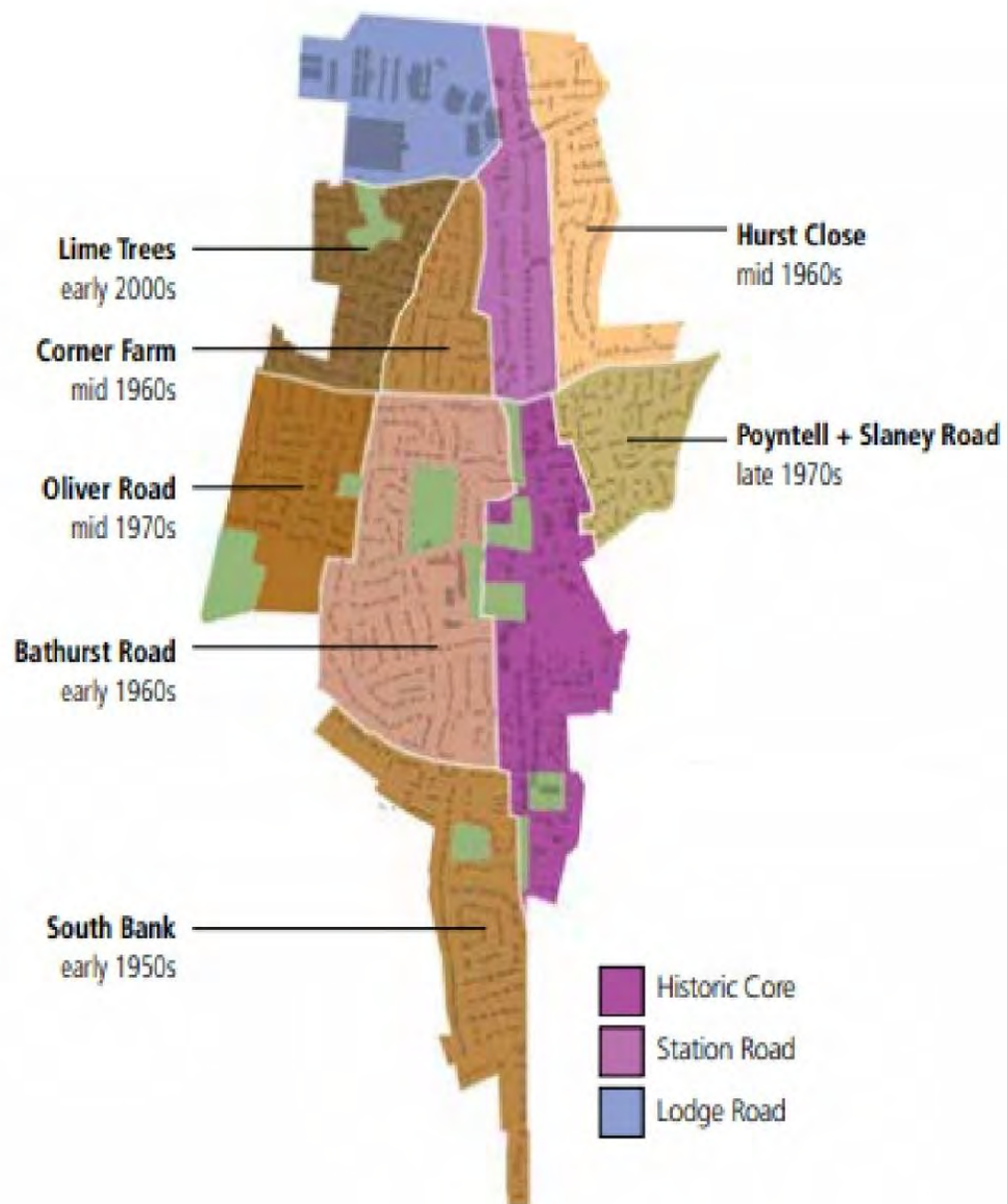
- 6.4. [National Design Guidance](#): The importance of good design has received renewed attention over recent years. In October 2019, a [National Design Guide](#) was launched, forming part of the Government's collection of Planning Practice Guidance. The document sets out the ten characteristics necessary for creating a well-designed place, contributing to its physical character, a sense of community and addressing environmental issues affecting climate. The [National Model Design Guide](#) expands on the ten characteristics and was used in the creation of the Staplehurst Design Guidance and Codes.
- 6.5. Furthermore, the guide [Building for a Healthy Life 2020](#) is the Government-endorsed industry standard for the design of new housing developments. It is a tool for assessing the design quality of homes and neighbourhoods. The criteria also link to other standards for housing design, including [Secured by Design](#). It should be used to inform development proposals along with other policies contained within this plan to achieve the industry standard's 'Building for a Healthy Life' commendation.
- 6.6. The report [Distinctively Local](#) aims to show in detail 'what good looks like'. Additionally, development must be guided by [Building with Nature 12 guiding principles](#).

Figure 6: Landscape Character Areas – larger scale map available to view at [Kent Landscape Assessment](#)



- 6.7. Local Design Guidance: The [Kent Design Guide](#) seeks to provide a starting point for good design while retaining scope for creative, individual approaches to different buildings and different areas.
- 6.8. Much of Staplehurst village falls within a Conservation Area. The footprint of this area is to be expanded and a new [Conservation Area Appraisal](#) has been drafted. *Figure 7* illustrates the different character areas of the Conservation Area by prevailing age, and the updated guidance provides more detailed information and guidance on the specific parts of the Conservation Area.
- 6.9. In the context of these documents, as they relate to the parish, and feedback from the community, Appendix B sets out some key principles that should be reflected in terms of design of development.
- 6.10. In the Village Core, special buildings, such as the pub, are located on corners to create small but memorable landmarks. New developments in Staplehurst can and should take inspiration from the village heart.
- 6.11. New housing should be influenced by the traditional character and style of the village, referencing the local context through high quality materials and styles appropriate to the place. The aim for all new developments should be to leave a positive architectural legacy and to add to the character of the village. This does not exclude innovative modern or contemporary architecture and this will be encouraged where appropriate.
- 6.12. Policy S3 has a close relationship with Policy S4 (Energy Efficiency and Design) of this Plan. Where it is appropriate to do so developments should take account of both policies.

Figure 7: Areas by age of prevailing buildings within the Staplehurst Conservation Area



POLICY S4: ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

POLICY S4: ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

- A. Development proposals which incorporate design and environmental performance measures and standards to reduce energy consumption, to reduce carbon emissions and climate effects will be supported, subject to compliance with other policies in this Plan.**
- B. Development proposals which incorporate the following sustainable design features as appropriate to their scale, nature and location will be strongly supported, where measures will not have a detrimental impact on character, landscape and views:**
- i. siting and orientation to optimise passive solar gain.**
 - ii. the use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials that also help to reduce overheating in warmer months.**
 - iii. installation of energy efficiency measures such as loft and wall insulation and double glazing.**
 - iv. incorporating on-site energy generation from renewable sources such as solar panels, air source heat pumps, ground source heating and energy generation etc.**
 - v. reducing water consumption using water re-use measures including rainwater harvesting, surface water harvesting and/or grey water recycling systems.**
 - vi. providing low carbon sustainable design and avoid or mitigate all regulated emissions using a combination of on-site energy efficiency measures (such as insulation and low energy heating systems), on-site zero carbon technologies (such as solar panels) and, only where necessary, off-site measures to deal with any remaining emissions.**
 - vii. designing development in a way that will help to reduce overheating in warmer months.**
 - viii. multifunctional sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) should be incorporated into all new development proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposals**
- C. Alterations to existing buildings, including sensitive measures to alter historic buildings, demonstrating designs to achieve energy reduction and compliance with current sustainable design guidance and construction standards, will be supported, subject to other policies in this Plan.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 1; Maidstone LPR: LPRQD1, LPRSP14(C), LPRSP15 (8); NPPF (2024): 131-140, 161-167, 182

Purpose

- 6.13. This policy seeks to ensure that development meets the highest environmental standards in terms of its construction, materials and energy use. This will help to mitigate against climate change and contribute to achieving the national target of zero net carbon by 2050.

Justification

- 6.14. On 12 June 2019 the Government voted to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a new target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is otherwise known as a net zero target. This

is a demanding target, which will require everyone to be engaged, from households and communities to businesses and local and national government. As part of this, the government has set an interim target to cut the country's greenhouse gas emissions 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

Examples of discreet solar panels (source: Historic England)



- 6.15. Being '2050 ready' means that new development will be required to have minimal energy use and net carbon emissions. Unlike Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans are more limited in what they can dictate in terms of environmental standards, as they must conform to the minimum requirements as set out by national policy and building regulations. The SNP can, however, strongly encourage the design and layout of new development to maximise its potential to be as energy efficient as possible and to encourage the use of renewable energy.
- 6.16. Kent County Council recognised the UK climate emergency in 2019, as a response to the need to act locally and in the context of climate change impacts being observed at the local level: dry riverbeds, reduced water supply, intense weather events, localised flooding and loss of habitats and species. It supports a range of projects designed to help adapt to climate change and these have informed the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.17. MBC also declared a climate emergency in 2019 and principles are embedded in the LPR. Policy LPRSP14(C) (Climate Change) of the LPR supports development proposals to be designed to enable significant carbon dioxide emissions reductions and more sustainable energy sources, through energy efficiency improvements and facilitating low and zero carbon technology to ensure development supports a path to net zero emissions by 2030.
- 6.18. At the local level, the Community Survey and feedback from the local event revealed strong support for sustainable design to be integral to new developments.
- 6.19. Opportunities to improve and promote sustainability in the neighbourhood area, which would help to deliver the government's climate change targets, include:
- following basic passive environmental design including use of efficient and insulative materials;
 - integrating renewable energy systems into new development, including existing and new public buildings;
 - reducing water consumption including through grey water systems; and

- promoting sustainable forms of transport through priority systems for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 6.20. From a flooding and drainage perspective, within the NPPF the government has removed the limitation for SuDS to only be considered on 'Major Development' and SuDS should now be considered by all development proportionate to the scale and nature of the scheme (Paragraph 182). This recognises the cumulative impact multiple smaller developments can have on surface water flood risk. The [National standards for sustainable drainage systems \(SuDS\)](#) should be consulted.
- 6.21. The Staplehurst Wastewater Treatment site operated by Southern Water continues to operate close to capacity. It is one of 8 sites earmarked for investment to increase capacity between 2027-29. It is critical to the future expansion of the village that these improvements are completed on time.

POLICY S5: RENEWABLE AND COMMUNITY ENERGY

POLICY S5: RENEWABLE AND COMMUNITY ENERGY

- A. Proposals for commercial solar photovoltaic (PV) development will only be supported where it meets the requirements of Maidstone Local Plan Policy LPRINF3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes and:**
- i. the applicant can demonstrate that any harm to the local landscape and environment will be minimised and, where necessary, mitigated. Applicants should use the guidance contained in the [Domestic and Medium Scale Solar PV Arrays \(up to 50KW\) and Solar Thermal \(2014\)](#) or the [Large Scale \(>50KW\) Solar PV Arrays \(2014\)](#) and the relevant landscape descriptions contained within the Kent Landscape Assessment (2004) to inform their landscape and visual impact assessment; and
 - ii. the applicant can demonstrate that the proposals do not adversely affect residential amenity through noise generation or overbearing visual impact. Proposals should seek to screen installations naturally, taking into account views onto the site from within the neighbourhood area, notably the ridgeline, and panoramic long views across the High Weald; and
 - iii. existing rights of way are retained. Where this is not possible, redirection within the site will be considered. Opportunities will be sought to enhance access for walking, cycling and equestrianism within and across the site to provide linkages to local amenities and neighbouring settlements; and
 - iv. there are opportunities to provide a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with Policy S9 (Landscape and environment); and
 - v. the benefits of renewable energy can be proven to outweigh the landscape and environmental impacts; and
 - vi. it demonstrates in particular how land beneath or surrounding the panels will be managed and how the applicant has avoided land with high potential for agriculture ('Best and Most Versatile Land').
- B. Proposals for individual and community-scale energy from hydroelectricity, solar PV panels, local biomass facilities, anaerobic digestion and wood fuel products will be supported subject to the following criteria:**
- i. the siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting and position in the wider landscape; and
 - ii. there is suitable road access, and traffic generated is appropriate for the rural setting; and
 - iii. the proposed development does not create an unacceptable impact on the amenity of local residents; and
 - iv. the proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 1; Maidstone LPR: LPRINF3, LPRSP14(C); NPPF (2024): 105, 131, 136, 161, 162, 165

Purpose

- 6.23. This policy sets out the types of renewable energy projects that would fit well with the character of the area and would therefore be supported. It also sets out the criteria to be considered as part of any renewable energy schemes in the neighbourhood area.

Justification

Renewable energy

- 6.24. Renewable energy is a source of power that comes from clean and natural resources. This means that it does not harm the environment around it, nor will it ever run dry.
- 6.25. The land in the parish is attracting solar energy developers. For example, potential for a solar farm up to 18 MW on land to the south of Staplehurst in Kent, to be known as “Mathurst Solar Farm” is actively being explored.
- 6.26. Within the neighbourhood area there is recognition and support for smaller-scale renewable projects, for instance, domestic and farm solar installations that utilise roof space, and air source and ground source heat pumps at a domestic or small-development level. The scale of such developments should not distract from nor negatively impact the setting of the village and smaller settlements.
- 6.27. Large-scale solar installations are less desirable, as they would detract significantly from the setting of the village across the valley, and from the view out from the ridgelines across farmland towards the North Downs. They would transform the rural character of the neighbourhood plan area and the visual relationship with neighbouring parishes.
- 6.28. The challenge for such schemes is that not all will be decided using the policies of the local development plan. Above a threshold (set out in Section 15 of the *Planning Act 2008*) of more than 50MW for onshore and more than 100MW for offshore generation, solar installations will be treated as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, for which a Development Consent Order must be sought from the Secretary of State.
- 6.29. The following factors were raised by the community that should be considered in parallel with the advice contained in MBC’s guidance: [Domestic and Medium Scale Solar PV Arrays \(up to 50KW\) and Solar Thermal \(2014\)](#) and [Large Scale \(>50KW\) Solar PV Arrays \(2014\)](#).
- The local community should be fully engaged to assist in shaping proposals.
 - Schemes that offer direct community benefits, for instance community energy schemes or contributions to electric bus schemes, would be welcomed.
 - The height, scale, orientation, and density of the panels should be designed to optimise solar gain while minimising impacts on the grazing capacity within a site, on biodiversity (if for instance less light can filter through) and on the visual impact from neighbouring properties and viewpoints further afield.
 - Natural screening should be used to minimise visual and noise impacts. This would include the retention of existing and the planting of new trees and hedgerows and also the provision of green buffers to the edges of installations. Consideration should be given to how the site will be viewed from all parts of the neighbourhood area, in

particular the ridgeline. If fencing is to be used, it should be camouflaged with natural planting to blend into the natural environment, where possible using natural materials and suitable colours if man-made. Industrial fencing will not be acceptable.

- Public Rights of Way are the responsibility of KCC. Where they cross proposed sites, they must be safeguarded. The neighbourhood area has a notably dense network of PRow footpaths, that is treasured as illustration of historic routes between parishes, farmsteads, and churches. Rerouting of paths (suitable for use by those on foot, bicycle or horseback) or the creation of additional paths may be supported, where this offers benefits in reaching community facilities, nearby villages (for instance to Marden) and the wider countryside. The County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan provides an opportunity to enshrine these routes in policy and ensure that they are safeguarded and well maintained.
- Opportunities to improve biodiversity must be taken and, where possible, to create and improve connectivity of habitats. Improvements should be accompanied by a management plan for the lifespan of the scheme and a system to measure that the improvements have happened over that period.

Community energy

- 6.30. Community energy refers to the delivery of community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by communities or through partnership with commercial or public sector partners. Community energy puts people at the heart of the energy system.
- 6.31. There could be scope for some community renewable energy projects, for example utilising waste from farming and land management together with local food waste to power an anaerobic digester, producing gas to power a community heat facility. This would be most cost-effective when a residential or small industrial development is being designed and built. Exemplar renewable energy projects in the neighbourhood area, which would benefit the community, relate well to its character and complement existing economic activities, would be supported.

POLICY S6: CONSERVING HERITAGE ASSETS

POLICY S6: CONSERVING HERITAGE ASSETS

- A. Designated Heritage Assets:** Development proposals affecting designated heritage assets (*Figure 8*), either directly or indirectly, should conserve or enhance the significance of the asset and those elements of the setting that contribute to the significance. This could include, where appropriate, the delivery of development that will make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the heritage asset, or reflect and enhance local character and distinctiveness with specific focus on the prevailing styles of design and use of materials in a local area. These details should be explained in a Heritage Statement.

In addition, development proposals should demonstrate that they have considered the potential impact on above and below ground archaeological deposits. Where a scheme has a potential impact on archaeological remains (below or above the ground), a Desk Based Assessment or similar should be prepared to address how archaeological deposits will be safeguarded.

- B. Non-designated Heritage Assets:** The following buildings and structures as shown on *Figures 9 to 14* and detailed in Appendix C are identified as non-designated heritage assets:

1. Blyth House, Chapel Lane
2. Victoria Works, Chapel Lane
3. Bly Court Cottages, Chapel Lane
4. Staplehurst Manor, Frittenden Road
5. Parish Rooms, Church Hill
6. War Memorial, Chickenden Lane
7. War Memorial, Grave Lane
8. The Quarter, Cranbrook Road
9. Iden Manor, Cranbrook Road
10. Herb Farm, Frittenden Road
11. Crossway, Five Ash Lane
12. Crowthers, High Street
13. The Bower, High Street
14. The Gables, Station Road
15. Market Stores, Station Road
16. Staplehurst Free Church, Station Road
17. Tower House, Maidstone Road
18. Milestone House, Maidstone Road
19. The Old Tollgate, Cross-at-Hand
20. United Reformed Church, High Street
21. Staplehurst Community Centre, High Street

Proposals affecting the non-designated heritage assets will be determined based on national planning policy.

- C. Conservation Area:** Development proposals in the Staplehurst Conservation Area should ensure that alterations and new developments contribute to the enhancement of the historic environment. Development within these areas and their settings should:

- i. be guided by the [Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal](#) and
- ii. be designed to a high quality and preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Areas and their settings; and
- iii. retain those buildings and other features, including trees and hedges, which make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Areas; and
- iv. protect open spaces and vistas important to the character and setting of the Conservation Areas; and
- v. where appropriate, make provision for the enhancement measures.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 4; MLPR: LPRSP14(B), LPRENV1; NPPF (2024): 135, 202, 203, 207, 212-217

Purpose

- 6.32. This policy recognises the important contribution that heritage assets – designated and non-designated – make to the local character and distinctiveness of Staplehurst, both individually and collectively. Where possible, they should be conserved, enhanced and celebrated.

Justification

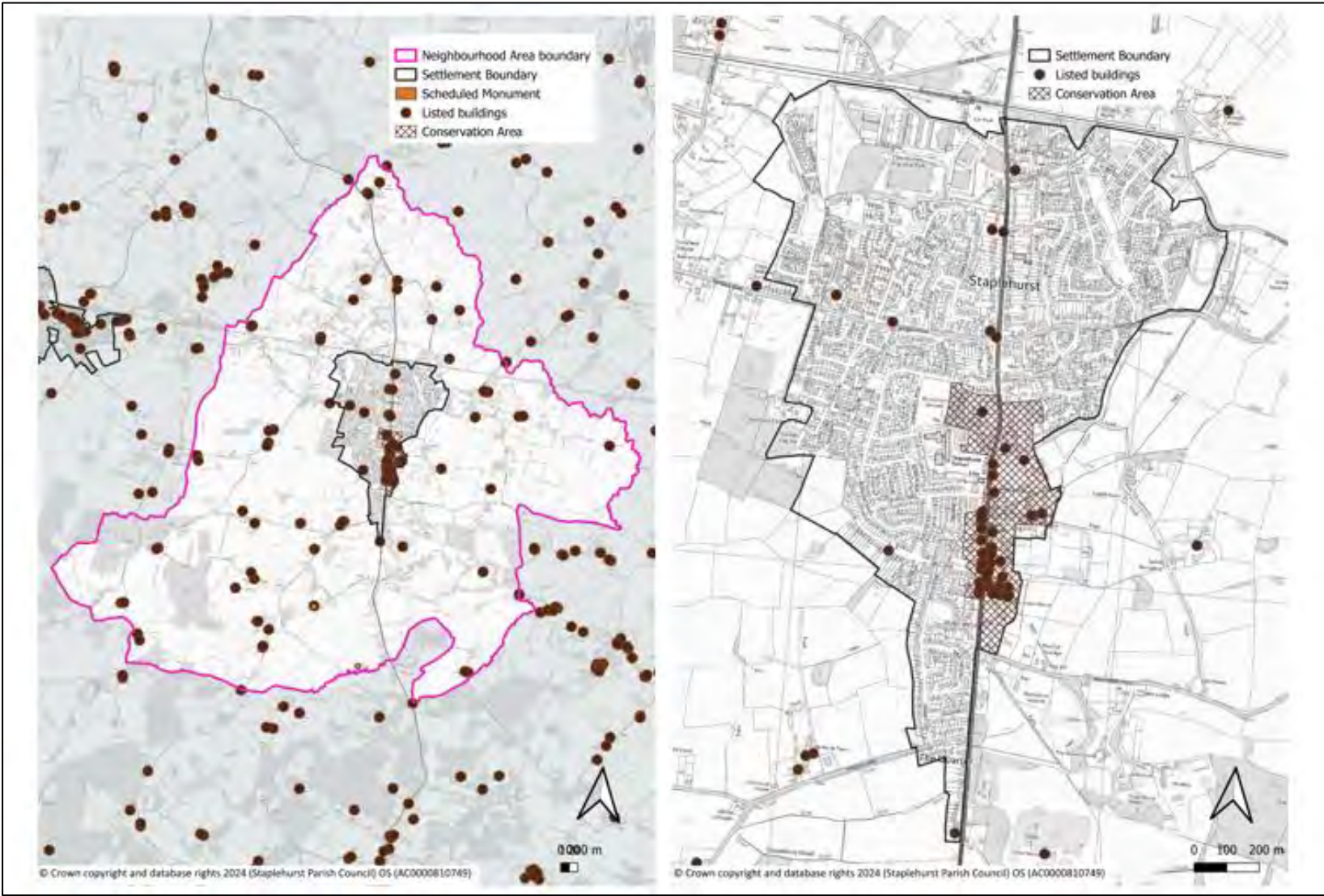
- 6.33. There are two Scheduled Monuments in the Parish: Medieval moated site, Lovehurst Manor and Moot Mound 400m west of Knox Bridge.
- 6.34. There are 110 individual/groups of buildings and assets in Staplehurst parish today that are recognised through a listing for their contribution to national heritage. Designated heritage assets are shown on *Figure 8*.
- 6.35. There are many other heritage assets, however, that contribute to the historic local context and story of the parish, but which are not nationally important enough to be included on the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Government.
- 6.36. There are also a number of local listed buildings that have identified by MBC including Tar Pit Chimneys (adjacent to Footpath KM318) and a series of assets in the Conservation Area.
- 6.37. Much of the central part of Staplehurst village is within the Conservation Area and an updated [Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal](#) was adopted in November 2024.
- 6.38. The National Planning Practice Guidance supports the identification of non-designated heritage assets through the neighbourhood planning process (Paragraph 018-039). An audit of local buildings and assets was undertaken to determine non-designated heritage assets, recognising their value to the local character and history of the parish. The assets named in the policy have been identified with photographs and descriptions provided in Appendix C:
- 6.39. *Figures 9 to 14* show the location of the assets on a map. This list is not exhaustive and additional assets may be identified.
- 6.40. In addition, the [Historic Environment Record](#) contains details of additional assets, some of which are not nationally listed. The record should be consulted by prospective developers and subject to Policy S6.

