

# Stoke Climsland Neighbourhood Development Plan

## Drop-In Sessions - Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why has the Parish Council invested time and effort in creating a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

The Parish Council has created an NDP because it gives the community a real opportunity to shape the future of the area. The national and local planning system sets the rules for what development can and cannot do, but an NDP allows local people to add their own priorities. Through the Stoke Climsland NDP, we can set out a shared vision for our parish, explain what we expect from new development, identify what needs to be protected, and highlight where improvements or enhancements are required. It gives residents greater influence over planning decisions that affect everyday life, and helps ensure that future growth is sustainable and locally appropriate.

### 2. What are the benefits of a Neighbourhood plan?

Neighbourhood Planning provides the opportunity for our community to set out a positive vision for how they want their community and the overall Parish area to develop over the next few years, and as a result have a greater influence on the thorny issues related to land use and housing development. In short, if new development is necessary, then let's have it on our local terms, rather than just those set by Whitehall and County Hall!

### 3. What are the main aims of the Neighbourhood Plan?

The Plan, which has been worked on for the past few years by a dedicated group of local volunteers, aims to:

- Help to tackle the causes and impacts of climate change;
- Protect and enhance the architectural and historic character of the area;
- Improve the quality of design of all development and change within the plan area;
- Support the provision of some new housing to meet local needs and demand;
- Support good quality locally distinctive homes for the elderly, young singles, couples and families.
- Ensure that the supply of existing housing remains available to meet local needs.

### 4. What's the point of creating the Neighbourhood Plan? Cornwall Council will just ignore it, and the Government just want more and more house building!

Once it is approved in a local referendum, a Neighbourhood Development Plan becomes part of the official planning rulebook for the area. This means Cornwall Council must take it into account when deciding planning applications. It has the same legal weight as the Cornwall Local Plan.

If Cornwall Council makes a decision that goes against the Neighbourhood Plan, they have to give clear and genuine planning reasons for doing so. If those reasons are weak or not valid, the decision can be challenged in court and, if found to be wrong, overturned.

It is true that the Government wants to increase housebuilding, and Cornwall will be expected to deliver more homes. However, having a Neighbourhood Plan gives the community a strong say in how and where development happens. It allows us to set local rules and priorities so that any new housing is better designed, respects our heritage and natural environment, and provides the types of homes that local people actually need.

### 5. What does the Plan say about housing development? Will it lead to more greenfield development and urban sprawl?

By mid-2024, the rural parts of the Launceston area had already delivered more homes than the Cornwall Local Plan originally required. However, the Government updated national planning rules in December 2024, which increased the number of homes that areas like ours are expected to plan for. Because of this, the housing policies in the Cornwall Local Plan are now considered out of date, and our Neighbourhood Plan has to plan for more housing in line with the new national guidelines.

Cornwall Council has advised that our parish should plan for 54 new homes, but after subtracting homes that already have planning permission, the figure falls to 42. To allow a small margin for flexibility, we have rounded this up **to 45 homes**.

The Neighbourhood Plan does not simply promote more development. Instead, it aims to make sure that the homes we do have to plan for are the right types of homes for local people. Feedback from community consultations has been very clear: we need more affordable homes for local residents, homes that allow families to stay in the area, and suitable housing for older residents and those with disabilities. For that reason, the Plan places a strong emphasis on delivering high levels of genuinely affordable rented housing.

At the same time, local people told us they want to protect the character of each village, safeguard our heritage, and prevent unnecessary spread of development into the countryside. The Plan therefore tries to strike a careful balance: meeting local housing and economic needs while protecting what makes our parish unique and valued.

## **6. Doesn't Stoke Climsland Parish have a lot of brownfield land that could be developed before any other land comes forward?**

As always, the answer isn't straightforward.

The national planning guidance [NPPF 2024] very much encourages the use of Brownfield land, also known as Previously Developed Land [PDL], over other land where it is sustainable to do so. The inclusion of brownfield land located adjacent to or within settlements is therefore appropriate unless other environmental, social and economic considerations outweigh it.

Brownfield land [PDL] is defined in the guidance as '*Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed)*.' However it specifically excludes:

- land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings;
- land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures;
- land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and
- land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.