- 6.41. In parallel with this policy, it is proposed that the identified non-designated heritage assets are considered by MBC for inclusion on their list of local heritage assets. However, the inclusion of any building or structure on such a register is not necessary for the application of this policy.

Local Heritage at Risk

- 6.42. Historic England produces an annual Register of Heritage at Risk. Outside of London it does not include Grade II listings, apart from churches. MBC maintains its own [‘Buildings at risk’ Register](#). Whilst there are currently no entries for Staplehurst, this should be monitored by the Parish Council in consultation with the Staplehurst Society and MBC.
- 6.43. Opportunities to restore assets should be taken when they arise, in partnership with the owner.

Figure 8: Designated heritage assets in the parish



Map of the settlement boundary and non-designated heritage assets in the area of The Quarter, Spilsall, and Iden.

Legend:

- Settlement Boundary (Black line)
- Non-designated heritage asset (Red diamond)

Numbered Non-designated Heritage Assets:

- 1: Church Lane
- 2: Willow House
- 3: Chapel Lane
- 4: Iden Croft
- 5: Hall
- 8: The Quarter
- 9: Iden Manor
- 10: Nursery

Other Features:

- Buildings: Willow House, Chapel Lane, Hall, Eccleston House, The Old Vicarage, Ppg Sta, Recreation Ground, The Dower House, Iden Croft, Staplehurst Manor, Iden Manor Farm, Winthrop Hall, Lake House, St Martins on the Hill, Oak House, Iden Lodge.
- Roads: Church Lane, Chapel Lane, Bell Lane, Church Green, Hallwards, Hammer Win, Drankook Road, Frittenden Road, Spillsall Bungalow, Track.
- Green Spaces: Recreation Ground, Lake House, Sluice, Path.
- Other: PW, PO, PW20, PW, Spills, Spillsall, Drain, 24m, 22m, 26m, 34m, 36m.

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Figure 10: Non-designated heritage assets in the parish (numbered as per the policy)

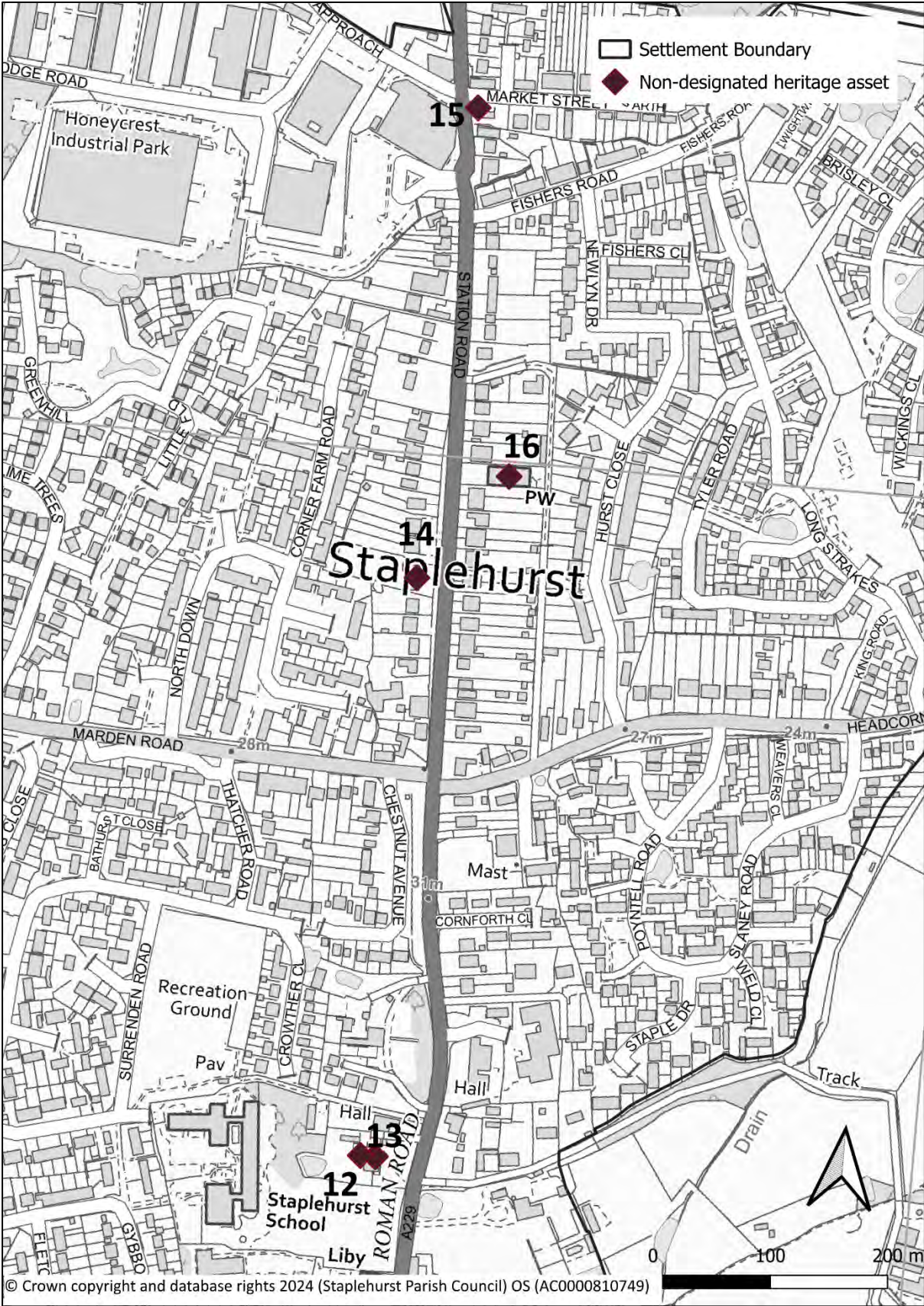


Figure 11: Non-designated heritage assets in the parish (numbered as per the policy)

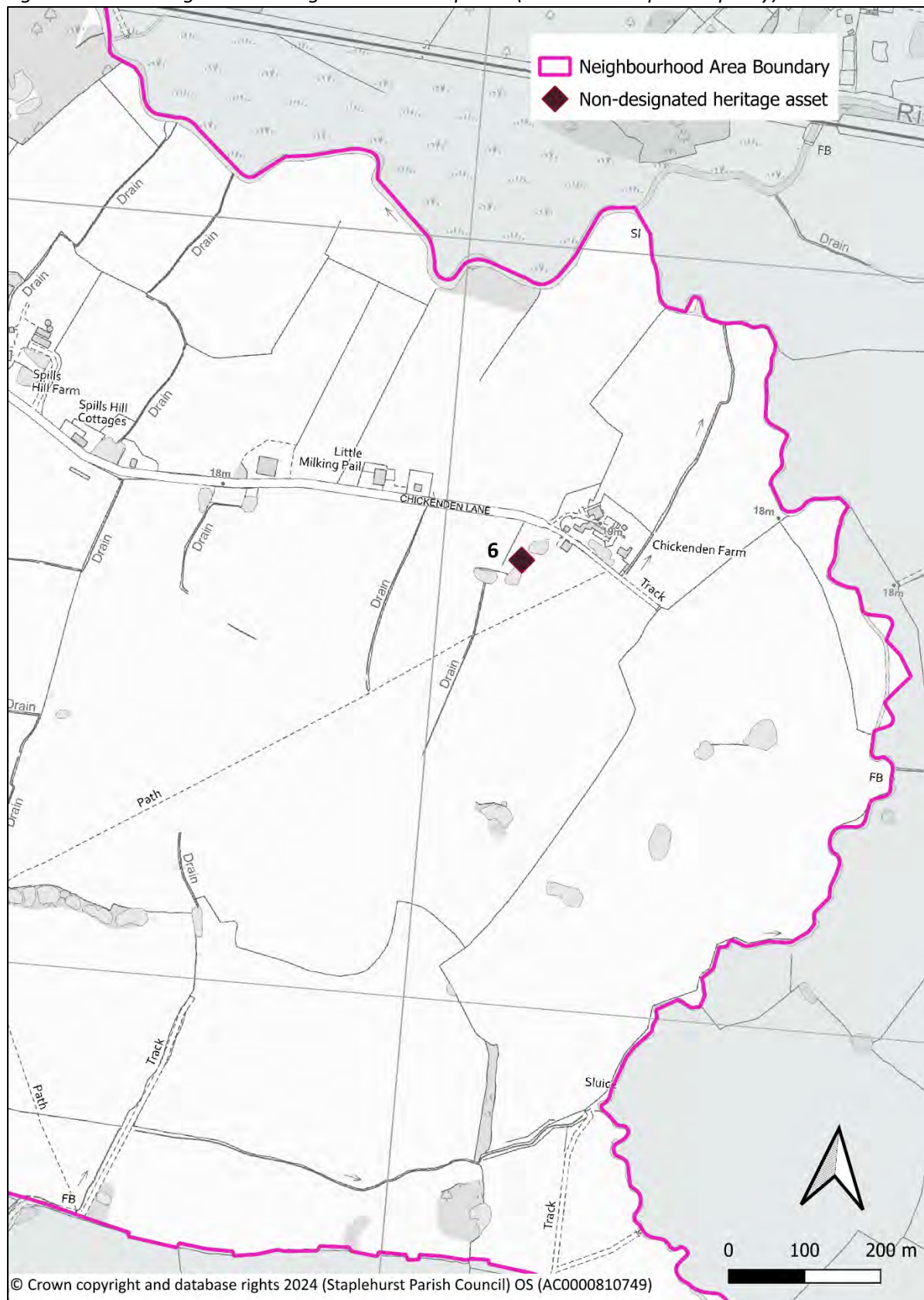


Figure 12: Non-designated heritage assets in the parish (numbered as per the policy)

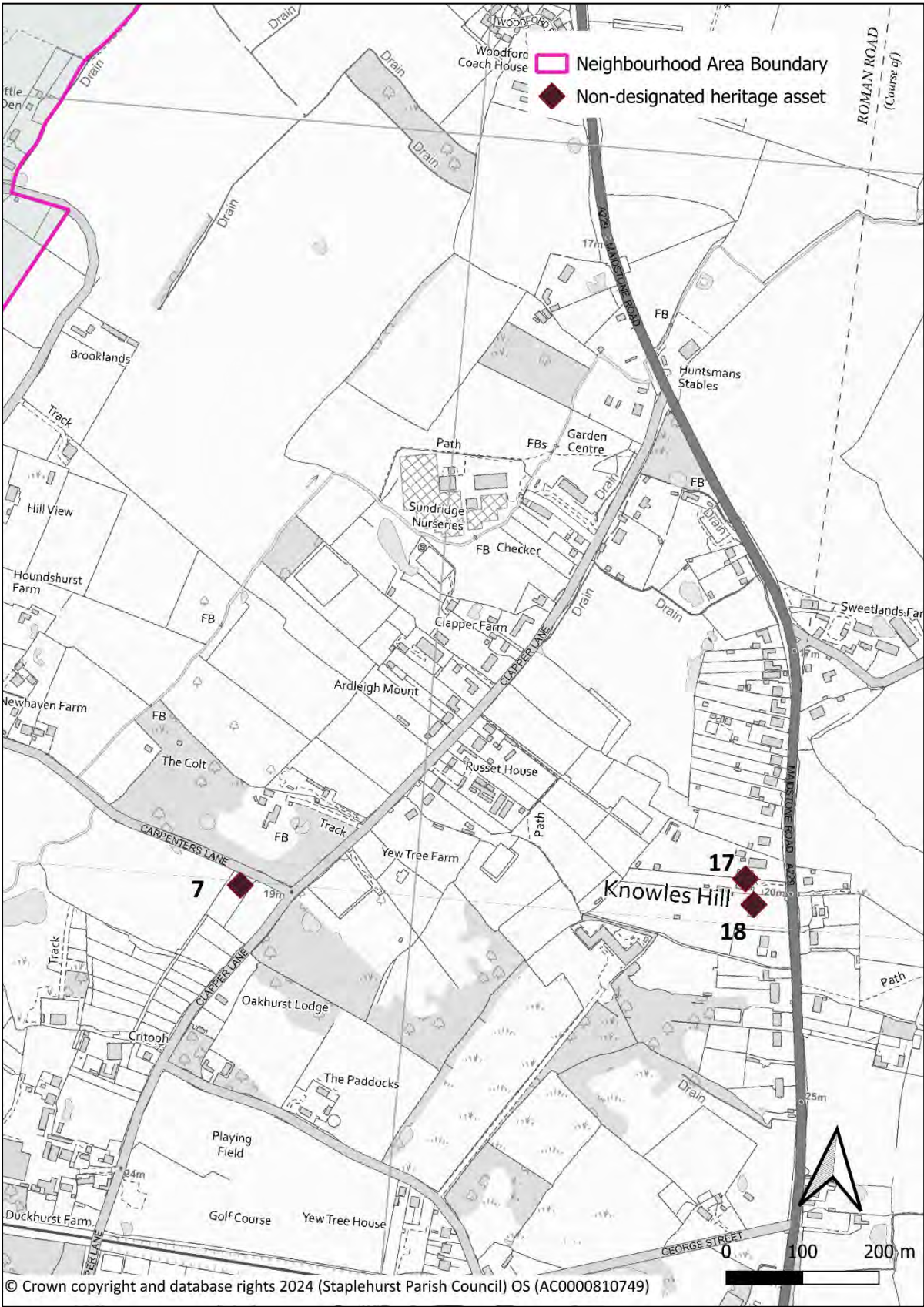
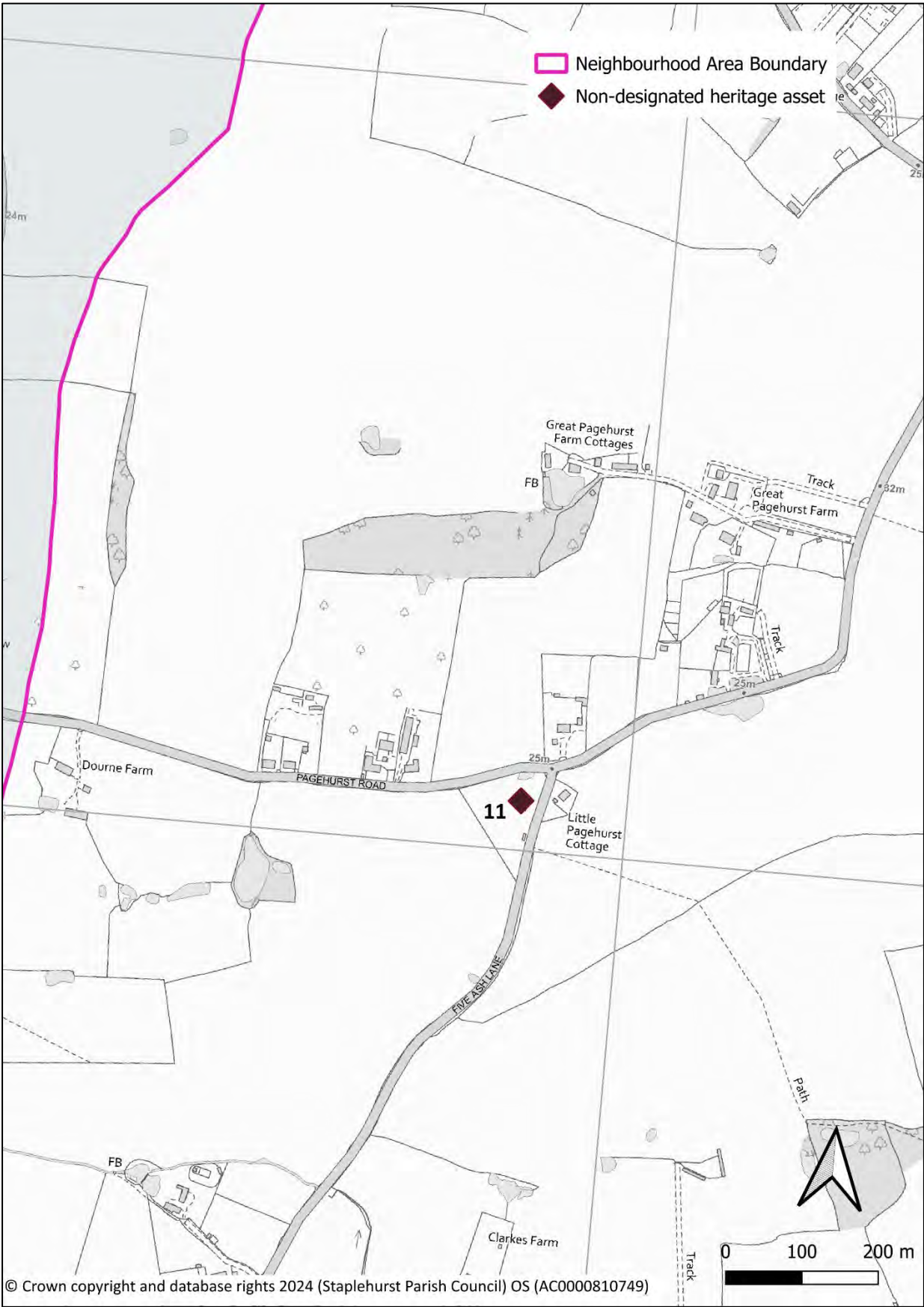


Figure 13: Non-designated heritage assets in the parish (numbered as per the policy)



This map illustrates the Neighbourhood Area Boundary, outlined in pink, and a Non-designated heritage asset, marked with a red diamond and the number 19. The heritage asset is located near The Shirley. The map also shows various geographical features such as Monk Lake, Cross-at-Hand Farm, Fleet Farm, and the Roman Road (Course of). Other labels include Home Farm, Garden Centre, Chaney Court Farm, River Farm, Little Rabbits, Chart Hill Paddock, Kencol Farm, Woodford Coach House, Depot, and Huntsmans Stables. The map includes a scale bar (0 to 200 m) and a north arrow.

7. LOCAL ECONOMY AND VILLAGE CENTRE

POLICY S7: VIBRANT VILLAGE CORE

POLICY S7: VIBRANT VILLAGE CORE

- A. Insofar as planning permission is required, development proposals which protect, enhance and promote a diverse range of village centre uses (Uses C1, E, F1, F2 and sui generis) including retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural and community will be supported.

Upper floor residential

- B. Insofar as planning permission is required, proposals for the residential use of underused upper floors will be supported. Where appropriate, such proposals should retain independent access arrangements to the upper floors.

Existing retail premises

- C. The permanent change of use of Classes C1, E, F1, F2 and sui generis to other uses will only be supported where the following can be demonstrated:
- i. the proposed use will maintain the vitality and viability of Staplehurst village centre;
 - ii. the premises in question have not been in continuous active use for at least 12 consecutive months; and
 - iii. the premises has no potential for either reoccupation as demonstrated through the results both of a full viability report and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least 6 months.

Temporary uses

- D. The use of Class E, F1 and F2 premises for temporary uses will be supported. Such uses include 'pop up' shops and cultural, creative and leisure uses introduced on a temporary basis or for specific events.
- E. Such uses must demonstrate that they will not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses, particularly residential through excessive noise and pollution.
- F. Such uses will generally not be considered appropriate if the operation of the business requires such large amounts of vehicle parking in order to function unless sufficient parking arrangements have been presented.

Re-use of historic buildings

- G. The reuse of historic buildings within the village centre for activities that will enhance its vitality and viability (including community uses, eating places, retail, or business) will be particularly supported.

Public realm

- H. Development proposals to enhance the public realm in the village centre will be supported where this will not result in the demolition of or significant detrimental impact to existing heritage assets. Proposals which enhance the pedestrian experience will be supported including:
- i. the widening of pavements;
 - ii. the provision of cycling facilities, such as secure and covered cycle parking;

- iii. **reinforcing the distinctive character of the village area, as set out in Policy S3 (Design and character of development) including through the use of planting, seating, installation of public art, celebrating the heritage and history of the parish and maintaining the landmark corner buildings; and**
- iv. **providing improved wayfinding and signage for the parish, to improve pedestrian links between the village centre, railway station, library, primary school, health centre, youth club, church and the Jubilee Field area to the east.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 6; MLPR: LPRSP6(f), LPRSP11, LPRHOU3, LPRCD1, LPRQD3; NPPF (2024): 85, 88, 89, 90, 96, 98, 101, 111a, 125e, 131-136, 141

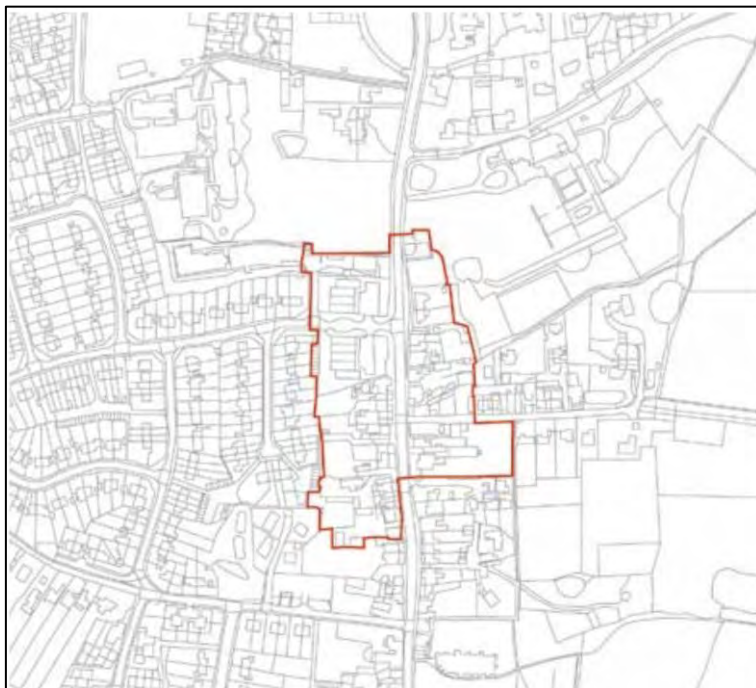
Purpose

- 7.1. This policy seeks to support uses that will enable an economically vibrant, mixed-use village core in Staplehurst, attracting additional footfall to the village centre, enhancing the historic environment, improving the look and feel and improving accessibility.