So for example, a site where unique flora has inhabited it, or is isolated and distant from services, would not be considered to be brownfield land. Sites where evidence of the previous use has blended into the landscape, or has created an important historic landscape, such as the relict mining or industrial sites around Lockett, are also not officially brownfield land.

Many of the Parish's former tin and copper mining sites fall into these categories, and there is no presumption for development applying to them [other than, perhaps, for minerals development].

## **7. So where will any necessary housing development take place?**

The Neighbourhood Plan makes clear that any new housing should mainly be focused in the Parish's established settlements of Stoke Climsland, Venterdon, Downgate, and Lockett, and should generally come from small infill sites, rounding-off, or the re-use of existing or previously developed buildings. This helps meet local needs while keeping growth in locations that already have services, infrastructure, and a clear settlement pattern.

A specific policy on infill within hamlets and small groups of dwellings ensures that residential development in these smaller places is sustainable, and of a scale and form that suits their character. Outside these areas, new housing will only be supported in limited rural circumstances, such as affordable homes delivered through a rural exception scheme, the replacement or subdivision of existing homes, the sensitive conversion

of redundant or historic buildings, accommodation for rural workers, or genuinely low-impact regenerative development.

The Plan also identifies Open Areas of Local Significance that are important to the setting of settlements. These areas help define each place's character, and the policy ensures that any development which does come forward preserves the openness and landscape qualities that make them valuable.

## **8. Why haven't we proposed Development Boundaries for our villages?**

The reason we have not drawn Development Boundaries around our villages is because national planning rules have changed. The Government now expects areas like ours to plan for more housing, and fixed boundaries around villages are seen as too restrictive. We have been advised that if we included Development Boundaries in our Neighbourhood Plan, the Independent Examiner would probably remove them, or Planning Inspectors might simply ignore them when deciding planning appeals. In short, they would not achieve what people might expect.

Instead, the Plan focuses on guiding where and how development should happen in a more flexible but still locally controlled way. We emphasise that any new housing in Stoke Climsland, Venterdon, Luckett and Downgate must be:

- the right scale for the village,
- able to support local services, and
- designed in a way that respects the character, setting and historic environment of the parish.

New homes should mainly come from small infill sites, rounding-off, or re-using existing or previously developed buildings. They should also help provide a good mix of homes and include safe walking and cycling links so that new residents can be fully part of village life.

By taking this approach, the Neighbourhood Plan aims to allow the housing we are required to plan for, but in a way that supports local needs and protects the rural character and heritage that make our parish special.

## **9. Can a Neighbourhood Plan stop development?**

No, a Neighbourhood Plan cannot stop development altogether — and that isn't what it is designed to do. The purpose of Neighbourhood Planning is to guide and control development so that it:

- is not too large or out of scale,
- fits in with the character of the area, and
- meets the needs of local people.

A Neighbourhood Plan can also protect important green spaces and recreation areas from being built on.

However, a Neighbourhood Plan cannot reduce the amount of development that the Local Plan or national planning policy requires. It cannot be used to block development that has already been set at a higher strategic level.

Instead, Neighbourhood Planning is about shaping development in a positive and practical way, so that whatever development does happen is the right type, in the right place, and reflects the wishes and needs of the local community.

## **10. You say it can deliver affordable housing....but what does affordable mean?**

The word "affordable" can mean different things depending on the type of housing and how it is provided, but in simple terms the Neighbourhood Plan uses it to mean:

Homes that local people on normal local wages can actually afford to live in.

We look especially at two groups:

- people earning the average local household income (about £38,700 in 2023), and
- people on lower incomes, which means the lowest quarter of local single earners (around £24,900) and joint earners (around £49,700).

For us, “affordable housing” means homes that these groups can realistically pay for, whether renting or buying, without stretching their finances beyond what is considered reasonable.

### **11. Ok, so what price should homes cost to be affordable?**

If a mortgage lender will only lend up to three-and-a-half times a household’s income, and the buyer can put down a 10% deposit, then using 2024 data:

- A household on a low but not the very lowest income in Cornwall (about £49,700 a year) could only afford a home costing up to around £193,000.
- A household on the average Stoke Climsland area local income (£38,700 a year) could only afford a home costing about £150,400.