Justification

- 7.2. The historic core of the village is located between the crossroads and the All Saints' Church on top of the hill (*Figure 15*). To the north, lies the Station Road character area of brick villas fronting the road. These two areas contain most of the village's essential services and facilities and can be described as the "spine of Staplehurst", providing a distinctive character, structure and definition to the village.
- 7.3. Community facilities in the Village core include the parish office, health centre, the library and the churches. There is also the commercial activity at the parade of shops, a variety of shops on the opposite side of the road, a cafe and the pub. Together, all these uses give life and vitality to the village.

Figure 15: Village core of Staplehurst



- 7.4. The local engagement has revealed a keen desire to improve the village core. Priorities for include:
- 7.5. Supporting uses that will enable an economically vibrant, mixed-use village centre: Locally, there is a desire to strengthen and enhance the cluster of village core use. Priorities include:
- Supporting the provision of activities and facilities that lend themselves to improving the viability of the village core (community, cultural, retail, health, education etc.).
 - Safeguarding existing community facilities and retail so as not to erode the village core. This will include limiting conversions to residential.
 - Ensuring that proposals for development or alteration to retail units in the village core conserve or enhance its historic character.
 - Supporting residential uses at first floor level and above (where this is accessible and adaptable to changing needs) provided there is no adverse impact on the highway. This will help to encourage footfall into the village core, without compromising the use of ground floor units.
- 7.6. Improve the look and feel of the public areas: Several of the buildings can also be made more attractive and visible to passers-by especially the centre of the village / the Parade. Priorities include:
- Supporting the maintenance of village core buildings, in line with the principles set out in the Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal.
 - Supporting opportunities for new or replacement tree planting in the street scene. These should be selected to reflect native species, colour etc.

- Installing public art that reinforces local identity.

7.7. Signage and accessibility: The close proximity of many of the essential village services (school, library, Parish Office, youth club, health centre and churches within the village core itself, lends itself to encouraging a pedestrian-first approach. Priorities include:

- Improving access into and within the village core, for instance by widening pavements to enable walking and those with mobility aids and/or pushchairs.
- Improving wayfinding between the village core and residential areas and the railway station.
- Improving connectivity by foot to the facilities further afield, notably the cluster of facilities at Jubilee Field to the east. This latter location is considered less accessible than the village core itself and so will have a greater emphasis on outdoor recreation, sports facilities and uses that need large areas of open space. The result will be an area that complements the uses in the village heart.
- Restricting signs to those which convey essential information to reduce street clutter.
- Promoting accessibility, for instance by applying the guidance contained in the RTP1's guidance aimed at planning neighbourhoods for those living with dementia as well as measures to assist other disabilities.
- Designing signage to be accessible and reinforce local character. Further guidance is available from Historic England's booklet Web link is [Streets for All: South East](#)

7.8. As the village grows, with new housing sites being built on the outer edges of the current village, some distance from the existing retail offer, it may be necessary to provide a greater range of convenience shops and services in closer proximity to its resident population if the village is to have a sustainable future. Without this, many residents may choose to leave the village, often by car, to access such facilities.

POLICY S8: RAILWAY STATION GATEWAY AREA

POLICY S8: RAILWAY STATION GATEWAY AREA

Proposals to improve the railway station area will be supported, where they can demonstrate that they would lead to improvements to the public realm in this area, enhance the visual approach, increase footfall and vitality and physical connectivity to the village from the north and integrate access for walking (and wheeling) and bicycle riders to link to nearby residential areas.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 3, 7; MLPR: LPRSP6(f), LPRSP12; NPPF (2024): 109, 111

Purpose

- 7.9. This policy is retained with amendments from the previous SNP. It supports the enhancement of the area around the railway station, as a key gateway into the village.

Justification

- 7.10. Staplehurst railway station is on the main line from London via Tonbridge to Ashford and has a half-hourly off-peak service of trains from London to Dover or Ramsgate, with a more frequent service during peak periods.
- 7.11. It plays a pivotal gateway role to the village and its presence is one reason why Staplehurst has been given Rural Service Centre status by the Maidstone Borough Council. It also provides an important facility for residents of the new housing developments in Hawkhurst, Hartley, Cranbrook, Benenden, Frittenden, Sissinghurst, Coxheath, Loose, Boughton Monchelsea and Sutton Valence, many of whom use Staplehurst as their nearest station. Enhancing access to this wider geographic area will assist in reducing commuter traffic on the A229.
- 7.12. Nevertheless, the approach from the railway station has largely been dominated by surface car parks and areas of scrappy under-utilised land (*Figure 16*). The area lacks a positive identity and fails to create a welcoming gateway to Staplehurst for those arriving by train.
- 7.13. The railway station is a daily destination for regular commuters heading away from Staplehurst and this to and from movement can add life to the area if utilised in the right way. Past discussions have included the rationalisation of the car parking, from all being surface level to a multi-deck arrangement, which would maintain car parking availability but free up land for more productive uses.
- 7.14. The overall look and feel of the railway station gateway remains a local subject of debate. As a whole, the under-utilised nature of the area, dominated by surface car parking, leaves a poor impression on both first-time visitors and regular users of this part of the village. However, the presence of the station and the fairly recent addition of a factory for DK Holdings shows the area has good commercial and economic opportunities and these can be leveraged to deliver a better public realm.
- 7.15. Section 106 contributions from residential developments (Hen and Duckhurst Farm, Marden Road (now David Wilson Homes) 14/502010/OUT: £1429 per housing unit (index linked); Fisher's Farm, Headcorn Road (Bovis) 14/505432/FULL: £238,643 (index linked); and Fisher's

Farm, Headcorn Road (Redrow) 15/510186/FULL: £264,365 (index linked)) are allocated for improvements to the railway station to be undertaken by Network Rail.

- 7.16. Network Rail's proposed new layout includes a large island outside the main station building between the two large car parks, which would also include what will be for presumably short drop off/pick up waiting. The proposed installation of low growing shrubs is not supported locally, as from experience with the planting between Platform 1 and the original car park, there is no maintenance done and the shrubs just grow and get out of hand.
- 7.17. The Neighbourhood Plan would support new commercial activity around the station, like small business units, shops or services and cafés all focused on a new market square could provide the positive new welcome that Staplehurst deserves. The scale of development here will be constrained though to ensure the protection and on-going viability of the existing retail centre in the village core (see Policy S6).
- 7.18. There have been discussions about what could be delivered here, including the provision of bicycle hubs, information signs, a refurbished footbridge and installation of electric vehicle charging points.
- 7.19. The Neighbourhood Plan would support new commercial activity around the station, like small business units, shops or services and cafés. The scale of development here will be constrained though to ensure the protection and on-going viability of the existing retail centre in the village core (see Policy S6).
- 7.20. 7.19. Retail Investment: The station area is close to the two large areas of land to the east and the west of the village which have been the location of the majority of the new housing growth. This would make it an accessible location by walking and cycling to new residents and therefore a sustainable location for new retail and associated services.
- 7.21. 7.20. The southern part of the site includes a supermarket, and other parts of the station environs could provide further retail units or associated services. The site's proximity to the railway station means there are excellent opportunities for retail and business spaces to trade off the footfall generated by the station.
- 7.22. Connectivity: It is vital that any improvements to the railway station enable connectivity to the rest of the village and nearby residential areas. The shortest walking route from most of Staplehurst west of the A229 to the railway is along the west side of Lodge Road. Pedestrians following this route would cross the western arm of the roundabout, and the only arm that does not have a designated pedestrian crossing. It would be desirable to improve the pavement along the first part of Lodge Road (e.g. with dropped kerbs at the entrance to Acorn Hire) and a zebra crossing in Lodge Road (just round the corner) connecting with Dutrepont's Walk. Further pedestrian crossings at Station Approach and on the railway's own approach road inside the stone setts would be helpful. These improvements would facilitate walking to the station and would make the station more accessible for passengers with reduced mobility. This area has the potential to provide a new civic space (e.g. a village "market square") together with small-scale retail and other commercial opportunities. The station area is an important gateway entrance to the village through which a large number of people pass every

day. This plan policy has a very high level of support from the local community and implementation will be a key part of the delivery of the Rural Service Centre concept.

- 7.23. Overall, the Parish Council will continue to work closely with partners to develop a realistic plan that can deliver some of the aspirations set out above.

8. ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACE

POLICY S9: LOCAL GREEN SPACE

POLICY S9: LOCAL GREEN SPACE

The following sites are designated as local green space as shown on *Figures 16 to 20*:

- LGS1: Village Golf Club and Sports Club**
- LGS2: Hen and Duckhurst Allotments**
- LGS3: Jenkins Way, Pond and Walkway**
- LGS4: Dickens Gate - Wildlife Area**
- LGS5: Dickens Gate – The Meadow**
- LGS6: Dickens Gate – central space**
- LGS7: Greenhill playground and open space**
- LGS8: Tomlin Close/ North Down**
- LGS9: Jeffery Close Green Space**
- LGS10: North Down Green Space**
- LGS11: Jeffery Close/ Oliver Road Green Space**
- LGS12: Stanley Close Green Space**
- LGS13: Pope Drive/ Reeves Close Green Space**
- LGS14: Land between Chestnut Avenue and High Street**
- LGS15: Surrenden Field**
- LGS16: Bathurst Road Green Spaces**
- LGS17: Oliver Road Nature Reserve**
- LGS18: Bell Lane Nature Reserve**
- LGS19: Church Green**
- LGS20: All Saints' Church Yard and Church Yard extension**
- LGS21: Cricket and Tennis Club**
- LGS22: Parisfield Close Green Space**
- LGS23: Youth Club Green Space**
- LGS24: Staple Drive Play Area**
- LGS25: Slaney Road Green Space**
- LGS26: Ponytell Pond and surrounds cluster (a, b and c)**
- LGS27: Area of trees and shrubs at junction of Weld Close and Slaney Road**
- LGS28: Long Strakes ponds (a and b)**
- LGS29: Play Area between Staple Drive and Ponytell Road**

LGS30: Jubilee Field

LGS31: Open space to the east of Tyler Road

LGS32: Green space alongside Long Strakes and Jull Close

LGS33: End of Long Strakes beside Fishers Road open space

LGS34: Railway Line ponds Green Space

LGS35: Green Space near railway line

LGS36: Land at bottom of George Smith Close

LGS37: Great Threads

LGS38: Brisley Brook

LGS39: Long Strakes Green Space

LGS40: Long Strakes Play Area

LGS41: Green Space adjacent to Slade Drive

LGS42: Great Threads ponds

LGS43: Little Threads

LGS44: Footpath from Great Threads to Little Threads

Development proposals within the designated local green spaces will be consistent with national policy for Green Belt.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 2; MLPR: LPRSP14(A); NPPF (2024): 106 to 108, 153 to 160

Purpose

- 8.1. The policy designates Local Green Spaces within Staplehurst that are demonstrably special to the local community.

Justification

- 8.2. Under the NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans can designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to the community. This will afford them protection from development other than in very special circumstances. The NPPF states that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is: in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- 8.3. A survey of green spaces in Staplehurst was undertaken by the Steering Group. Building on feedback from the local community via the surveys and workshops, they reviewed the green spaces across the Parish to ascertain whether they might be suitable for designation as a Local Green Space. *Figures 16 to 20* show the location of each of the Local Green Spaces. Detailed maps of each space are shown in Appendix D along with details as to how they each meet the NPPF criteria.

Figure 16: Local Green Spaces (1-7)

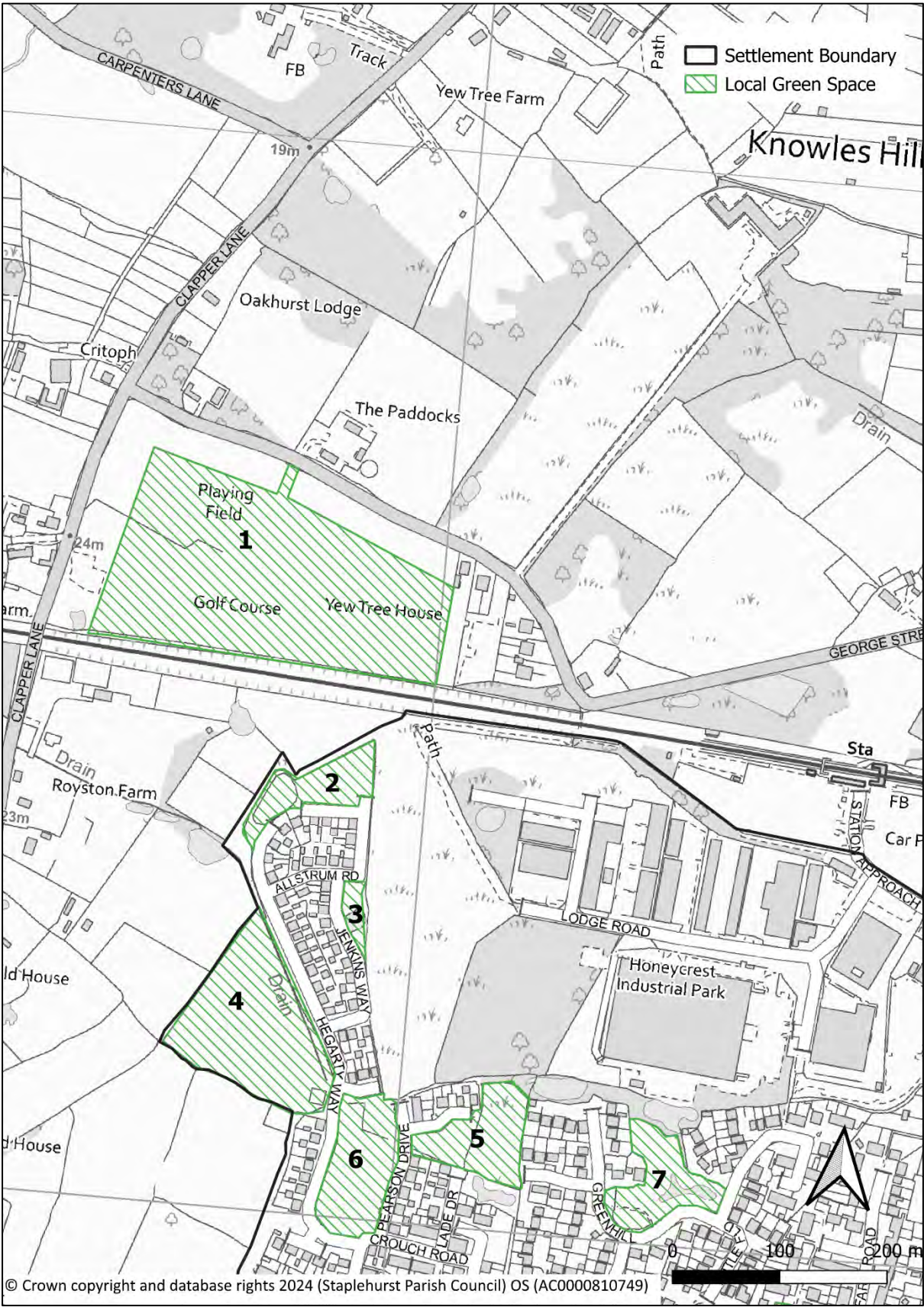


Figure 17: Local Green Spaces (8 to 19) (red line demonstrates a cluster of spaces)

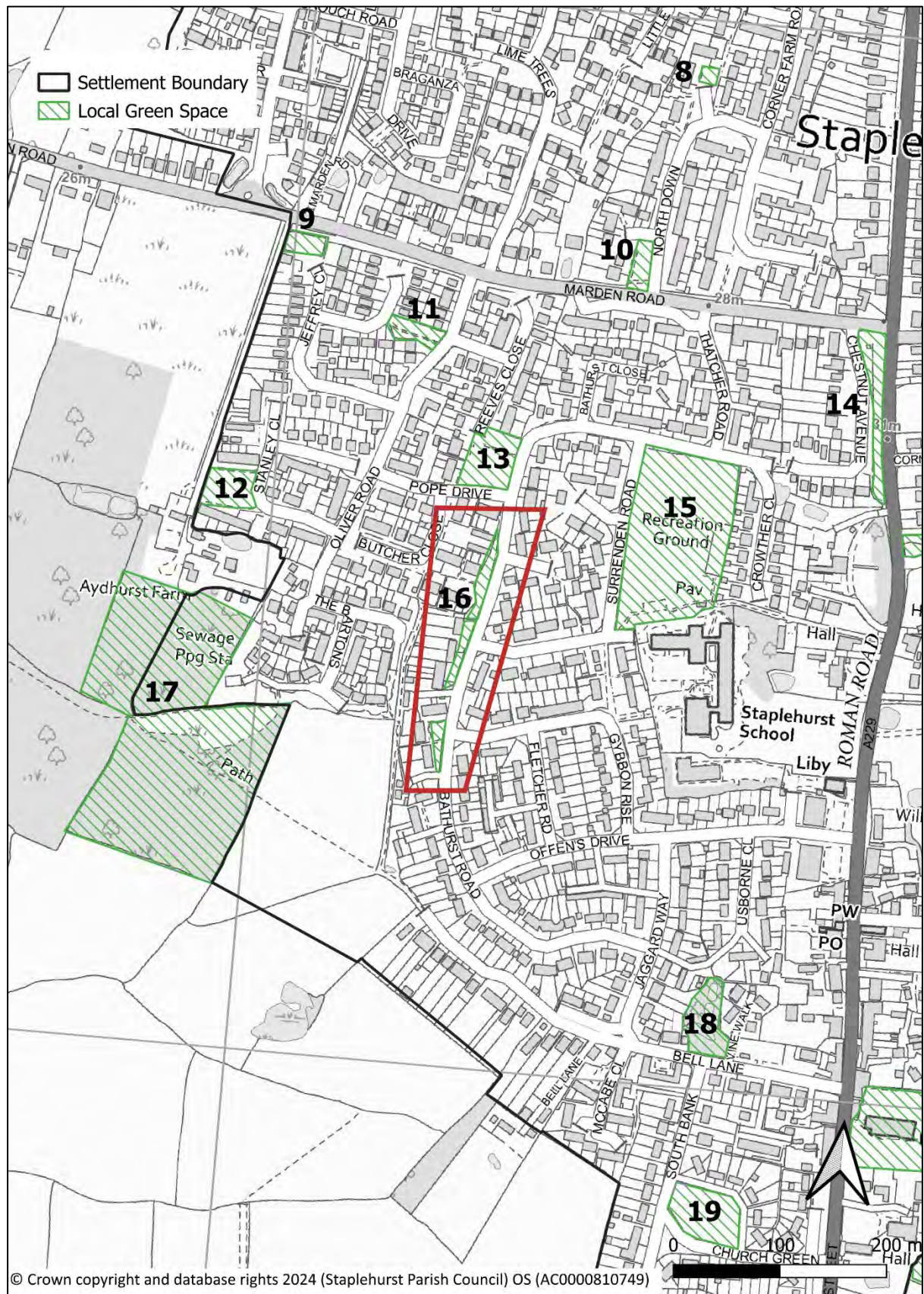


Figure 18: Local Green Space – 16 and 18 to 21

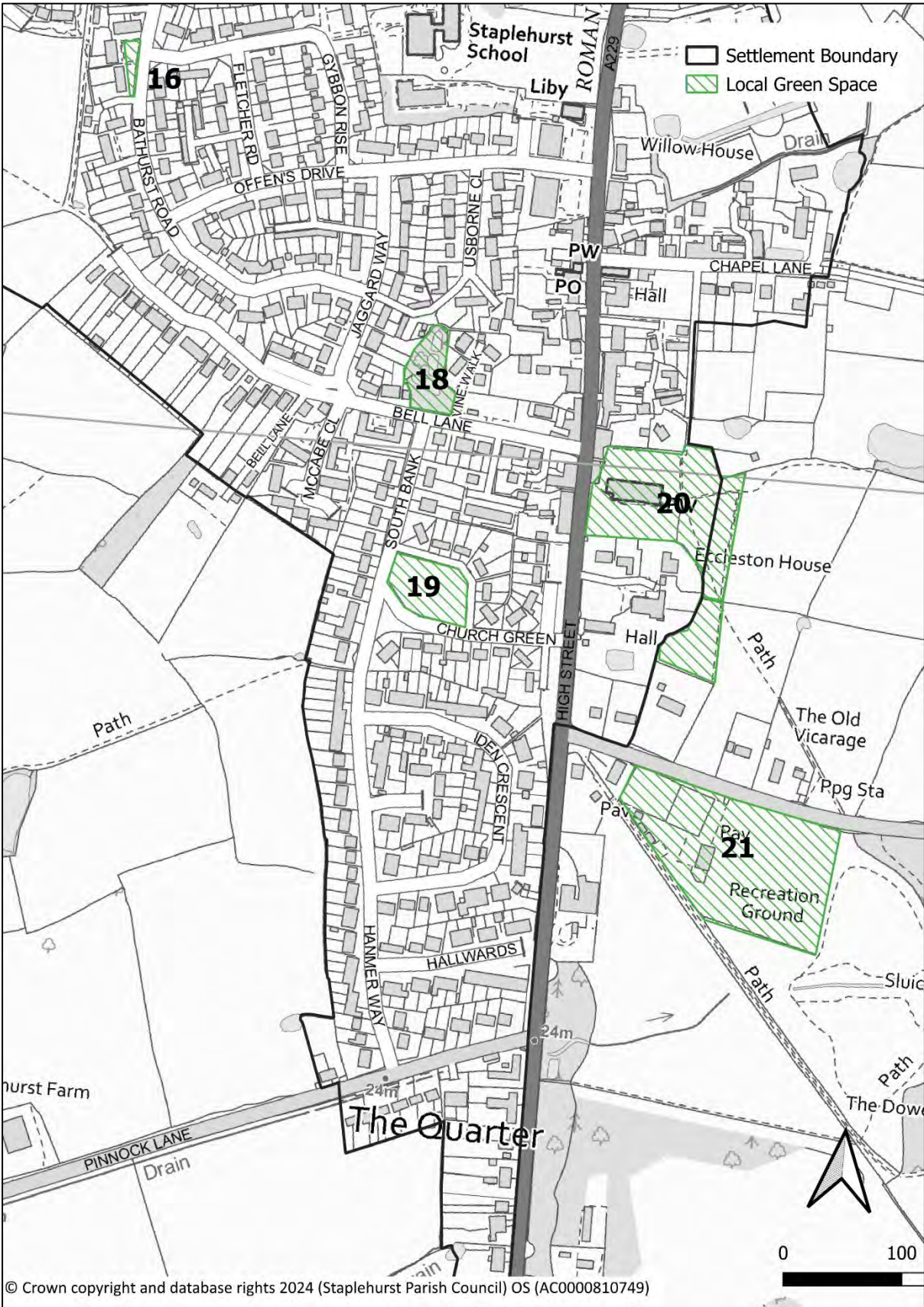


Figure 19: Local Green Spaces – 22 to 44 (red line demonstrates a cluster of spaces)

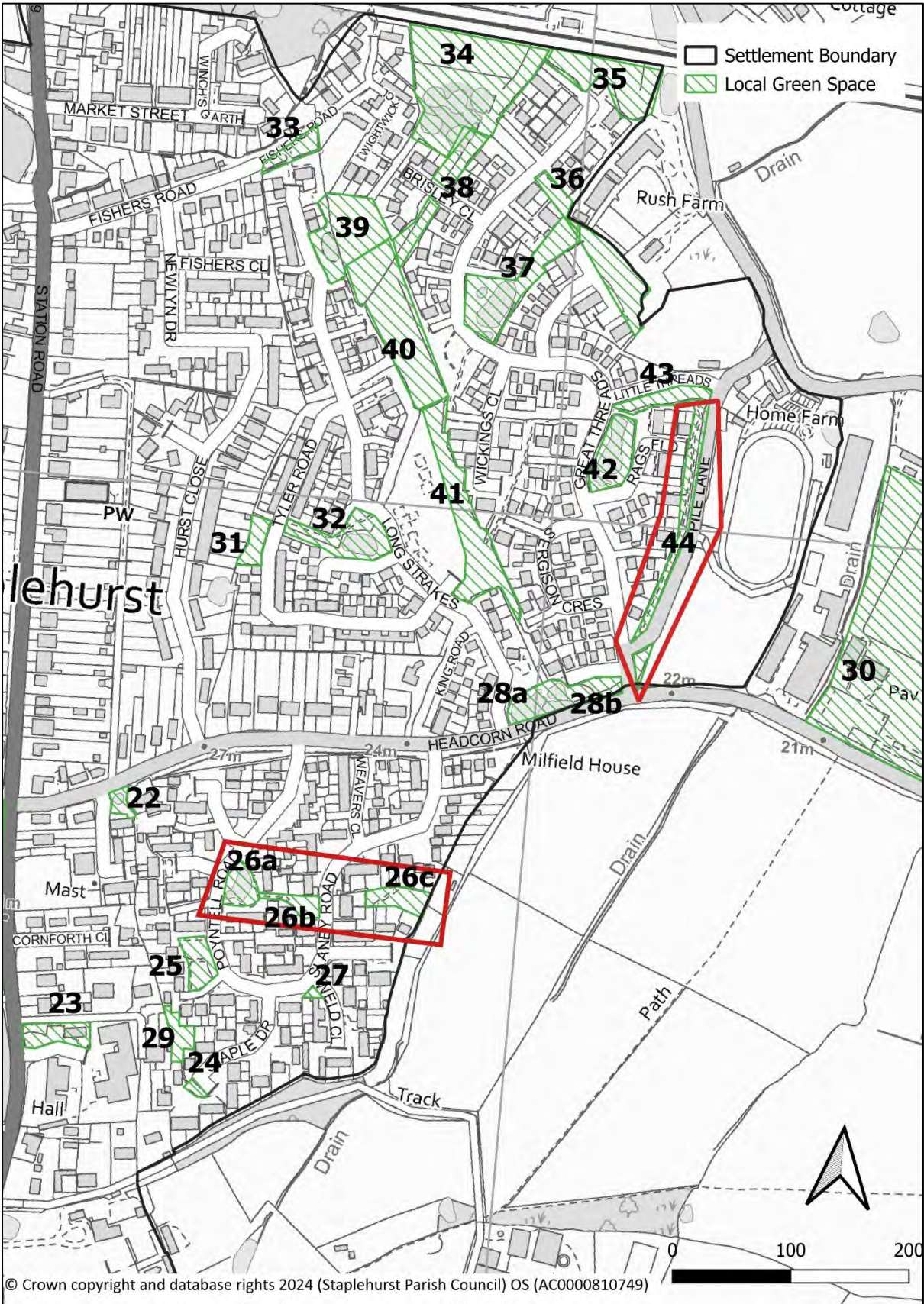
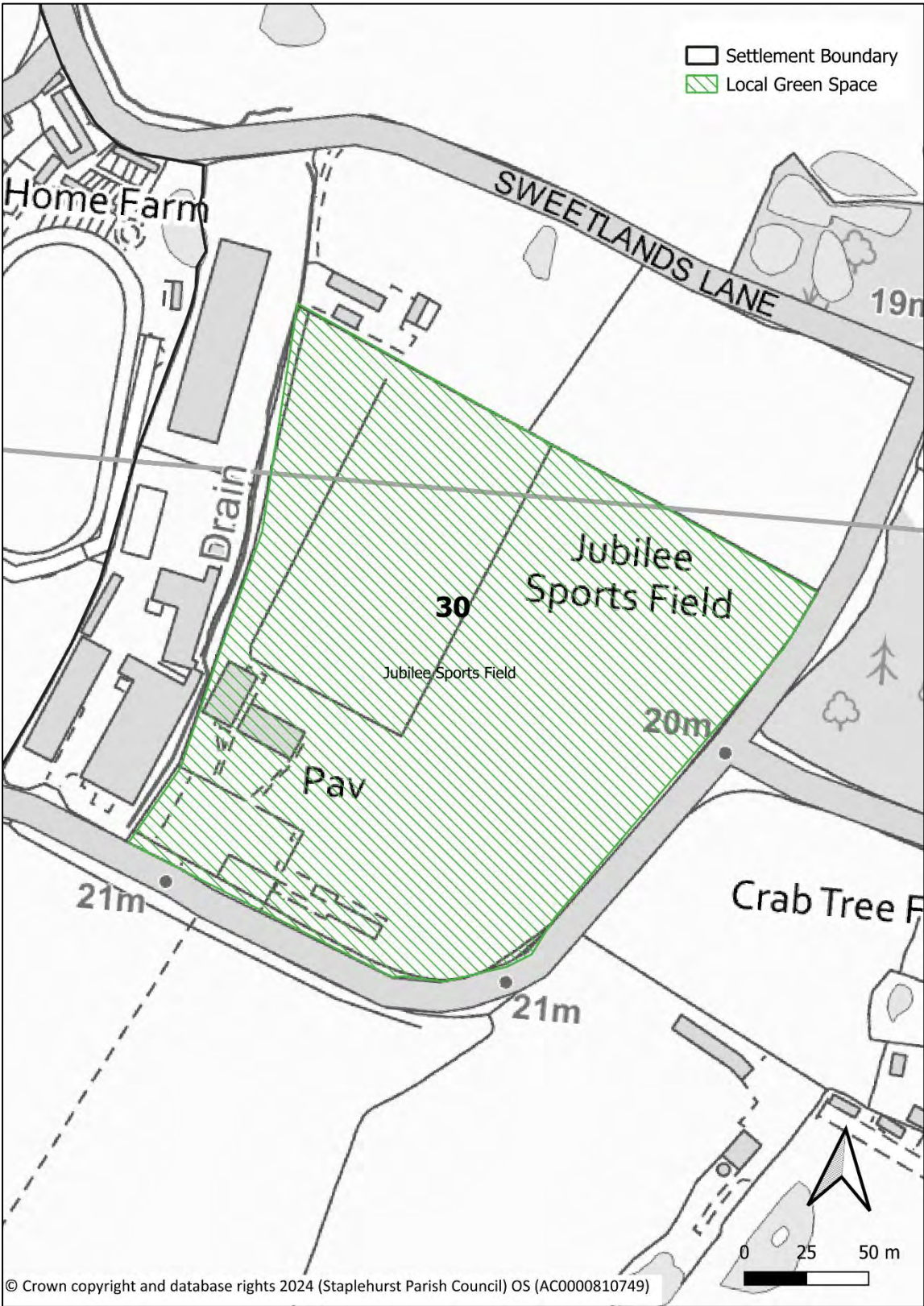


Figure 20: Local Green Space - 30



POLICY S10: LANDSCAPE, ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

POLICY S10: LANDSCAPE, ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity net gain:

- A. Where biodiversity net gain units cannot be delivered on site, they should be prioritised for use within the parish, focusing on maintaining and improving identified biodiversity opportunity areas.

Landscape and environment:

- B. Development proposals should maintain, enhance the natural environment, landscape features and the rural character and setting of the neighbourhood area. Where possible, development proposals should seek to incorporate natural features typical of the parish, for instance ponds, fruit trees, orchards, verges and trees.
- C. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should contribute to the delivery of the [Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan](#) and the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and demonstrate that they have addressed the following matters:

Trees and woodland:

- i. There should be no unacceptable loss of, or damage to, existing trees or woodlands during or as a result of development. Ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees must not be removed except in exceptional circumstances and in that case they should be replaced with trees of a similar potential size and native species elsewhere on the site, unless this is clearly not possible.
- ii. where trees and/or shrubs are replaced with new plantings, native or locally appropriate varieties attractive to insects, birds and other wildlife must be used.
- iii. all priority habitats and mature trees must have a minimum buffer of complimentary habitat of 10m, and more if required (for instance ancient woodland or veteran trees require a minimum buffer of 15m).
- iv. where arboricultural work is required to a veteran/mature/notable tree (as defined by the Woodland Trust), the tree should be safeguarded and maintained in a way which responds positively to the condition of the trees and its location within the overall development.
- v. include additional native woodland planting with a specific focus in areas with public access.

Hedgerows

- vi. natural boundaries (i.e. hedgerows in preference to fencing) are supported.
- vii. avoid the loss of, or the deterioration in the quality of, hedgerows. Where access points to new development involves the loss of a section of hedgerow, the access should include trees at either end of the retained hedgerow to aid wildlife to cross overhead from crown to crown.

Wildlife-friendly features:

- viii. provide suitable wildlife-friendly features (such as hedgehog holes in new residential fencing and bird and bat nesting boxes, swift boxes).
- ix. retained front gardens or made use of permeable materials if resurfacing.

- D. Wherever practicable development proposals should seek to incorporate open space that:

- comprises features typical of the parish (ponds, trees, hillocks);
- is in usable parcels of land and not fragmented;
- is safe, easily accessible, and not severed by any physical barrier;
- is accessible to the public;
- creates a safe environment considering lighting and layout; and
- is complemented by high quality landscaping.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 2; MLPR: LPRSP14(A); NPPF (2024): 135, 136, 187-195

Purpose

- 8.4. This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals have considered how they can enhance the natural environment – both flora and fauna – including the features of it that are particularly distinctive to Staplehurst. It also seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute to the provision of adequate open space.

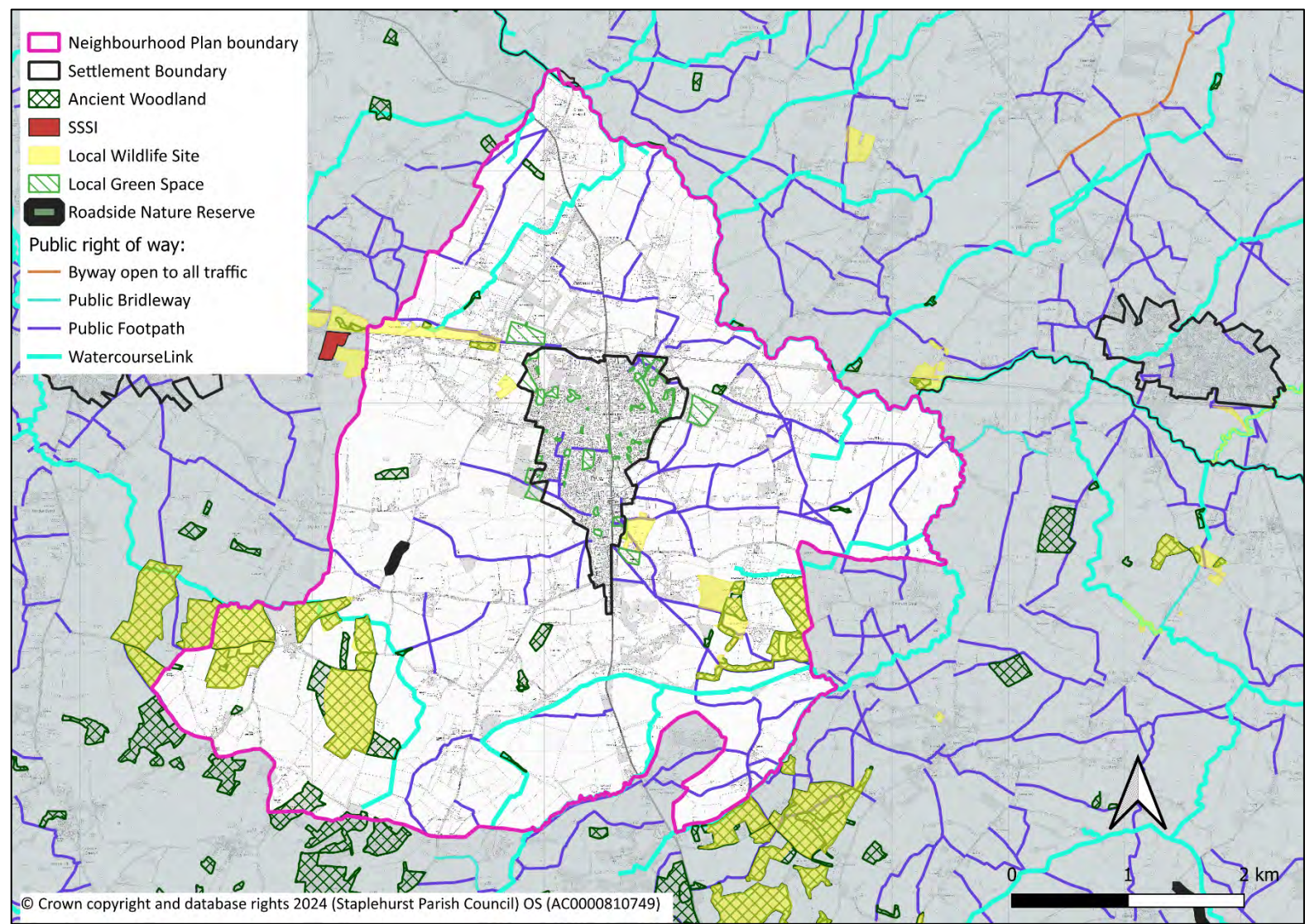
Justification

- 8.5. National policy states that planning groups should take a positive approach to conserving and better connecting green and blue spaces and wildlife corridors and promoting biodiversity. Formally designated natural assets in the neighbourhood area are shown in *Table 3/Figure 21*.

Table 3: Designated environmental assets in the parish

Designation	Sites
Site of Special Scientific Interest	River Beult, running along the northern parish boundary. The churchyard extension area was already listed as an SSSI before it became a churchyard extension, which is why there is a ban on planting anything on graves in the extension.
Ancient woodland	Some significant areas of ancient woodland
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	These are often in private ownership and include: Ponds and Pasture, Wanshurst Green; Field Farm Meadows; Ponds and Pasture; Pasture and woods, Maplehurst; Widehurst Wood, Marden Thorn. LWS boundaries can change; up-to-date maps are available from the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre.
Roadside Nature Reserves (RNR)	Clapper Lane, Staplehurst Between Pagehurst Road and Five Ash Lane, Staplehurst
Landscape of Local Value	Low Weald - The Low Weald National Character Area (NCA) is a broad, low-lying clay vale which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald. It is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils in the east, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland.
Local Green Spaces	As set out in Policy S9 (Local Green Space)

Figure 21: Designated features of the landscape



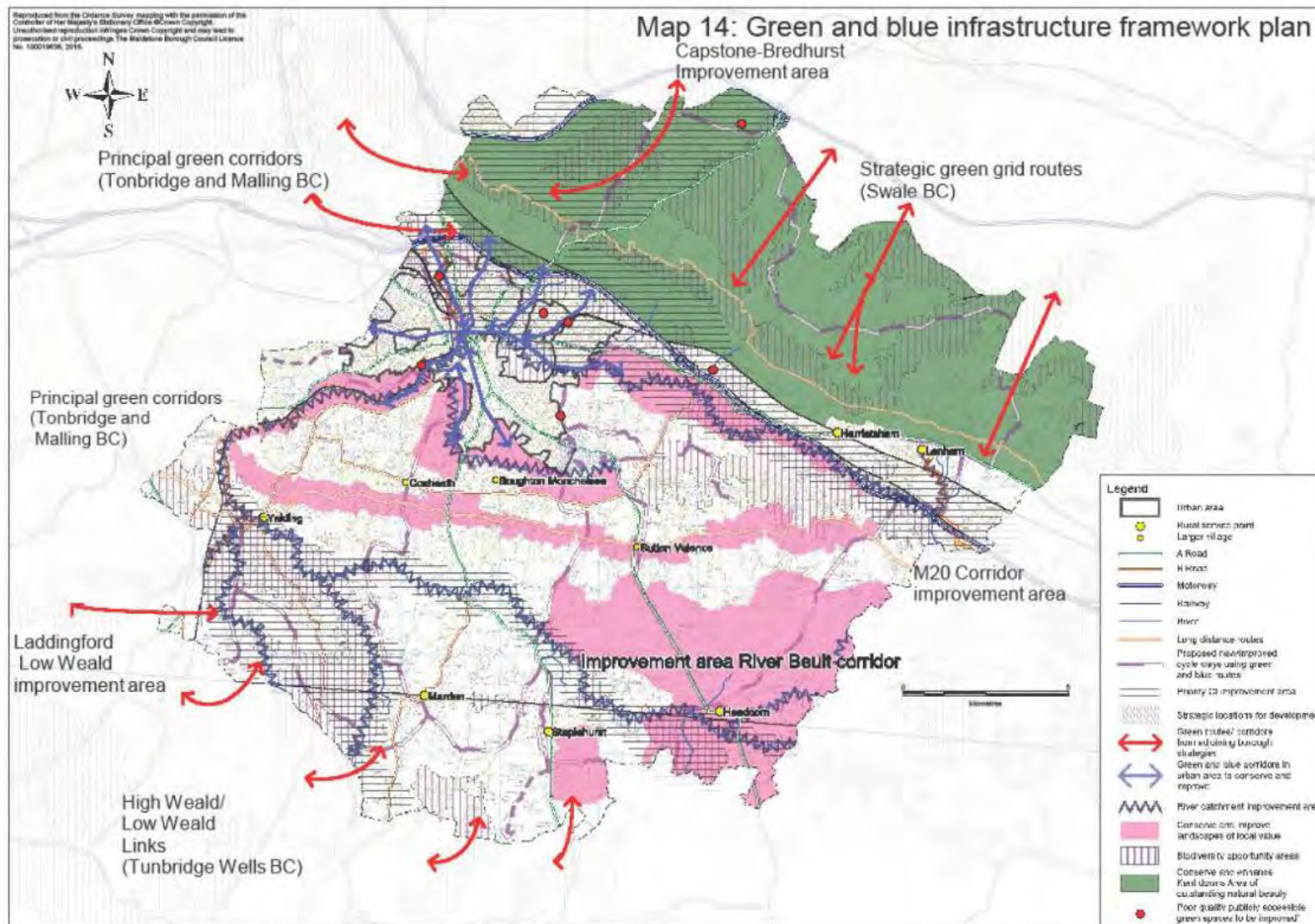
- 8.6. There are also a range of features which, whilst not designated, form habitats and vital corridors for many animals and birds, especially those migrating and these need to be protected through the planning process. In the parish these include:
- 8.7. Trees and woodland: The parish is home to a significant number of trees and areas of woodland – including veteran trees and some ancient woodland. As well as natural habitats, as noted in the NPPF, trees play a vital part in dealing with the effects of climate change and managing pollution. They provide shade, reduce flood risk, enable carbon capture, improve air quality and contribute to the purification of water. They also contribute to local character.
- 8.8. Natural England advises that development which would result in the loss of, or damage to, ancient woodland and ancient or notable trees will not be permitted except in wholly exceptional circumstances, as set out in the NPPF. They advise that it is preferable to link up fragmented areas of woodland, which might be divided by development, with green bridges or tunnels. Also, to buffer ancient woodland and notable/veteran trees by leaving an appropriate zone of semi-natural habitat between the development and the woodland, providing wildlife corridors, and balancing new developments and residential areas with green infrastructure and allowing space for trees.
- 8.9. Planning permission should be refused for any development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats such as veteran trees and trees of a high conservation value, unless the need for and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. In this instance, substantial compensation as quantified by the Defra biodiversity metric will be considered.
- 8.10. Hedgerows: Not only do these provide habitats for a range of fauna, but they also link up habitat patches and have a conservation value in their own right. Hedgerows should be retained and extended wherever possible. The use of hedgerows to define the village streetscene and should be integral to development.
- 8.11. Ponds (including in private gardens): These provide a valuable habitat for species identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). Sightings locally include great crested newts and emerald dragonflies. The great ponds in the Parish provide connectivity as part of the wider freshwater ‘patchwork’.
- 8.12. The parish falls within the Wealden Great Crested Newt Important Area for Ponds (IAP) identified by the Environment Agency (Important Areas for Ponds in the Environment Agency Southern Region, 2009). Great Crested Newt populations thrive where there is high pond density and a well-connected landscape. This helps ensure the survival of populations even if sub-populations are affected by, for example, pond desiccation or fish introductions. The IAP covers the whole of the Weald but within this large area there are ‘hotspots’ with clusters of Great Crested Newt populations including in Staplehurst, which has a high density of ponds.
- 8.13. Orchards: These are typically found in parts of the parish. Whilst many have been removed over the years to make way for development, there are areas which remain – some undisturbed - and these provide a haven for biodiversity as they comprise many habitats including elements of woodland, pasture, meadow grassland. They are often bordered by hedgerows and can also include areas of scrub.

- 8.14. Provision for wildlife needs on-site includes, for example, bird and bat nesting-boxes, hedgehog holes in fencing, swift boxes, ponds (a distinctive feature locally) and wildlife friendly communal green spaces. An associated action to this policy is to install information boards at key wildlife sites, for instance as has been installed at Dickens Gate.

Biodiversity net gain

- 8.15. The LPR requires development requires minimum 20% biodiversity net gain on new residential development, having regard to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and/or Nature Recovery Networks. Biodiversity net gain should be calculated in accordance with the latest Natural England/DEFRA biodiversity metric or equivalent. Where 20% biodiversity net gain is demonstrated not to be financially viable, together with other policy costs, then the statutory minimum net gain provision will be secured.
- 8.16. All development is encouraged to deliver biodiversity net gain on site; however, this is not always possible. Where this is the case, opportunities to enhance other parts of the parish should be explored. It is therefore useful to consider where biodiversity opportunity areas (BOAs) exist within the neighbourhood area. The starting point should be the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (KMLNRS), which was published in November 2025. This sets out Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity and also areas that could become of importance. Developers should consult the KMLNRS [mapping](#) to identify opportunities within Staplehurst Parish. This should be considered in conjunction with the [KMLNRS strategy](#), which sets out specific measures to improve biodiversity within those areas.
- 8.17. Furthermore, the Kent Biodiversity Strategy provides information about the management, creation and restoration of different types of habitat. Within the parish, in addition to the broader aims of the landscape character areas (see Policy S3), notably the Low Weald, the following biodiversity opportunity area has been identified:
- 8.18. River Beult SSSI: This coincides with the northern boundary of the parish. It is designated as an SSSI because it is one of the few slow-flowing clay rivers in the country that still supports some of the flora and fauna expected in this kind of water body. The river is a vital natural asset because it is a source of fresh water for wildlife and agriculture. It also naturally controls and stores flood waters, supports crop pollination, breaks down pollutants and helps the wellbeing of the local community through interests such as fishing and walking. The KNP aim to create a River Beult that provides: natural flood management; a healthy fishery with good angling participation; a secure, clean water supply; and an attractive, resilient landscape that supports sustainable agriculture, flourishing wildlife and recreation.
- 8.19. MBC's Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework Plan (*Figure 22*), for Staplehurst, seeks to conserve and enhance landscapes of local value, promote new cycle ways through the parish using green and blue routes, and support green wildlife corridors to connect to the wider landscape and through the village. Much work has been achieved at the local level, in terms of tree and wildflower planting, but more could be done to improve biodiversity in the pockets of green space that can be found throughout the villages to connect wildlife corridors.