By comparison:

- The typical house price in the area is £329,000, which would need a household income of around £74,000 to buy.
- Even the cheapest quarter of homes, which start at around £255,000, would still need an income of about £57,400.

This shows that people on normal or lower incomes simply cannot afford to buy a home on the open market unless they can save more than 10% or get help from ‘the bank of mum and dad’. Even shared-ownership homes would only be affordable if buyers could start with a very small share, under 40%.

For a single person on a low income (around £24,900 a year), buying any market home is not possible.

Renting is also difficult for many:

- Average private rents (about £10,200 per year) are only affordable for households earning £34,000 or more.
- Cheaper one-bed and two-bed rents (£7,800 and £10,200 per year) are slightly more manageable, but still too expensive for single people on low incomes.

This means that lower-income households depend on affordable and social rented housing, because both home-ownership and private renting cost more than they can reasonably pay.

### **12. So what does the NDP do to deal with this?**

The NDP asks that Affordable housing provided through development should include a tenure mix of 50% social rented and 50% shared-ownership housing, including some ‘discounted market sale’ housing if appropriate. Shared-ownership homes should be offered at the lowest possible initial equity share, with a target of 25% or less to maximise affordability. The rented element should prioritise one- and two-bedroom homes for social rent\* to meet the needs of households on or below the local average income, reflecting the most up-to-date housing need for the Parish.

\*Social rented housing typically gives a 45% to 55% of open market rent and would be affordable to all on the average or lower quartile incomes.

### **13. What does the Neighbourhood Plan say about protecting our historic environment?**

The Neighbourhood Plan places strong emphasis on safeguarding Stoke Climsland’s rich historic environment, including its ancient sites, listed buildings, Conservation Areas and its part of the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site. It recognises the Parish’s distinctive local character and the importance that residents attach to its unique architectural style and sense of place.

The Plan introduces three key policies. First, it extends protection and enhancement measures across the whole of the World Heritage Site area within the Parish, ensuring that both designated and undesignated historic buildings and structures are properly safeguarded. Second, it requires all new development to reflect the Parish's historic character, draw on its local context, and help repair or improve areas where past development has caused harm. Finally, it sets out general design principles that promote safe, accessible, visually sensitive and sustainable design, so that future development fits in well and continues to respect what makes the Parish special.

#### **14. Is the Neighbourhood Plan concerned about our natural environment?**

Yes, very much so. In addition to the statutory designations that protect the the most special areas, the Neighbourhood Plan places strong importance on protecting and enhancing the Parish's natural environment generally, including landscapes, habitats and biodiversity. Stoke Climsland has an extensive network of footpaths, green spaces and quiet lanes, as well as rich woodlands, priority habitats and wildlife corridors linked to the Tamar catchment. These areas are highly valued by residents and are essential to the Parish's rural character, tranquillity and ecological health.

The Plan includes a suite of policies to safeguard these assets. It defines and strengthens the Parish's green infrastructure network, protects wildlife habitats and requires biodiversity net gain, and ensures that existing trees, Cornish hedges and hedgerows are retained and integrated into new development. It also requires development to respect key views and the wider landscape, supports measures to preserve the Parish's dark skies through good lighting design, and promotes actions to protect water quality in rivers, streams and groundwater. Together, these policies ensure that future development contributes positively to the natural environment and the Parish's distinctive landscape setting.

#### **15. Isn't there a big conflict between the need for new housing and protecting the historic and natural environment?**

Not necessarily. The Neighbourhood Plan accepts that some new housing is needed, but it also recognises the importance of protecting what makes Stoke Climsland special, including its historic buildings, landscapes, wildlife habitats and dark rural character. Rather than choosing one priority over the other, the Plan aims to strike a careful balance.

National and local planning policy already requires development to be sustainable and protects the most important features. The Neighbourhood Plan builds on this by guiding where new homes should go, how they should be designed, and what features they must respect. This means new housing must fit sensitively within the Parish's historic setting, safeguard important green spaces and habitats, and avoid harming key viewpoints, heritage assets or the wider landscape.