Figure 22: Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework Plan (p.107, MBC – [see website document for clearer version](#))



- 8.20. The public rights of way network and roadside verges: the parish is crossed by numerous paths and verges, which themselves provide important wildlife corridors. Rural roads in the parish too are often bordered by trees and hedgerows, forming natural wildlife corridors. There are some abandoned rural lanes, which not only provide habitats and corridors, but also contribute to local character.
- 8.21. Collectively, these designated and non-designated environmental features provide critical spaces as wildlife refuges and routes for wildlife, such as bats, to prevent species becoming isolated. Where it can be achieved sustainably, they can also be important spaces and routes for the local community to access for recreational purposes, contributing to people's physical wellbeing and mental health.
- 8.22. Development proposals are expected to retain, protect, and enhance wildlife habitats where possible and, where appropriate, include a landscape and ecological management plan guided by the [Building with Nature Standards](#) to ensure that high-quality green infrastructure is integral to placemaking, putting nature at the heart of development in a way that is good for wildlife. Developers are encouraged to seek the Building with Nature Award accreditation.

POLICY S11: PROTECTION OF LOCALLY SIGNIFICANT VIEWS

POLICY S11: PROTECTION OF LOCALLY SIGNIFICANT VIEWS

Development proposals are required to ensure that they have been informed by, and do not have a significantly detrimental impact on the views identified in the Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal and those set out below and shown on *Figure 23*:

- V1: View south from PROW KM313**
- V2: View south from the High Street**
- V3: View west towards the Church**
- V4: View north / northeast towards Sutton Valence**
- V5: View north from KM302A over typical Low Weald landscape**
- V6: View south from PROW KM302A**
- V7: Long distance view towards Knoxbridge**
- V8: View from the PROW KM307 from the Church to Chapel Lane**
- V9: View south from PROW KM313**
- V10: View towards Staplehurst village from PROW KM313**
- V11: View towards apple orchard from KM313**
- V12: View north-east towards the church**
- V13: View towards Pagehurst Farm**
- V14: View from PROW KM313 northwest across unchanged field patterns**

As appropriate to their scale and nature development proposals within the shaded arcs of the various views as shown on *Figure 19* should be designed in a way that safeguards the locally significant view or views concerned. Proposals for major development should be supported by a landscape/visual impact assessment which clearly demonstrates the potential impacts that such a proposal would have on significant views where relevant and how these impacts will be mitigated.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 2; MLPR: LPRSP14(A), LPRSP14(B), LPRSP15; NPPF (2024): 131 to 135, 187

Purpose

8.23. This policy sets out a series of views in and across the parish, which have been identified by the community as being important to safeguard. The policy seeks to safeguard the views from inappropriate development.

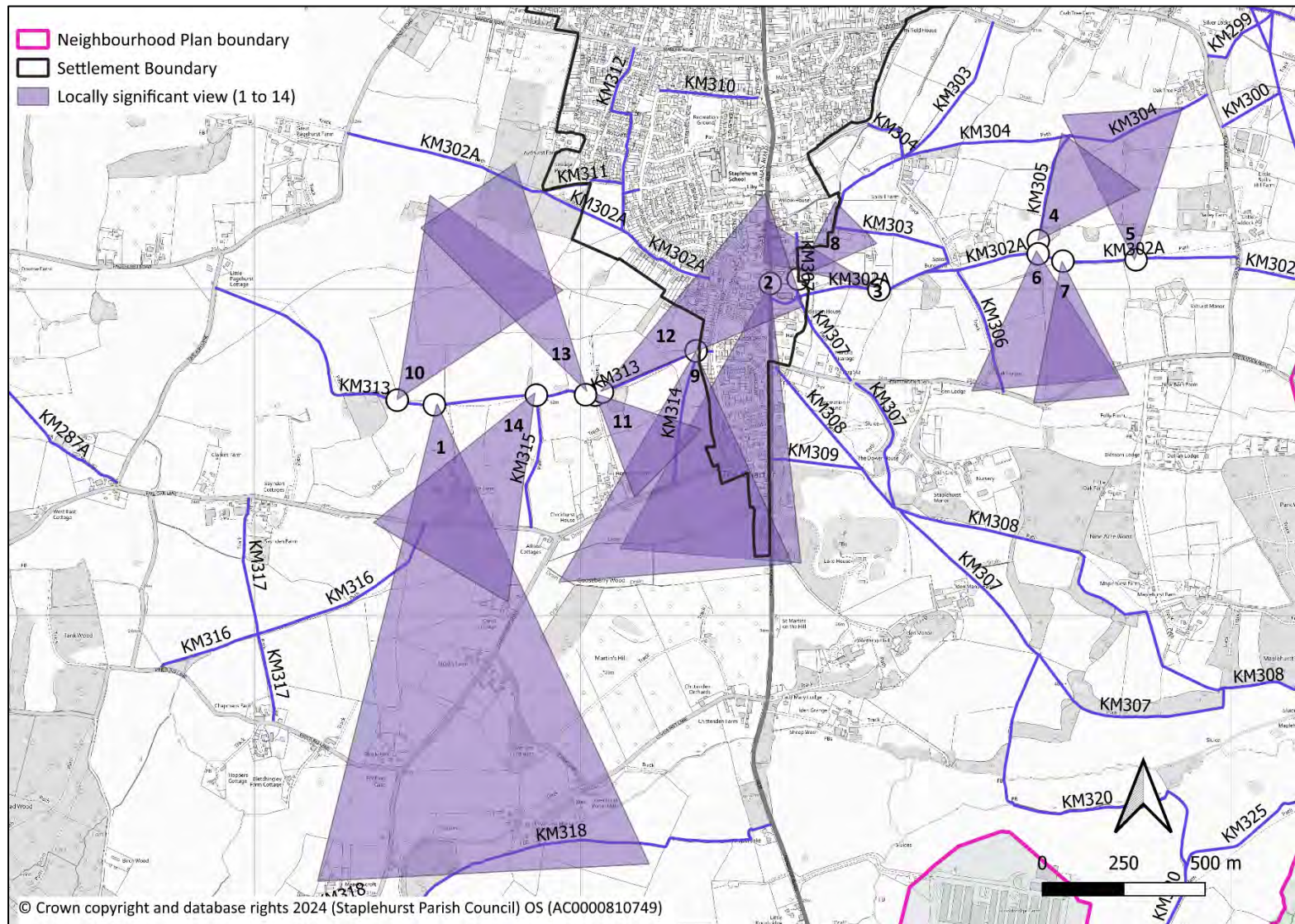
Justification

8.24. In consultation with the community – by way of the community survey and the mapping workshop 14 views have been identified, which are felt to be particularly significant because

they encapsulate the landscape and built heritage of the parish. *Figure 23* provides a map of the views and further details about why they are important is contained in Appendix E.

- 8.25. Within the Conservation Area, there are several views identified as being important in the Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal. The views are dictated by the linear road, with either the built form or the established trees and gardens. The subtle variety of the ridge and eaves heights add visual interest, where the built form is visible. Where the road offers gentle bends, the views are generally of natural form of the trees and hedges. The creation of some boundary treatments, such as solid timber fences, have had a negative impact and lower the impact (and its associated social status) of the boundary wall of ragstone and railings to Loddenham Manor. The views are shown Appendix E.
- 8.26. The policy requires that development proposals are designed in a way that safeguards, where possible, the locally significant view or views concerned. It attempts to provide the flexibility required for the range of development proposals which will come forward within the Plan period.
- 8.27. In circumstances where the proposed development would be likely to have a significant impact on an identified significant view – which is highly likely for the views coinciding with the allocated sites – the planning application concerned should be accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment that is proportionate to the scale of the development proposed. Appropriate mitigation measures should be incorporated within the design of the development proposed and captured in the assessment. It is accepted that in some areas, views will be compromised, but developers should seek to incorporate glimpses of views within proposals.
- 8.28. It is recognised that some of the shaded arcs identified stretch into neighbouring parishes particularly to the south and that it is only views up to the neighbourhood area boundary that can be safeguarded. Nevertheless, it is the intention of the Parish Council to discuss with neighbouring parishes the impact on views in their area, if development is planned for those areas. It is noted that Policy LPRSP15 (Principles of good design) LPR requires proposals to respect the topography of the site and views are an important aspect of this.

Figure 23: Locally significant views (1 to 14, as per policy S11)



POLICY S12: DARK SKIES

POLICY S12: DARK SKIES

Development proposals should ensure that any external lighting protects the night sky from light pollution. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate that:

- i. the lighting is necessary for operational, safety or security reasons;
- ii. any light spillage beyond the application site is eliminated, or reduced by measures such as timing and proximity controls, orientation, screening, shielding or glazing;
- iii. impact on nearby residential properties, wildlife, local heritage assets or the wider landscape is minimised; and
- iv. they have considered carefully, and provided details of, the light source and intensity being used, the luminaire design, height, and angle, adding baffles and cut-off shields where required, and details of control mechanisms to dim or switch off lighting schemes when not required. Where appropriate, lights should be controlled by passive infrared detectors.

Development proposals should also take account of the relevant guidance on light pollution published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP).

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 2; MLPR: LPRSP14, LPRQD2; NPPF (2024): 198

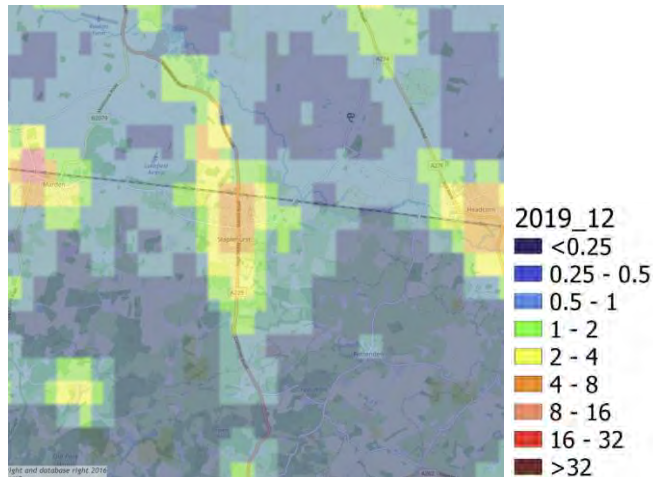
Purpose

8.29. Parts of Staplehurst parish provide ideal locations from which to enjoy dark skies and stargazing. These dark skies also support both nocturnal and diurnal wildlife. This policy seeks to ensure that development does not encroach on this valued aspect of the parish.

Justification

8.30. Parts of the parish remain largely unlit (*Figure 24*), for instance the significant areas of woodland away from the village. The dark night skies in these areas are predominantly unspoilt and it is important that they are kept that way.

Figure 24: Map showing levels of radiance for Staplehurst Parish, 2016 (source: CPRE)



- 8.31. The benefits derived from the prevention of light pollution include:
- Enjoyment and appreciation – improving quality of life and providing creative inspiration
 - Health – promoting better sleep patterns and reducing stress
 - Wildlife – supporting a more natural environment for both nocturnal and diurnal animals
 - Energy efficiency – reducing wastage from unnecessary or excessive lighting, thus reducing the parish's carbon footprint
- 8.32. The impact of light pollution is particularly harmful in the open countryside where rural character is eroded. Light pollution can also compromise the architectural and historical character of conservation areas and listed buildings or their settings. Artificial lighting has an impact on biodiversity especially for nocturnal animals and invertebrates can be seriously affected by artificial light at even very low levels, adversely affecting their ability to feed and reproduce.
- 8.33. The Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) produces guidance on light pollution and this should be consulted when preparing development proposals. In particular the [Guidance Note 01 The Reduction of Obtrusive Light](#), and [Guidance Note 08 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK](#), which was updated in 2023. This guidance is summarised in criterion iv of Policy S12.

9. TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

POLICY S13: SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES

POLICY S13: SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES

- A. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should ensure safe and direct pedestrian and, where possible, cycle access to link up with the existing footpath and cycleway network, and public transport nodes (railways station and bus stops) as defined in *Figure 28*. Permeability within and through housing areas, by foot/bike, should be provided.
- B. The provision of new, or the enhancement of existing, cycle and pedestrian routes that are, where feasible, physically separated from vehicular traffic and from one another will be strongly supported. Pavements must be incorporated and in line with the Healthy Streets principles and the Manual for Streets for all users. Such routes should be of permeable material, with dropped kerbs and tactile surfacing to enable access by disabled users and users of mobility scooters.
- C. All new development sites on the edge of the settlements should integrate positive planting and recreational routes along their boundaries and within their layouts to help define a long-term edge to the village and respond to the needs of residents on the existing village edge.
- D. Development proposals should, where appropriate, provide new or enhanced public transport services and facilities.
- E. Insofar as planning permission is required, the design and layout of works related to the widening of footpaths or the provision of traffic-calming measures should enhance the rural village character, for example retaining and/or providing hedgerows, trees and soft verges where possible. Materials and layout must be sympathetic to local character, in accordance with Policy S3.
- F. Proposals for new bridleways will be supported wherever possible; in all new developments existing bridleways must be retained where they exist or, alternatively, new or amended bridleway links provided together with safe road crossing points that enable connectivity between the village and the wider countryside.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 3; MLPR: LPRSP12, LPRTRA2; NPPF (2024): 96, 103, 105, 109-111, 115-117, 135

Purpose

- 9.1. This policy seeks to enhance walking (and wheeling) and, where feasible, cycling opportunities along routes which are most likely to encourage a shift away from the private car for short journeys in and around Staplehurst parish and to neighbouring settlements. This accords with the strategic transport priorities for the area, as set out in [the Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016 to 2031](#) (p.30-31), published by Kent County Council, which support opportunities for active travel. It also seeks to ensure that development is accessible to

public transport nodes and that provision of this, and associated facilities is enhanced where possible.

Justification

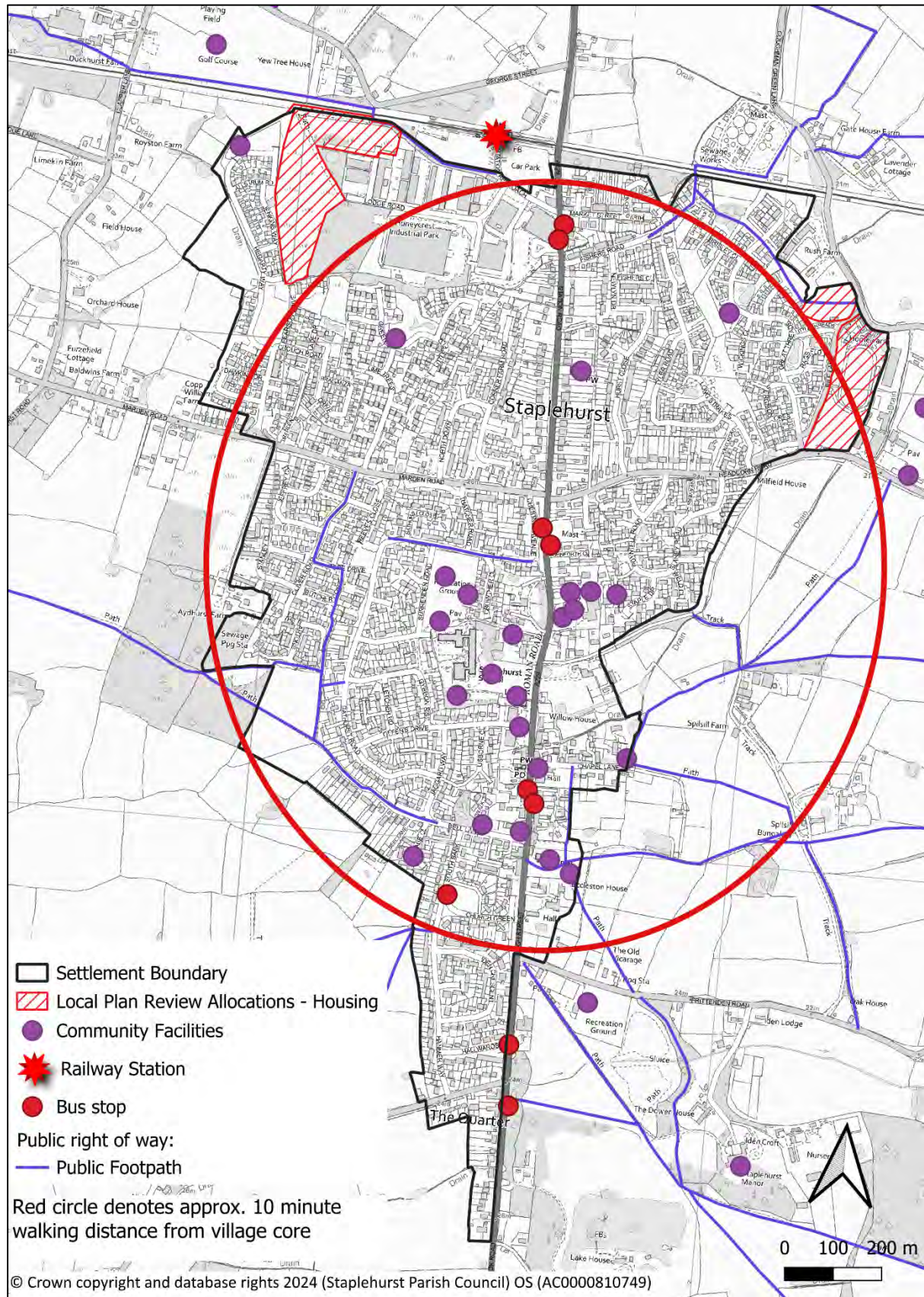
- 9.2. The community has a high level of concern about the existing amount of traffic in the parish, which is exacerbated by presence of the traffic-light-controlled crossroads of the A229 and the Headcorn/Marden Roads, in the centre of the village. This is a very busy junction, experiencing heavy traffic throughout the day, as it is the main route connecting Hastings and Maidstone.
- 9.3. The road layout effectively divides the village into four quadrants, and the historic design of the village has incorporated few cut-throughs, meaning that pedestrians (and cyclists) are largely forced to walk along the main roads. This can be unpleasant due to the volume of traffic, poorer air quality (as a result of traffic fumes) and noise (due to engines). The route is also used frequently by heavy goods vehicles.
- 9.4. Car ownership locally is high, with 91% of households owning at least one vehicle. Many people rely on their car for a variety of reasons - they may have limited mobility, they may be transporting young children, commuting to work, carrying larger loads, or simply be short of time. Nevertheless, whilst some car journeys may be unavoidable, it is important that active travel (i.e. walking, wheeling and cycling) is enabled and encouraged, particularly for shorter journeys within the parish and, where feasible, to nearby settlements.
- 9.5. Active travel brings with it health benefits, both physical and mental, and can assist in reducing congestion and air pollution whilst freeing the roads for those who are less able to give up their cars for the reasons stated above. Notably, 10% of households have no access to a vehicle, so their needs must be catered for.
- 9.6. An aspiration of the SNP is to promote Staplehurst as a 'walkable village'. This is a concept promoted by the [Town and Country Planning Association](#) (TCPA) whereby residential developments are encouraged to be no more than a 10-minute walk (each way) from key facilities (*Figure 25*).

Figure 25: Principles of the '20 minute' neighbourhood (i.e. 10 minutes each way) (source: TCPA)



9.7. Figure 27 shows the approximate areas that are walkable within 10 minutes of the village core, taken as a central point. The railway station could provide another central point from which 10 minutes should be walkable. Note that Policy S13 does not directly comment on the 20-minute neighbourhood. Rather it takes a more general approach in advising that development proposals should ensure safe pedestrian, and where possible cycle, access to link up with the existing footpath and public transport network. Nevertheless, proposals which meet the 20 minutes neighbourhood concept will be particularly supported. This approach overlaps with that taken in Policy S13 which focuses on new development within the Settlement Boundary. Plainly this approach will provide convenient access to the village centre and to the railway station.