In practice, this approach helps make new development better, not harder. Well-designed homes that respond to their context can meet local needs while strengthening the Parish's character, protecting valued natural areas and improving biodiversity. The Plan therefore does not prevent growth, but ensures that any growth contributes positively to the place people care about.

#### **16. What does the NDP say about traffic and heavy lorries?**

Neighbourhood Plans cannot directly control day-to-day traffic management or decide where heavy lorries should drive. However, the NDP can influence how new development deals with traffic.

The Plan includes a policy that requires larger developments to provide a Transport Assessment or Travel Plan. This means developers must show how any extra traffic created by their proposal will be managed, and how impacts on local roads will be kept as low as possible.

The Plan also makes it clear that new development will not be supported if:

- it would create an unacceptable impact on road safety, or
- the overall effect on the road network (when added to existing traffic) would be severe.

In short, while we cannot control all traffic issues, the Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that new development does not make existing problems worse.

### **17. What about parking congestion?**

Because the parish is rural and spread out, most people rely on cars. This means parking is a real problem in many places. Residents often raise concerns about emergency vehicles being blocked and the risks to pedestrians, especially children, who have to walk between parked cars.

The Neighbourhood Plan responds to this by saying that new development must provide enough parking to meet real-life demand. This includes space not only for residents, but also for visitors, carers, delivery vans and work vehicles. Parking areas should feel safe and secure for both people and their vehicles.

The Plan also says that parking spaces should be big enough for modern family-sized cars, not outdated small-car standards. As a minimum, each new home should have at least two parking spaces, and for larger homes, ideally one parking space per bedroom.

### **18. Who do I contact about an illegal parking issue?**

The Neighbourhood Plan cannot deal with illegal parking, because this is not something planning rules can control.

Cornwall Council is responsible for enforcing parking restrictions on public roads. They can issue penalty charge notices whenever parking rules apply — including evenings, nights, weekends, and bank holidays.

If you believe a vehicle is parked illegally where restrictions are in place, you can report it directly to Cornwall Council using their online reporting page: [www.cornwall.gov.uk/transport-parking-and-streets/parking/parking-fines-and-enforcement/report-an-illegally-parked-vehicle/](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/transport-parking-and-streets/parking/parking-fines-and-enforcement/report-an-illegally-parked-vehicle/)

### **19. What does the Stoke Climsland Neighbourhood Plan say about climate change?**

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises that climate change is a serious threat and includes several policies to help reduce carbon emissions and make our parish more resilient.

#### **Renewable Energy**

The Plan supports new renewable energy projects where they help Cornwall move towards 100% renewable electricity by 2030, as long as they do not cause significant harm to the landscape, wildlife, heritage or local residents.

- Wind energy: New single turbines (up to 60m) are supported in the area shown on Map 2, provided they meet safety, environmental and design criteria. Small turbines elsewhere may be supported if they help farming or rural businesses.
- Solar energy: Ground-mounted solar arrays up to 10ha are supported if they follow landscape guidance, avoid the best farmland where possible, and do not harm local amenity or public rights of way.
- Energy storage: Supported where buildings are well designed and fit sensitively into the local landscape and heritage.

#### **Low-Carbon Design**

New development is encouraged to be as energy-efficient and low-carbon as possible.

#### **Flooding and Drainage**

The Plan supports natural drainage systems (SuDS) such as swales, ponds, permeable surfaces and rain gardens to reduce flooding. Developments should work with the natural shape of the land and include simple, wildlife-friendly drainage features. Retrofitting SuDS and rainwater harvesting in existing buildings is also encouraged.

## **20. Who made up the Neighbourhood Plan's policies? Are they just the opinions of some self-appointed group with interests to protect?**

The Neighbourhood Plan was written by a Steering Group made up of Stoke Climsland Parish Councillors and local volunteers, following the requirements of national government regulations and guidance from Cornwall Council. The Steering Group took into account the views of many local residents and businesses collected in surveys over the last five years, and has engaged planning consultants to advise it [mostly using grant aid from the Government's agents called 'Locality']. The Steering Group also carried out detailed research on all the themes covered by the Plan, which has also helped to shape its policies. The Plan's local planning policies must also, by law, fit in with national and Cornwall level strategic planning policy.