Figure 26: Approximate 10-minute walkable area from the village core



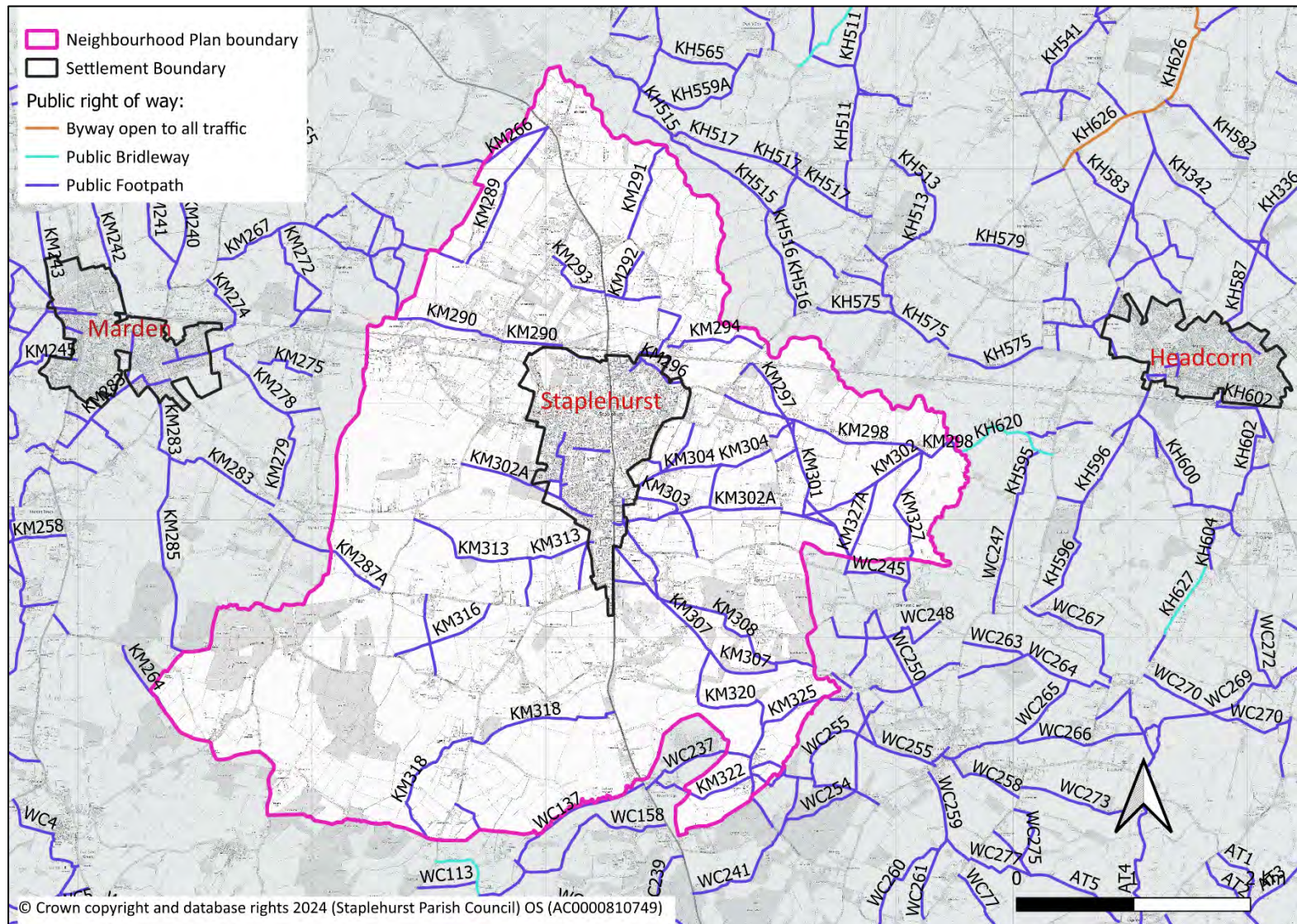
- 9.8. The public right of way network is shown in *Figure 27*. Persuading people to walk (wheel) and, where feasible cycle, needs a culture and a safe environment in which to do it. Particular priorities raised via the consultation revealed the following priorities:
- i. Landowners should be responsible for keeping footpaths clear and unfenced. This will help to maximise available pavement space.
 - i. Many existing footpaths/pavements in the village are not suitable for all residents in the village, in particular for those that use wheelchairs or those that find walking on uneven surfaces difficult. Footpaths must be widened where possible. This will be easier to achieve in new developments, where guidance on pavement provision in the Manual for Streets should be followed.
 - ii. Additional pedestrian crossings at particular points – including near to the Church, along Lodge Road and the Station Approach - will allow greater movement in an east-west direction across the village, connecting up the cluster of facilities in the village core.
 - iii. A significant characteristic of the wider village structure is the prevalence of cul-de-sac dominated layouts that often define more recent areas of development. This can lead to a lack of internal connections between different areas, making it a necessity for many journeys to pass through the crossroads. The neighbourhood plan seeks to rectify this by ensuring that new major development maximises permeability for pedestrians (not vehicles) through the housing, to negate the need to walk / cycle along main roads. The network of existing alleyways should be retained to aid permeability through the older parts of the village.
 - iv. Beyond the village itself, there are many public rights of way leading into the countryside and on to neighbouring settlements. There are examples of areas, however, where public rights of way have been historically removed. For instance, some paths were removed prior to WWI to make way for the Pagehurst Airfield. There is a desire locally to explore the reinstatement of former public rights of way, in consultation with landowners and KCC.
 - v. The provision of a public right of way linking Staplehurst to Headcorn.
 - vi. Improved wheelchair/mobility access from A229 to the station, which is currently challenging. A pedestrian crossing is needed.
 - vii. The general maintenance of public rights of way needs to be addressed in certain areas. Whilst this is a responsibility of KCC, residents are encouraged to report issues as they arise.
 - viii. There are few dedicated bridleways in the parish, which means that horse-riders are forced onto public roads and rural lanes. Opportunities to upgrade footpaths to bridleways (in particular where these can be segregated for different users) would be supported, as would the introduction of new bridleways. This chimes with MBC's aspiration to introduce more cycle ways, coinciding with the green and blue infrastructure.

- ix. Improved signage between residential areas and key facilities, which take pedestrians away from the main roads would be helpful.
 - x. Major development should be designed in a way to encourage slower traffic speeds through estates. A 20mph approach would be supported.
- 9.9. In association with Policy S13, the Parish Council will liaise with MBC and KCC to explore ways to improve access and permeability, linking into the Rights of Way Strategy and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans being prepared across the county. By setting out such priorities, should developer or other funding become available, the Parish Council will have a ready list of priority projects.
- 9.10. The following objectives remain valid and should be facilitated in discussion with the Highways Authority, and private landowners as necessary:
- There is a need to safeguard pedestrian access points for new railway bridge crossings to the west of the current high street bridge link. This can be achieved by ensuring that the layout of all new developments does not prevent the delivery of a new bridge link in future, either in this plan period or future plan periods.
 - Create better and more frequent pedestrian crossings, including along the A229 as the road passes through the village.
 - Improvements to the Marden Road – Headcorn Road – Station Road – High Street crossroads, to ease traffic flow and improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists while retaining the village character that is special to Staplehurst.
- 9.11. In parallel to improving the active travel network, there are a series of factors that may help to improve the environment for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. Many are beyond the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan but are considered in Section 13 (Non-Policy Actions). They include:
- Using design to slow-down traffic
 - Ensuring that new development incorporates access roads to relieve pressure on the crossroads.
 - Introducing slower speed limits in part or all of the village
 - Redirecting HGVs away from rural lanes
 - Problems associated with rat-running
 - Working with Kent County Council Highways and private operators to improve public transport provision in Staplehurst in terms of routes served, timings and punctuality.
 - Working with Kent County Council Highways to help achieve the aims of the [Kent Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#) and the [Framing Kent's Future](#) strategy (2022-2026).

Public Transport

- 9.12. In addition to the proposals set out above, there is a general desire locally to improve access to, frequency and reliability of public transport in the parish.
- 9.13. The railway station is a much-valued asset that is well used by residents and those living beyond the parish. Journeys can be expensive, however. Those who might choose to use the bus are restricted by the timetable offered, which offers an extremely limited service outside the hours of 9am and 5pm. Anyone working in Maidstone, for example, the nearest principal town, would be unable to reach their place of work on Sundays and bank holidays, and later journeys are also impossible. This is particularly challenging for those on lower wages and those working shift patterns.
- 9.14. Whilst such improvements sit outside the scope of the neighbourhood plan itself, the Parish Council will continue to work with KCC and public transport providers to secure improvements.

Figure 27: Public rights of way



POLICY S14: PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE PARKING

Purpose

9.15. The policy seeks to safeguard existing public car parking and support new parking in areas where parking is a challenge. Residential car parking is addressed via the Design Guidance in Policy S3 (Character and Design of Development).

POLICY S14: PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE PARKING

- A. Development proposals that would result in the loss of existing publicly available off-street car parking spaces – in particular at Bell Lane - will not be supported.**
- B. Proposals for major development should seek to incorporate publicly accessible off-road car parking spaces.**
- C. At existing locations – at public car parks, school car parks, employment areas etc. – and alongside any new public car parking provision, proposals are strongly encouraged to provide:**
 - i. dedicated covered and secure bicycle parking facilities, preferably with e-bike charging points, fitting solar panels if possible; and**
 - ii. future-proofed four hour or faster electric vehicle charging points (or wireless charging facilities);**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 3; MLPR: LPRSP13, LPRTA4; NPPF (2024): 109, 113

Justification

9.16. The library, primary school, Community Centre, parade of shops, health centre and church all have their own car parking and drop-off arrangements to differing degrees. There is only one public car park serving the village core, which is located at Bell Lane. This is owned by MBC. As space is at a premium in this part of the village, and it is unlikely that new land will come forward here for additional car parking, the existing public car parking must be retained.

Bell Lane car park



- 9.17. In addition, where major development takes place, opportunities should be sought to deliver additional off-street public parking that is well-connected and signed to enable onward pedestrian access to the main local facilities.
- 9.18. In parallel, a review of the waiting time restrictions, the opportunity for shared spaces, joint management and for the realignment of existing car parks to make them more efficient should be explored.

10. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

POLICY S15: IMPORTANT COMMUNITY, CULTURAL, SPORT AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

POLICY S15: IMPORTANT COMMUNITY, CULTURAL, SPORT AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

- A.** The sites shown in *Table 4* are identified as important community facilities to be retained, and where feasible, enhanced or developed in accordance with the corresponding description to ensure a range of quality, accessible and safe facilities that meet the diverse needs of the community.
- B.** Proposals for new community, recreational, cultural and leisure facilities, or the improvement of existing facilities - in particular allotments/community growing spaces, playgrounds, teenage facilities and sports facilities - will be supported where:
- i. the proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the amenities of surrounding residents and the local environment; and
 - ii. the proposal would not have significant adverse impacts upon the local road network; and
 - iii. the proposal would not have harmful impacts on the heritage aspects, including the setting, of the facility.
- C.** The provision of new and upgraded play areas to serve the needs of children of all ages should be in accordance with Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan/Open Space Study standards. Where possible, these should incorporate areas for 'natural play' (defined as play provision with natural environments as opposed to 'man-made' ones).
- D.** Proposals that would result in the loss of community, leisure, cultural and recreational facilities will only be supported if either the facility is surplus to requirements and there is no longer a proven need for such a facility or alternative and equivalent facilities demonstrate by comparison to the existing facility that:
- i. the replacement will be of at least an equivalent scale, specification and located in an accessible location to the community to be served;
 - ii. re-provision of these facilities will incorporate adequate safeguards for delivery; and
 - iii. satisfy all other relevant policy expectations of this neighbourhood plan.

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 5; MLPR: LPRSP13, LPRINF1, LPRINF2; NPPF (2024): 96, 98, 100, 101, 103, 104

Table 4: Important community facilities in Staplehurst (see also Figures 28 and 29)

Map ref.	Local Facility	Commentary
A	Parish Centre Office / Community Centre	Located in the centre of the village, this has planning permission for modernising and rebuilding to make it more suitable for today's needs of the community.
B	Playgrounds	Retain and upgrade equipment as necessary. Seek additional provision to serve the south of the village.

C	Primary School	Primary school catering for ages 4-11 years, with a current roll of 376 pupils.
D	Sobell Lodge	This is a home for 21 adults with physical disabilities.
E	Health Facilities	Staplehurst Health Centre includes a range of primary and community health services, including a dental practice and a branch surgery of The Mote Medical Practice (primary medical care. The Kent and Medway Adolescent Hospital (KMAH) inpatient mental health unit for children and young people in Kent and Medway is also located at a separate location in Staplehurst
F	Youth Club	Maintain in good order and review as necessary. .A Men's Shed is provided here.
G	Library	The library is considered to be under threat of closure and options to explore how to retain it should be explored. It is a designated Asset of Community Value.
H	Jubilee Field	Including the skateboarding centre and the Guide Centre. The facility has four grass pitches and a changing pavilion.
I	Surrenden Field	New pavilion sought. A pre-planning application has been submitted to MBC. This is proposed as a Local Green Space.
J	Kings Head public house	This is the only public house in the parish. There were seven in the past. It is a designated Asset of Community Value.
K	Places of Worship	All Saints' Church, Baptist Chapel, United Reformed Church, Free Church
L	Public toilets at Bell Lane and the Parade	To be safeguarded.
M	Scout Centre	To be retained.
N	Allotments	There are 8 plots in the parish. Additional allotment space would be supported. See Policy S16 for further detail.
O	Early years provision	Additional provision would be supported.
P	Burial Ground	To be retained.
Q	Older people's care	Staplehurst Manor Care Home, Abbotsleigh Care Home, Iden Manor Care Home, McCabe Day Centre
R	Staplehurst Cricket and Tennis Club	A much-valued sports facility in the parish.
S	Staplehurst Village Golf and Sports Club	A 12-hole, 1697 yards, 39 par, pitch and putt style golf course set in attractive parkland on the outskirts of the village. The Club has approximately 500 members.

Purpose

- 10.1. With the levels of growth expected over the period of the Plan, it is particularly important that development is supported by appropriate provision of community facilities. This policy seeks to ensure that those living in and moving to the parish are adequately served with a range of good quality facilities and activities and that there are opportunities for residents to shape this.

Justification

- 10.2. As a rural service centre, Staplehurst is well served for community facilities (*Figures 28 and 29*). The parish has traditionally had an active voluntary sector and the community is keen that this continues. Providing good quality facilities will serve to encourage and sustain the voluntary sector.
- 10.3. *Table 5*, appended to the policy, sets out detail about the important local facilities that should, as far as possible, be retained. These are considered to be the most important facilities in the village. *Table 5* also sets out, where relevant, priorities for improving these facilities. This will help to ensure that any developer contributions or other funding sources are directed to delivering against local infrastructure need.
- 10.4. The Parish Council will consider which of the facilities might be suitable for identifying as Assets of Community Value, so that there is a greater opportunity to safeguard the asset for community use, should it come up for sale.
- 10.5. There are a number of facilities and amenities that are either missing or in deficit in Staplehurst and which should be prioritised for delivery as part of any new major development or funding via contributions if an alternative location is preferred:
- The reopening of public toilets (including disabled provision) at The Parade.
 - Children's Play Space is considered to be deficient in parts of the parish (see [MBC Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan](#)).
 - The provision of additional natural/semi-natural greenspace
 - Provision of additional allotment space or community-growing spaces. There are currently just eight plots in the parish. Policy
 - Provision of additional display boards around the parish.
 - Provision of additional storage space
 - Sports facilities – including whether existing commercial buildings can be converted for use for exercise and general fitness. There are already outdoor exercise facilities on the Redrow Estate and on Surrenden Playing Field. There is a lack of indoor sports facilities for the population of circa 8,000. Whilst the school provides some facilities, these are not adequate for the village.

Figure 28: Important Community Facilities (numbering as per Table 4)

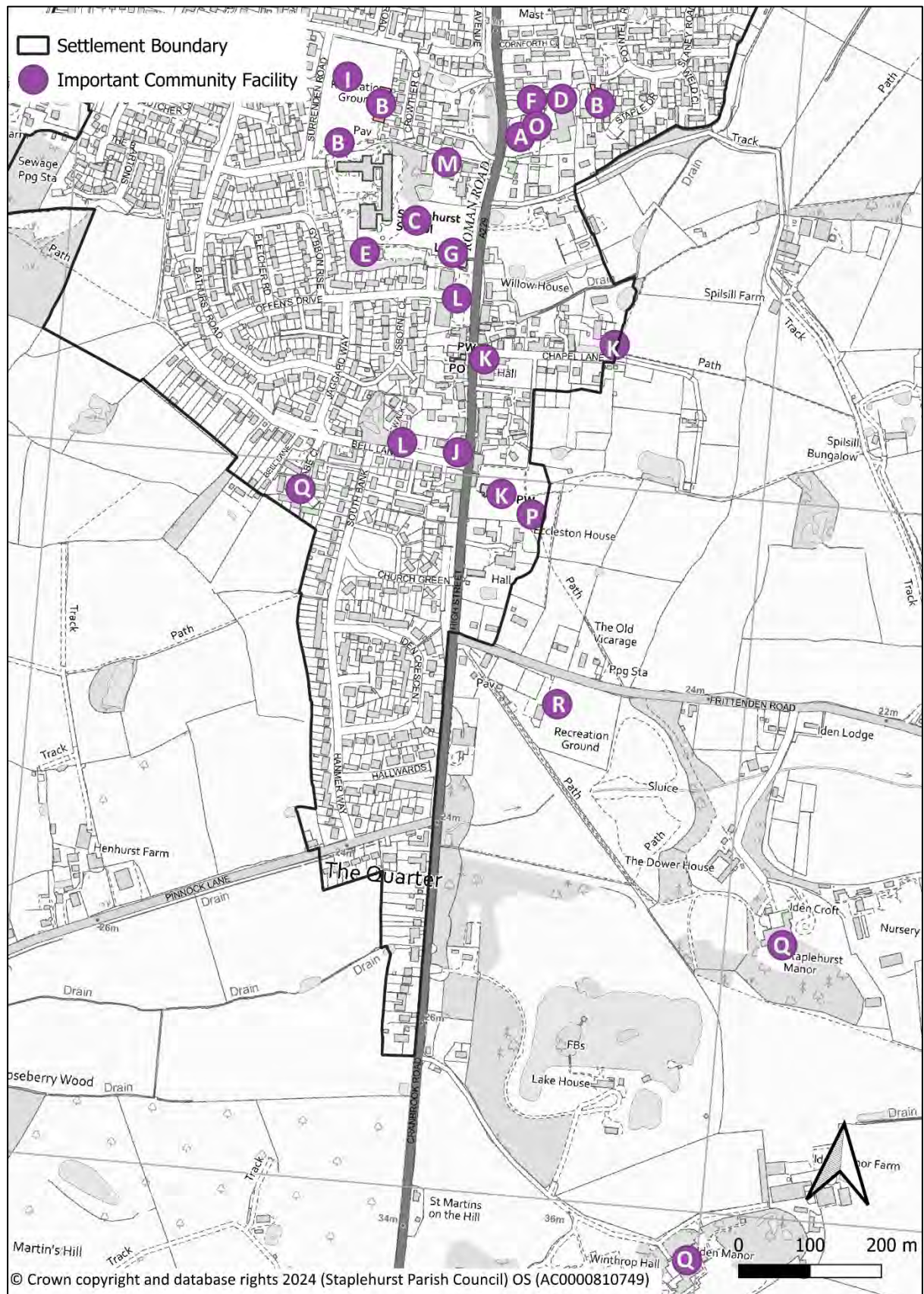
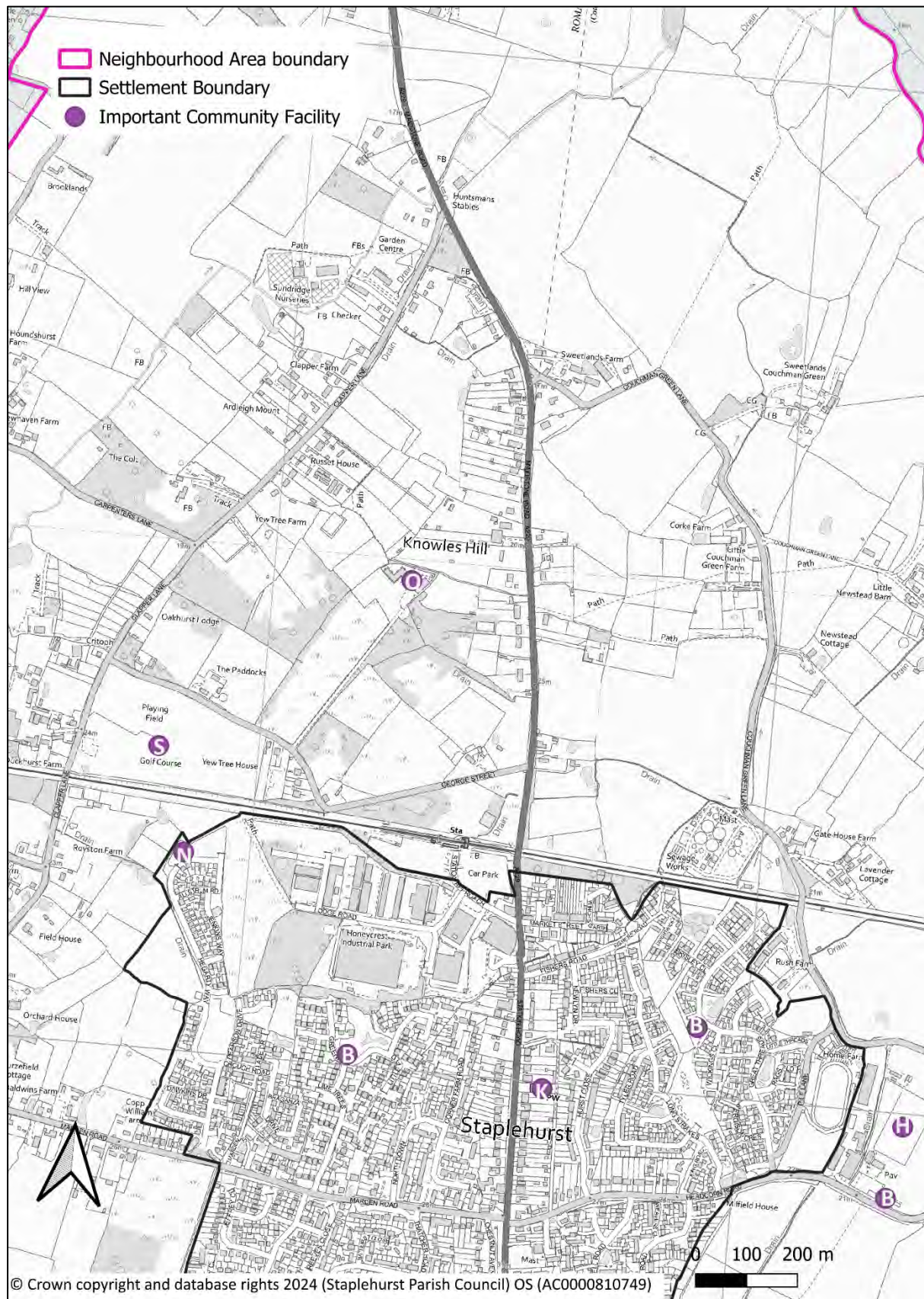


Figure 29: Important Community Facilities (numbering as per Table 4)



POLICY S16: ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GROWING SPACES

POLICY S16: ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GROWING SPACES

- A. Development proposals that incorporate new allotments and community growing spaces of a size appropriate to the development and with access to features such as good drainage, light exposure and water/electric options, will be supported, in particular where these can be used to create attractive green screening, for example, car parking areas, roads, and commercial servicing areas. Quantity and quality standards should confirm to the Local Plan Review requirements.**
- B. Proposals that would result in the loss of all or part of existing allotment spaces will not be supported unless:**
- i. an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the provision to be surplus to requirements; or**
 - ii. the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or**
 - iii. the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.**

Conformity Reference: NP objectives: 5; MLPR: LPRINF1, LPRSP13; NPPF (2024): 96, 98

Purpose

- 10.6. The policy seeks to safeguard the existing allotment space within the Parish. It also supports the provision of new allotment space.

Justification

- 10.7. Allotments are important community facilities as they allow for greater self-sufficiency and contribute positively to mental and physical health and wellbeing, including healthy eating. They also form an important habitat for wildlife and part of the green infrastructure network connecting green (and blue) spaces across the Parish.
- 10.8. Currently there are only eight allotment plots available to residents in the parish. These are located at the end of the Dickens Gate development, next to the Lime Trees Estate. As a result, demand for allotments is currently higher than supply and there is a waiting list for allotments. MBC's [Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy](#) and the [Parks and Open Spaces 10 year Strategy \(2017 to 2027\)](#) confirm that this represents a deficit against provision standards.
- 10.9. All major development proposals should seek to provide allotments to meet the Quantity and Quality Standards as per LPR Policy LPRINF1 (Publicly Accessible Open Space and Recreation. Any additional allotments provided in the parish would need to be on productive ground to fulfil their purpose, so shaded and badly drained land would be inappropriate. It should be noted that existing allotments are designated as Local Green Spaces in Policy S9.
- 10.10. In addition to allotments, a further opportunity is the provision of community growing spaces. These tend to be smaller in size and can be designed into new developments, meaning they are close to residents' homes and involve collective growing. They might also be introduced along verges, within car parking areas and pockets of green space to enable shared growing space, provide shade and soundproof against road noise.

11. IMPLEMENTATION AND PLAN REVIEW

- 11.1. Staplehurst Parish Council is the qualifying body responsible for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 11.2. Once the Plan has been 'made', there will be a series of actions that need to be undertaken to ensure that the policies within the SNP are being interpreted and used in the way intended. It will also be necessary to maintain a watching brief on changes to the planning policy landscape, both at the national and local planning authority levels, which may have an impact on the Plan's policies. Finally, any non-planning-related projects and activities that were identified will need to be prioritised for delivery, in partnership with other organisations.
- 11.3. Specific actions to be undertaken are as follows:
- Pursuing the projects and activities that are not policy-based, but nevertheless contribute to the delivery of the Plan - these are set out in Section 13, divided into priorities towards which developer contributions may be directed and broader, community projects, which have been collated throughout the process, but which sit beyond planning policy. A range of organisations may be involved in delivering these projects and there will be a need for a co-ordinated approach. Many will require funding and therefore it would be helpful to consult with the community to understand the potential costs and achievability of each. Funding may be sourced from developer contributions or tailored funds, such as the Big Lottery Fund.
 - Commenting on planning applications or consultations relating to the neighbourhood plan area – the Parish Council has a role in ensuring that the SNP policies are being adequately considered, where relevant, in decisions to determine the outcome of planning applications in the Parish. A meeting between local councillors, planning committee members and the supporting planning officers at MBC would be a useful step in ensuring that the purpose and application of the policies is fully understood by all parties. This will assist in ensuring that policies are interpreted and applied in the way intended.
 - Monitoring the application of the SNP policies to ensure they have been applied consistently and interpreted correctly in response to planning applications – there is scope to identify indicators to measure the effect that each policy is having and the extent to which this is delivering against the associated objective. As a minimum, the Parish Council would wish to maintain a log of planning applications relating to the neighbourhood area, detailing which Neighbourhood Plan policies have informed the Parish Council response and the outcome of the decision. This will assist in understanding whether the policies have been used in the manner intended or whether changes may be required, for instance in any future review of the Neighbourhood Plan.
 - Maintaining a dialogue with MBC regarding the timing and content of and future Local Plan – it will be important to consider the policies in the emerging document and how these may impact the SNP policies. The adoption of the new Local Plan may trigger a light-touch review of the SNP.

- Maintaining a dialogue with MBC and the promoter/developers of the sites allocated within the Local Plan.
- 11.4. Maintaining a watching brief on the national policy landscape – changes at the national level may impact on the policies contained in the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore important to keep abreast of this, as this could also provide a trigger to undertake a light-touch review of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Maintaining a dialogue with neighbouring parishes on cross-boundary projects.
 - Maintaining a dialogue with the local community on the plan implementation – ensuring that all records of how the plan has been used should be made public. It is also recommended that a regular update – for instance at the Annual Parish Meeting – is provided, to feed back to the community on progress about both the effectiveness of the policies and the pursing of the projects.
- 11.5. Considering gaps in the Neighbourhood Plan – local issues, concerns or opportunities may arise during the lifespan of the Plan that trigger the need for the inclusion of a new policy. Such issues can be most effectively understood by maintaining open dialogue with the community and other partners.
- 11.6. Whilst it is not a legislative requirement to review a Neighbourhood Plan, it is good practice to do so periodically. This may be because of any of the points noted above. A light-touch review will enable the Parish Council to keep the Neighbourhood Plan up to date in general terms, and to ensure that it remains in general conformity with the wider development plan. Any review should be undertaken in partnership with and ensuring the engagement of the wider community.
- 11.7. The Parish Council will consider how best to progress these actions.

12. INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND PROVISION

- 12.1. The Parish Council is keen to influence the way in which developer contributions are spent in the neighbourhood area to the full extent of their powers under national legislation and planning guidance.
- 12.2. There are different types of contributions arising from section 106 agreements, section 278 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):
- A section 106 agreement (based on that section of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act) or planning obligation is a private agreement made between local authorities and developers and can be attached to a planning permission to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.
 - A section 278 agreement refers to a section of the Highways Act 1980 that allows developers to enter into a legal agreement with the local authority to make alterations or improvements to a public highway as part of a planning application.
 - The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a non-negotiable charge on development based on a fixed rate per square metre of net additional development on a site, and levied by the Borough Council. Different charge rates would apply for different types of uses and in different areas. The levy is intended to fund the provision, improvement, replacement or maintenance of infrastructure required to support development in an area as set out in its local plan. With a 'made' (adopted) Neighbourhood Plan, the local community benefits from an uplift in the level of CIL received, from 15% (capped at £100 per existing property) to an uncapped 25% of CIL receipts from neighbourhood area.
- 12.3. Spending and infrastructure priorities for Staplehurst Parish are included within the MBC Infrastructure Delivery Plan, and within the MBC LPR, the strategic parish policy for Staplehurst.
- 12.4. The Parish Council intends to regularly review its spending priorities. It already maintains a Highways Improvement Plan and Strategy Document, which can be found on the Parish council website. Any proposed changes to spending principles or priorities will be published for comment by the community and other interested parties. Once finalised, any updated list will be published on the Parish Council website and in relevant literature.

13. POLICIES MAPS

Figures 30 to 33 show the designations in the Parish.

Key to Policies maps:



Green shaded circles demonstrate where coalescence between settlements should be avoided.

Figure 30: Policies Map - Parish (north)

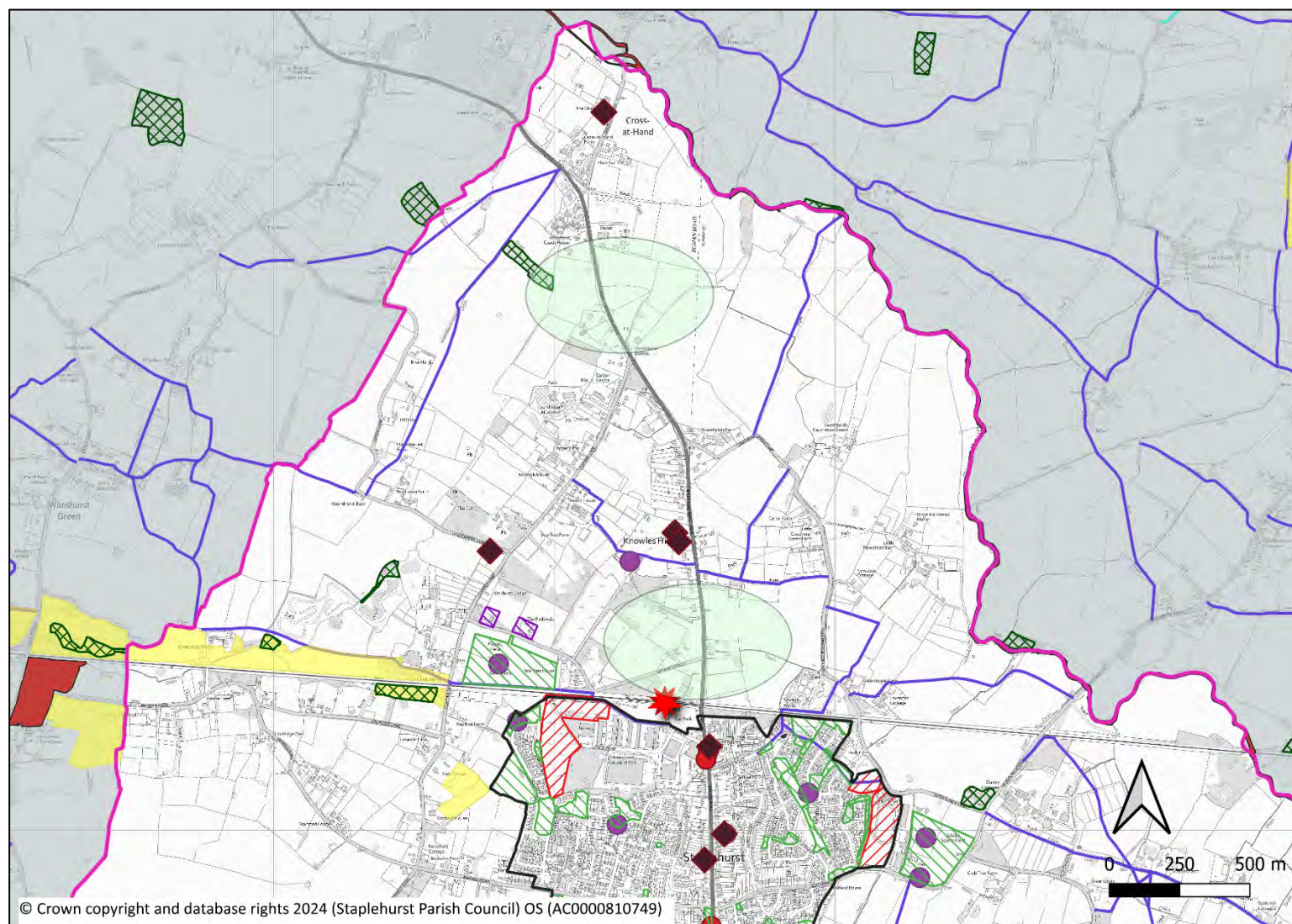


Figure 31: Policies Map - Parish (south)

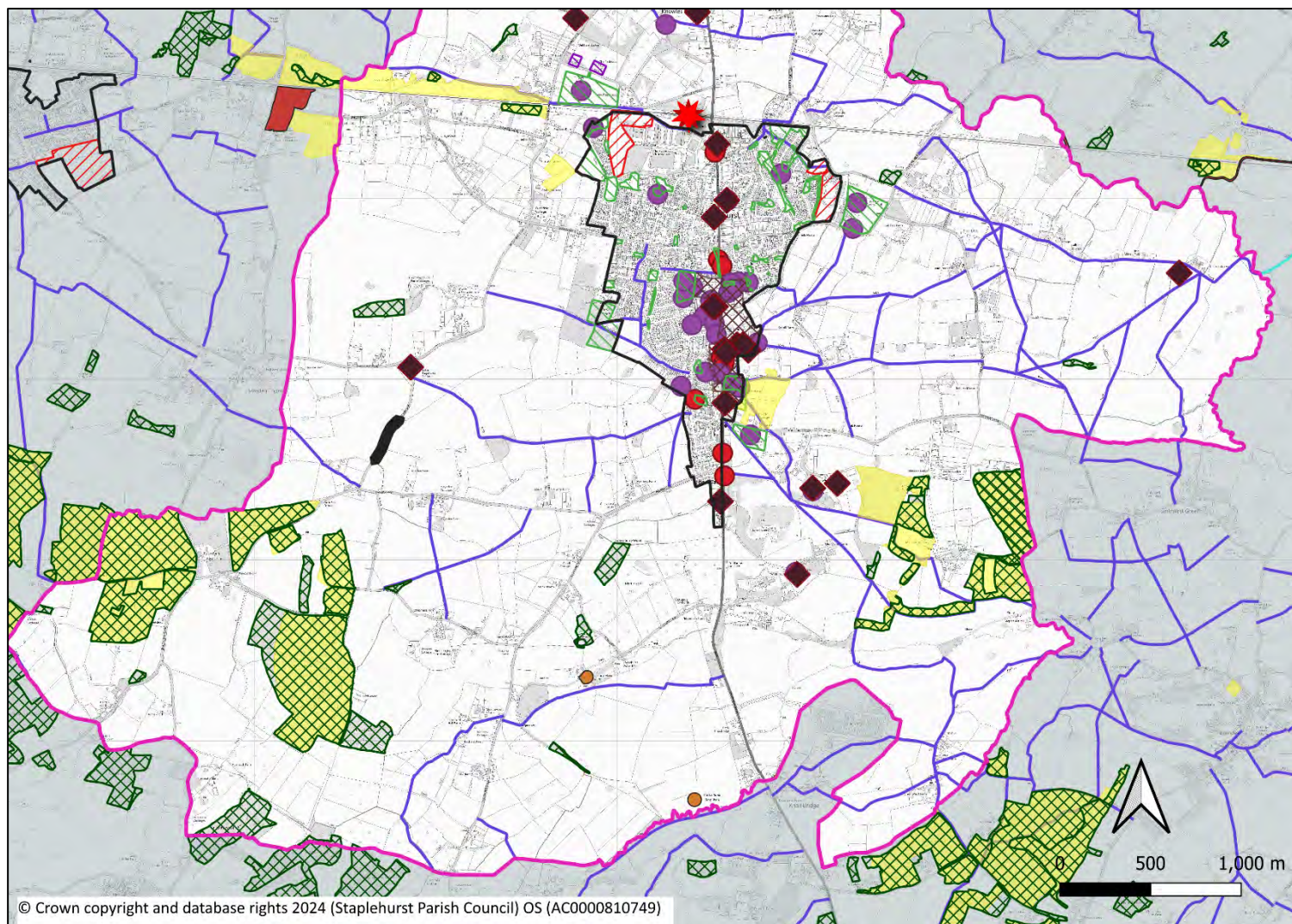


Figure 32: Policies Map - Village (north)

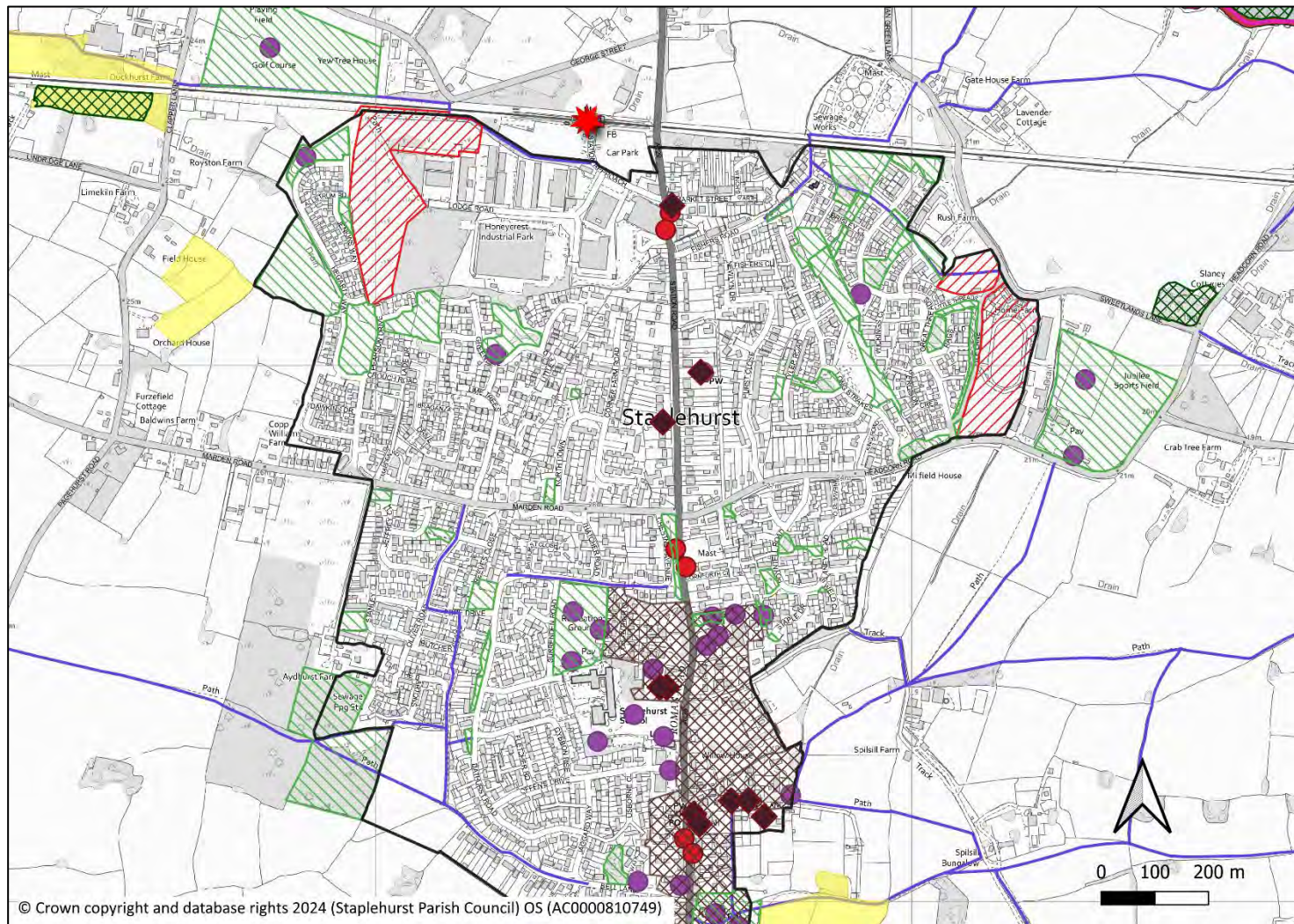
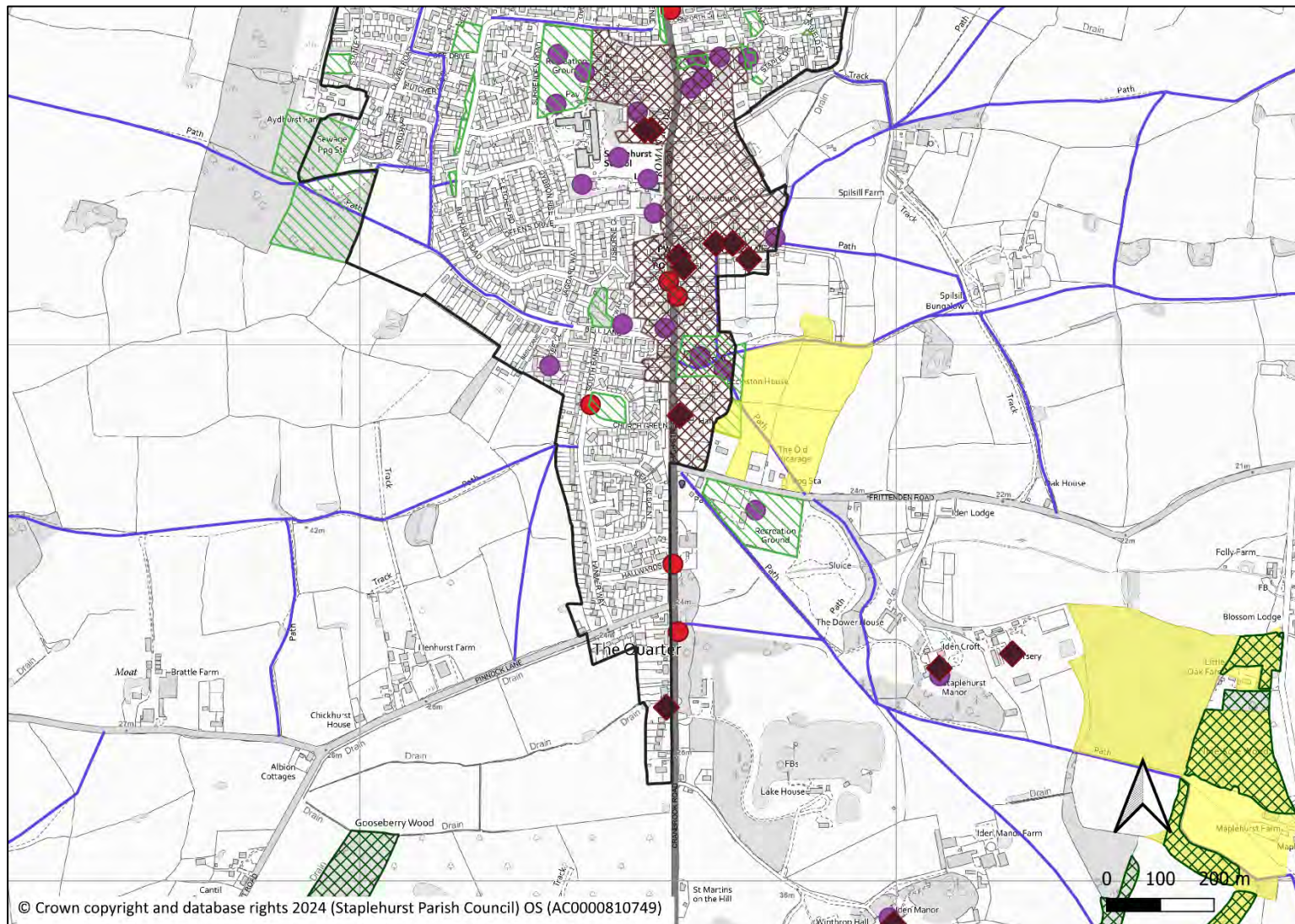


Figure 33: Policies Map - Village (south)



14. GLOSSARY

- **Active travel:** as defined in the Kent Active Travel Strategy: Active Travel means walking or cycling as a means of transport, in order to get to a particular destination such as work, the shops or to visit friends. It does not cover walking and cycling done purely for pleasure, for health reasons, or simply walking the dog (Welsh Government (2014) Active Travel: Walking and Cycling www.gov.uk/government/statistics/active-travel-financial-year-ending-march-2015)
- **Affordable housing:** Social rented, affordable rented, intermediate housing, and First Homes provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market
- **Ancient or veteran tree/tree of arboricultural value:** A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.
- **Archaeological interest:** There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- **Blue infrastructure:** Blue infrastructure refers to water elements, like rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, floodplains, water treatment facilities, etc. Green infrastructure refers to trees, lawns, hedgerows, parks, fields, forests, etc. These terms come from urban planning and land-use planning.
- **Change of Use:** A change in the way that land or buildings are used (see Use Classes Order). Planning permission is usually necessary to change a "use class".
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** a fixed, non-negotiable contribution that must be made by new development. It is chargeable on each net additional square metre of development built.
- **Conservation area:** an area of notable environmental or historical interest or importance which is protected by law against undesirable changes.
- **Designated heritage asset:** A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation
- **Disability:** There is no single definition for 'disability'. Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is defined as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.
- **Green infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
- **Habitats Regulations Assessment:** a Habitat Regulations Assessment is required any time a development project is being carried out on a European site that is protected by Habitat Regulations. This would include SPAs, SACs, Ramsar sites and any areas that have been secured to compensate for damage caused to a European site.
- **Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- **Kent County Council:** The county-wide authority has responsibility for strategic matters including waste and minerals planning, maintaining the public rights of way network, education, libraries and roads.
- **Local connection:** For the purposes of allocating affordable homes, housing shall be occupied in accordance with the Borough Council's standard allocation procedures with priority given to applicants who can demonstrate that they have a local connection to the parish of Staplehurst at the time of occupation.

- **Local housing need:** The number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance.
- **Local Plan** - Local Plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure – as well as a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design for the area they cover. They are a critical tool in guiding decisions about individual development proposals, as Local Plans (together with any Neighbourhood Development Plans that have been made) are the starting point for considering whether applications can be approved. It is important for all areas to put an up-to-date Local Plan in place to positively guide development decisions.
- **Local Wildlife Site:** Areas of land that are especially important for their wildlife. They are identified and selected locally using scientifically determined criteria and surveys. They provide corridors for wildlife, forming key components of ecological networks. They can be in public or private ownership.
- **Major Development:** For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** the national planning policy document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- **Nature Recovery Network:** An expanding, increasingly connected, network of wildlife-rich habitats supporting species recovery, alongside wider benefits such as carbon capture, water quality improvements, natural flood risk management and recreation. It includes the existing network of protected sites and other wildlife rich habitats as well as and landscape or catchment scale recovery areas where there is coordinated action for species and habitats.
- **Non-strategic policies:** Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.
- **Older people:** People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.
- **Permitted development:** Permitted development rights are an automatic grant of planning permission which allow certain building works and changes of use to be carried out without having to make a planning application. Most houses have permitted development rights, but flats and maisonettes do not, so planning permission is required. A further example is the conversion of offices, for instance to flats, without the need for planning permission.
- **Previously developed land/ brownfield land:** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.
- **Section 106 agreement:** A mechanism under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which makes a development proposal acceptable in planning terms that would not otherwise be acceptable.
- **Settlement Boundaries:** These identify the areas of primarily built form, rather than countryside. They identify areas within which development of brownfield land may normally be appropriate, including infilling, redevelopment and conversions in accordance with Government Policy and Guidance (NPPF and NPPG). They do not include a presumption for the development of greenfield land such as playing fields and other open space. Identified built-up area boundaries do not necessarily include all existing developed areas. The SNP shows both the current, adopted LBD and those as proposed in the LPR.