The administration of the process has been managed by the Parish Council, which is the 'Qualifying Body' under the Neighbourhood Planning legislation to be responsible for the Plan and its rules on the declaration of interests has been followed. The process of writing the Plan has been entirely in the public domain.

The Plan and its policies are subject to two phases of formal community consultation [of which the current consultation is the first], checks by Cornwall Council, assessment by an expert Independent Examiner, and then a referendum of all those who are on the electoral roll in the Parish.

Taking all this into account the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan when it is eventually adopted and in use will be fair, robust and fit-for-purpose.

## **21. How can I see the evidence which supports the policies in the Stoke Climsland Neighbourhood Plan?**

Go to the Parish Council website, click on the Neighbourhood Plan tab and look for the 'Supporting Documents' page. This page includes links to all the relevant documentation.

## **22. Who can vote in a Neighbourhood plan referendum?**

Anyone on the date of the referendum who is registered to vote in the Parish.

## **23. What changes has the government made or is about to make to the planning system and the role of local councils?**

The Government has recently made, and is continuing to make, significant changes to the planning system. These changes affect how decisions are made and what roles local councils and communities play.

Here are the key points:

- A new law — the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 — has brought in major reforms to planning and local government.
- New National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) will be introduced. These will sit above Local Plans and will become the main set of rules that planning decisions must follow.
- Local Plans will focus mainly on locally specific issues, rather than repeating national policies.
- Neighbourhood Plans will have a stronger role in decision-making than before.
- Every Neighbourhood Plan will have to show how it helps to reduce climate change impacts and support climate adaptation.

Neighbourhood Plans will also be able to set policies on:

- how much development should take place and where it should go,
- objectives linked to the parish's special character or local circumstances,
- what infrastructure or affordable housing new developments must provide, and
- design requirements for new development, either across the parish or at specific sites.

Overall, this is positive news for communities who feel their Neighbourhood Plans have been ignored too often. However, it may also mean that developers take a closer interest in the process and challenge Neighbourhood Plan policies more frequently, including through the courts.

## **24. How is this NDP going to interact with the proposed new Local Plan for Cornwall 2030 to 2050?**

The NDP will feed into the new Local Plan by giving Cornwall Council a clear picture of what local people want for their area, and how future development should be shaped to reflect local needs and character.

When the new Local Plan is formally adopted, the Parish Council may wish to update the Neighbourhood Plan to look forward to 2050.

## **25. What are the things that a NDP cannot do?**

- It cannot stop development altogether. An NDP cannot say “no more houses” if national or local policy requires new homes to be built.
- It cannot reduce the housing numbers set by the Local Plan or national planning policy.
- It cannot change national planning rules, planning law, or policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- It cannot deal with issues outside planning, such as traffic enforcement, parking fines, speed limits, waste collection or public transport routes.
- It cannot block permitted development rights, which are forms of development allowed automatically by national rules.
- It cannot control private matters, such as land ownership, house prices, school places, or how private businesses operate.
- It cannot approve or refuse planning applications. That remains the job of Cornwall Council, which will be guided by the Neighbourhood Plan.

## **26. What are the things that a NDP doesn't need to do?**

A Neighbourhood Development Plan does not need to repeat things that are already covered or protected by higher-level planning policies. This means it does not need to:

- Repeat national planning rules in the NPPF or National Development Management Policies — these already apply automatically.
- Repeat policies in the Cornwall Local Plan or the Climate Emergency DPD — the NDP only needs to support them and add local detail.
- Protect nationally designated areas again, such as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These already have strong legal protection.
- Duplicate protections for the AONB / National Landscape or other landscape designations, as these are already covered by strict national and local policies.
- Cover issues outside land-use planning, such as daily traffic management, school places, public transport timetables, waste collection or policing.

In short, the NDP doesn't need to repeat or replace what is already protected at national or county level. Instead, it focuses on local priorities and detailed guidance that higher-level plans cannot provide.