- **SMEs (Small to medium-sized enterprises):** The UK definition of SME is generally a small or medium-sized enterprise with fewer than 250 employees. While the SME meaning defined by the EU is also business with fewer than 250 employees, and a turnover of less than €50 million, or a balance sheet total of less than €43 million. Within this umbrella there are three different categories: medium-sized, small, and micro-businesses. These categories are defined by turnover and number of employees.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment:** Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic and effective way to ensure that environmental issues are central to public sector decision-making. SEA supports rigorous and transparent preparation of all public sector plans, programmes and strategies.
- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):** Supplementary Planning Documents may cover a range of issues, both topic and site specific, which may expand policy or provide further detail to policies contained in a Development Plan Document, where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery.
- **Use Classes Order:** The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As amended in 1995, 2005, 2013 and 2020) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories. Planning permission is not needed for changes of use within the same use class.

15. LIST OF EVIDENCE DOCUMENTS

All links correct at October 2025:

Document/ Evidence	Author	Year
20-minute neighbourhoods https://www.tcpa.org.uk/collection/the-20-minute-neighbourhood/	TCPA	2024
A brief history of Staplehurst From Acorn to oak http://www.staplehurstsociety.org/Staplehurst%20History.pdf	Anita Thompson	2005
Ancient tree guide 4: What are ancient, veteran and other trees of special interest? https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1836/what-are-ancient-trees.pdf	The Woodland Trust	2008
Building for a Healthy Life 2020	HM Government	2020
Building With Nature https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/	Building With Nature	no date
Buildings At Risk Register https://docs.maidstone.gov.uk/heritage-and-landscape/Maidstone-Buildings-at-Risk-Register.pdf	MBC	ongoing
Climate Change Act 2008 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents	HM Government	2008
Defra Biodiversity Metric Guidance https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-metric-calculate-the-biodiversity-net-gain-of-a-project-or-development	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and Natural England	2021
Dementia and town planning: Creating better environments for people living with dementia	Royal Town Planning Institute's	2020
Distinctively Local https://distinctively-local.co.uk/storage/app/media/Distinctively-Local-Fnal-Report.pdf	Pollard Thomas Edwards, Proctor & Matthews Architects, PRP, HTA Design	no date
Environment Act https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted	HM Government	2021
Framing Kent's Future Strategy https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/136431/Framing-Kents-Future-strategy-document.pdf	Kent County Council	2022 to 2026
Flood Maps for Planning https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/	Environment Agency	ongoing
Guidance Note 1: The reduction of obtrusive light https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021/	Institution of Lighting Professionals	2021
Guidance Note 8: Bats and Artificial Lighting https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/	Institution of Lighting Professionals	2023
Healthy Streets https://www.healthystreets.com/	Healthy Streets	ongoing

Historic Environment Record https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/	Kent County Council	ongoing
Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/	Communities and Local Government, Department of Health, Homes and Communities Agency	2009
Kent County Council's Parking Standards https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/174440/Supplementary-guidance-parking-standards.pdf	Kent County Council	2025
Kent Design Guide https://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/data/Cabinet/20060427/Agenda/kent%20design%20append.pdf	Kent County Council	2000 (currently being updated)
Kent Landscape Assessment https://www.kent.gov.uk/environment-waste-and-planning/planning-and-land/kents-landscape-assessment	Kent County Council	2004
Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/112585/Kent-Minerals-and-Waste-Local-Plan-2013-2030.pdf	Kent County Council	2016 (modified 2020)
Kent Mineral Sites Plan (2020) https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/112584/Kent-Mineral-Sites-Plan.pdf	Kent County Council	2020
Kent Rights of Way Improvement Plan https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/90491/Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan-2018-2028.pdf	Kent County Council	2018 to 2028
Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP) https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/kent-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan	Kent County Council	Ongoing
Localism Act 2011 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted	HM Government	2011
Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage Historic England Advice Note 7 (Second Edition) https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/heag301-local-heritage-listing/#:~:text=Non%2Ddesignated%20heritage%20assets%20are,heritage%20assets%27%20(PPG).	Historic England	2021
Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016 to 2031 https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/72668/Local-transport-plan-4.pdf	KCC	2016-2031
Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review 2021-2038 (adopted March 2024) https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QSkRhBDxcBFEftITb62_IWB50yq7VOj0/view?pli=1	MBC	2024
Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan https://maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/9874/Green-and-Blue-Infrastructure-Strategy-June-2016.pdf	MBC	2016

Maidstone Local Plan Review (LPR) 2021-2038 Policies Map https://services.maidstone.gov.uk/maps/astun.ishare.web/mymaidstone.aspx?ms=Maidstone/Maidstone_Adopted_Local_Plan_2017	MBC	2024
Maidstone's Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Strategic Plan https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TCOKOsoZgLVKof_77lw5Vmr2YYWd408/view	MBC	2017-2027
Making local green space designations in your neighbourhood plan https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/	Locality	2021
National Design Guide https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962113/National_design_guide.pdf National Model Design Guide https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code	HM Government	2019/20
National Planning Policy Framework https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf	HM Government	Amended Dec 2024 (and Feb 2025)
National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-standards-for-sustainable-drainage-systems/national-standards-for-sustainable-drainage-systems-suds	Defra	July 2025
Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made	HM Government	2012
Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents	HM Government	2004
Planners' Manual for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2019/06/planners-manual-for-ancient-woodland/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz8emBhDrARIsANNjS7_6poLC3yJw4R6_oDZJfohladzPX3Whe6NZzYw-129B94syES97EaAv4REALw_wcB&gclid=aw.ds	Woodland Trust	2019
Planning Policy Advice Note: Domestic and Medium Scale Solar PV Arrays (up to 50KW) and Solar Thermal (2014) https://drive.google.com/file/d/19yKV_SqbzsxdRqDfPugRfLEdTy3SYHzV/view	MBC	2014
Planning Policy Advice Note: Large scale (>50kW) solar PV arrays https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pg2rsAMyT6aUsAEmn7N-qVFTAWJTO46G/view	MBC	2014
Retrofit and Energy Efficiency in Historic Building https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/	Historic England	2020

Secured by Design	Police Crime Prevention Initiatives Limited	no date
Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal https://docs.maidstone.gov.uk/heritage-and-landscape/Staplehurst-conservation-area.pdf	MBC	2024
Streets for All: South East https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all-south-east/	Historic England	2018
Ten Dark Sky Policies for the Government https://appgdarksdies.co.uk/policy-plan	Government All Party Parliamentary Group for Dark Skies	2021
The Streets of the Parish of Staplehurst http://www.staplehurstsociety.org/Streetsbooklet.pdf	Tony Norfolk	No date
Town & Country Planning Act 1990 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents	HM Government	1990
Traffic in Villages Toolkit: Safety and Civility for Rural Roads https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Traffic-in-villages.pdf	Dorset National Landscape and Hamilton-Baillie Associates	2020

APPENDIX A – STAPLEHURST EXISTING AND PROPOSED SITE ALLOCATIONS IN THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

The LPR seeks to build approximately 527 new dwellings in Staplehurst to 2038.

The sites allocated are as follows:

- Policy H1 (49) Fishers Farm, Fishers Road, Staplehurst – approx. 400 dwellings – retained from the Local Plan (2017)
- Policy LPRSA066 - Land West of Lodge Road, Staplehurst – approx. 78 dwellings – allocated in the Local Plan Review 2021-2038
- Policy LPRSA114 - Land at Home Farm, Staplehurst – approx. 49 dwellings allocated in the Local Plan Review 2021-2038

In addition, Policy H1 (48) of the Local Plan 2017 allocated Hen and Duckhurst Farm, Marden Road, Staplehurst for approx. 250 dwellings. This has been built out.

Table 4 shows the Gypsy and Traveller sites in Staplehurst.

The LPR allocates two additional site (*Figure 3*):

- GT1 (11) Blue Bell Farm
- 2. GT1 (10) The Paddocks, George Street

Table 5: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Staplehurst

	GYPSY & TRAVELLER SITES IN STAPLEHURST				
LOCATION	SITE NAME	NO of FAMILIES	MOBILE HOMES /CARAVANS	PLANNING PERMISSION	
Clapper Lane	Land off Clapper Lane	1	2	Granted	
	Oakhurst Lodge	1	2	Granted	
	Land at Oakhurst Lodge	1	2	Granted	
Cradducks Lane	Oak Tree Farm	3	5	Granted	
	Oak Tree Farm	3	6	Granted	
George Street	Blue Bell Farm	1?	6	Granted	
	Land North of Blue Bell Farm	2	4	Granted	New pitch
	The Paddocks	1?	4	Granted	
	Land East of The Paddocks	2	4	Refused	Appeal Date 4.4.23
Goudhurst Road	Woodside Place	1	8	Granted	
Maidstone Road	Land North of Willow End/Oak Tree Place	1	2	Granted	Removed - re applied
Marden Road	Little Acre	2	2	Granted	
	Stable Paddocks	1	4	Granted	
	Udene Barn Stud	3	8	Granted at Appeal	
	Whiteacres	2	5	Granted	
	Whiteacres	1	4	Granted	
	Meadow View	?	8	Granted	

Maplehurst Lane	Land East Maplehurst Lane - The Stables	2	4	Granted at Appeal	
	Little Oak Farm	2	2	Granted	
	Maplehurst Paddock	3	6	Granted	
	The Oaks	1	2	Granted at Appeal	
	Delilah Lodge Maplehurst Lane	1	4	Granted	
	The Acorns, Frittenden Road	1	2	Granted	
	The Acorns, Frittenden Road	1	2	Granted	
	Blossom	1	2	Granted at Appeal	
Park Wood Lane	Perfect Place	1	2	Granted	
	Perfect Place	1	2	Granted at Appeal	
	Perfect Place	1	2	Granted at Appeal	
	Perfect Place	1	2	Granted at Appeal	
	Three Sons	1	2	Refused	
	Three Sons	2	6	Granted	
	Parkwood Stables	2	4	Granted	
TOTAL			120	33 sites	
As at 29th August 2024			114	Granted	
			6	Refused	
			0	NYD	
			120		
Staplehurst Parish has well in excess of 100 mobile homes housing G&T families who all need access to facilities here.					

APPENDIX B – STAPLEHURST DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Description of Staplehurst Village:

Staplehurst is a Larger Village some distance to the south of Maidstone urban area, and relatively close to the High Weald landscape character area to the south. It is well connected, is significant in the local economy and has a high number of facilities and services. Services include one school, a few local businesses (including a supermarket and the Kings Head public house), leisure facilities, a GP surgery, two bus services and a rail station. The village is also well-connected by road, with the A229 highway running through its centre.

The long spine road through the village of Staplehurst follows the original path of a Roman road which passed through the Weald.

The village contains a significant concentration of buildings with historic and architectural value. At the centre, All Saints Church and the village's earliest dwellings (of timber frame construction) are situated on an elevated limestone ridge. Other notable examples of timber framed buildings on the High Street include the Crown Cottages, a long-close studded building with an integral cart entry, the c.14th century Kings Head public house and, further northwards, Loddenden Hall.

In contrast, there are also distinctive Victorian era buildings, including the austere blond brick Vine House and the unusually rambunctious Village hall, originally a village school. Additionally, the village encompasses hall houses, including the 14th century Copp William (on the western edge of Staplehurst) and Little Hearts Heath.

The prevailing landscape is low lying and gently undulating, with shallow elevated ridges to the south including at the centre of Staplehurst. There is also a network of watercourses, ditches and ponds, with willows populating more waterlogged ground.

Given the topography, many views are enclosed by tall hedgerows and tree belts, unless fields have been enlarged for arable agriculture. Where there is elevated land, long views include Greensand Ridge and woodland to the north, and Sherenden Wooded Hills and the High Weald National Landscape to the south.

The landscape largely comprises a coherent pattern of small fields with mature oaks, orchards and pasture, enclosed by thick native hedgerows. Small woodland blocks are also a common feature, including ancient woodland. Nonetheless, there are also examples of fields being enlarged for arable agriculture, leaving irregularly shaped fields of monoculture crops.

Development is dispersed in form, comprising several small hamlets and farmsteads scattered across the area. These are linked by gently winding rural roads with generous verges and ditches containing cow parsley, meadowsweet and other colourful flora. Overall, the landscape has a historic and productive character.

A description of the streets that make up the parish was prepared by Tony Norfolk for the Staplehurst Society: [The Streets of the Parish of Staplehurst](#).

[A Brief History of Staplehurst From Acorn to Oak](#) by Anita Thompson provides a comprehensive history of the parish.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS FROM STAPLEHURST

These particular architectural details have been selected as they represent some of the more effective building and design techniques that help add to the character and quality of the parish. The fact these examples have primarily been drawn from the older parts of the village does not mean more recent developments in Staplehurst are poor quality. Rather that the distinctive sense of place evident in the historic heart is what the community admire most about where they live. New development proposals must learn from this and look to incorporate techniques such as this, where appropriate. See also the Staplehurst Village Design Statement (April 2005) that remains a valid document and a source of useful guidance for all new development.



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- 01 Simple but traditional Palladian-style housing provides the sense of importance and quality to some of the properties in Staplehurst.
- 02 Careful and deliberate use of colour helps to identify and pronounce the characteristics of the building. In this example brick, coloured window frames, traditional tall roofing all contrast with the white rendered walls.
- 03 The use of double bays on the ground creates flexible spaces that help allow a building to change use from residential to retail/cafe.
- 04 Careful use of brick, timber and tile cladding on buildings creates a Kentish village aesthetic and creates a sense of a strong and robust buildings.
- 05 Structural elements standing proud and on show (e.g. external timber trusses and joists) can accentuate a building's longevity.
- 06 Buildings positioned side-on to main streets can help mitigate traffic impacts and also allow for deliberate orientation in relation to the sun.
- 07 Traditional lapped-timber cladding can be accurately reproduced using modern materials for a longer lifespan.

- 08 Low rise mature hedging provides clear and defensible boundaries but does not obstruct the view of the fine architecture behind it.
- 09 Medieval stonework of the All Saints church needs to be celebrated and welcoming to not only visitors but villagers too.
- 10 Traditional fencing and shrub-planted borders used to separate private gardens from public streets or roads.
- 11 Maintaining the traditional look of the village pubs is important; there must be resistance against any modern or corporate identities being applied to their external appearances through branding or signage.
- 12 Half-timbered elevations on an arts and crafts style house, with a distinctive tall chimney feature.
- 13 Mature planting vegetation within private gardens softens the street scene and adds distinctive rural qualities to some buildings in the village.
- 14 The terraced row of houses at Cross-At-Hand represents a high density form of development appropriate to a village or rural setting.

APPENDIX C – NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

See separate document.

APPENDIX D – LOCAL GREEN SPACES

See separate Appendix

APPENDIX E – LOCALLY SIGNIFICANT VIEWS

One of the distinctive features of the parish is the visual connectivity with the surrounding countryside from public places.

Resident surveys undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan and responses to Maidstone Borough Council consultations on planning applications have highlighted that parishioners value highly the visual connection between the villages and the surrounding countryside. Some views are looking outward from within the village built-up areas (sometimes far-reaching) whilst others are looking towards the villages at landmark features which form an important part of the village approach and setting.

It is recognised that whilst there are a significant number of views across beautiful countryside within it would be impossible to list them all. Rather, it is important to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the countryside more generally whilst protecting the footpaths which allow access to it.

How the views were identified: A number of important views were identified during the course of public consultation at meetings held in the Parish Office, where residents were asked to identify what was important to the parish and also to draw preferred views on maps of the Parish. In addition, the community survey provided an opportunity for people to nominate special views.

Members of the Steering Group undertook a number of visits to assess the views put forward. The identified views were examined in more detail, in particular where those views formed an integral part of the village Character Areas or approach/setting.

The Steering Group first ensured that the views were public, rather than private, views and visible either from the public highway, public footpaths, bridleways, public open spaces or space to which the public has access (such as the Churchyard). They were carefully recorded and mapped, and assessed using set criteria consistently.

All the Views fell into two principal groups: those views looking outwards from the built up area which contribute to the distinctive character and/or heritage of Staplehurst Village and those views looking towards the village at landmark features which contribute to the distinctive character and/or heritage of the village approach and setting.

The reason for the importance of each view is established by assessing their role in relation to the character of the villages and local heritage as follows:

Views looking out from the villages

- a) important to the character of the Conservation Area
- b) important to the setting of a listed building(s)
- c) important to a Character Area
- d) important to the village approach and setting
- e) important view of landmark feature, such as a listed building or woodland

Views from the countryside of village feature, such as a listed building or woodland

- f) important to the character and setting of the Conservation Area
- g) important to the setting of a listed building(s)
- h) important to a Character Area
- i) important to the village approach and setting
- j) important view of landmark feature, such as a listed building or woodland

The locally significant views:

Ref.	Description	Reason for importance of view
V1	View south from PROW KM313	d, e
V2	View south from the High Street	a, b, c, d, e
V3	View west towards the Church	f, g, h, i
V4	View north / north east towards Sutton Valence	d, e
V5	View north from KM302A over typical Low Weald landscape	d, e
V6	View south from PROW KM302A	d, e
V7	Long distance view towards Knoxbridge	d, e
V8	View from the PROW KM307 from the Church to Chapel Lane	b, d, e
V9	View south from PROW KM313	d, e
V10	View towards Staplehurst village from PROW KM313	f, g, h, i, j
V11	View towards apple orchard from KM313	b, d, e
V12	View north-east towards the church	f, g, h, i
V13	View towards Pagehurst Farm	d, e
V14	View from PROW KM313 northwest across unchanged field patterns	d, e
	Views within the Conservation Area	f, g, h, i, j

V1: View south from PROW KM313

A typical Kentish view looking south over open countryside, which includes an oast house to add to the beauty. Location: [///skillet.outwit.frizz](https://skillet.outwit.frizz) 5109'20" N 0°32'16" E



V2: View south from the High Street

A beautiful view which is taken from the highest point in the village looking south. The view takes in The Lamb, one of the former pubs in the village, and in the distance is an Oast house which adds to the classic Kent countryside view. Location: [///pounding.sapping.legs](#) 51°09'30" N 0°33'9" E



V3: View west towards the Church

Taken from the PROW looking west, this view captures the church tower in the distance encapsulating a view which would have been much the same for hundreds of years. Location: [///cleansed.motive.profit](#) 51°9'30" N 0°33'27" E Taken 29 August 2024 Looking 258° W



V4: View north / north east towards Sutton Valence

Taken from PROW KM305 it shows a delightful view north towards the hills at Sutton Valence and one of the longstanding ponds which as a feature of the area. looking northeast from this spot shows the views towards Sutton Valence and the hills in the distance and includes the rolling pastures, with grazing sheep, and mature hedgerows. Location: [///protestet.detriment.cracks](#) 51°9'34" N 0°33'52" E Looking 31° NE and 35° NE.



V5: View north from KM302A over typical Low Weald landscape

Taken from PROW KM302A looking north, it captures the open countryside and native hedgerows and borders to long established fields. Location: [///flocking.reclining.sounding](#) 51°9'35"N 0°34'5"E
51°9'35" N 0°34'5" E



V6: View south from PROW KM302A

Taken from KM302A looking south it shows the classic Kent countryside which mature hedgerows and pasture grazing land. Location: [///folk.worksheet.eyelashes](#) 51°9'34" N 0°33'54" E Looking 191° South



V7: Long distance view towards Knoxbridge

Taken from the south side of the field with PROW KM302A it shows the views to the south into the distance towards Knoxbridge. Location: [///decks.nuptials.notice](#) 51°9'32" N 0°33'53" E Looking 178° South.



V8: View from the PROW KM307 from the Church to Chapel Lane

This view is seen from a footpath very close to the centre of the village. It provides a lovely view of the last buildings in Chapel Lane and onwards to the views of the hills in the distance around Sutton Valence. Location: [///giggle.hunt.tarnished](https://giggle.hunt.tarnished) 51°09'32" N 0°33'13" E Looking 40° NE



V9: View south from PROW KM313

Taken from PROW KM313, this view is the first site of the flowing hedgerows and open countryside you see as soon as you come through the gap in the houses the road in South Bank.

The view is taken from under a beautiful mature oak tree. Location: [///drive.harmless.grumbles](#) 51°9'24" N 0°32'57" E Looking 191° South.



V10: View towards Staplehurst village from PROW KM313

The view from PROW KM313 looking northeast towards the village in the distance. It captures the rolling countryside and mature hedgerows with the village in the distance. Location: [///draining.shuttle.recruiter](#) 51°9'20" N 0°32'11" E Looking 43° NE.



V11: View towards apple orchard from KM313

Taken from PROW KM313 looking south/ southeast it captures a host of local features in the rolling countryside. There is an oast house in the distance and rows of apple trees lined up in the distanced as a backdrop to the woodland in the distance. Location: [///decays.swims.stopped](#) 51°09'20" N 0°32'41" E Looking 150° SE



V12: View north-east towards the church

Taken from PROW KM313 where it joins KM315 it provides a lovely scene of the village set in rolling countryside with the church tower visible above the trees. Location: [///pest.chosen.stumble](#) 51°09'20" N 0°32'41" E Looking 55° NE



V13: View towards Pagehurst Farm

From PROW KM313 this provides a view of the rolling farmland and native hedgerows to the north towards Pagehurst Farm. the view captures the rolling Kent countryside and mature trees and hedgerows that border the fields Location: [///sliders.meanders.litters 51°09'20" N 0°32'41" E](https://www.sliders.meanders.litters.com/51.0920,0.53241) Looking 332° NW.



V14: View from PROW KM313 northwest across unchanged field patterns

Taken from PROW KM313 this view is all about the countryside. Mature oak trees are part of the mature hedgerows separating the fields as they have done for hundreds of years and views to woodlands in the distance are part of the overall panorama. Location: [///intent.depth.clef 51°09'20" N 0°32'32" E Looking 215° SW](#).



Views within the Conservation Area

A series of views within the Conservation Area are highlighted in the Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal. Some are long views afforded by the topology or the open countryside. Others views that include those towards the Church, around and from the Church, and to Iden Manor are considered exceptional, as these remain relatively unaltered since the major Victorian building works.

Examples include:

View looking south from the High Street, the linear road very clear; View looking from entrance to Iden Manor towards the village; View from the modern retail space looking north, the width of the road provides some indication of the wealth of the village.

