

## **Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan: Local Green Space designation justification**

The draft Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan identifies five areas of land as locally valued green space to be designated as Local Green Space:

### **“Policy ENV3: Local Green Space**

**Our locally valued green spaces (green infrastructure) are identified on map X and are designated as Local Green Space. These Local Green Spaces (and the reason(s) for their designation) are:**

- a) Severn Road Park Estate Green (used for recreation and community events)**
- b) Midland Road Park Estate Green (used for recreation and community events)**
- c) Boakes Drive Green (used for recreation and community events and noted for important wildlife)**
- d) Verney Fields (part of) (local significance due to beauty, historic landscape features, tranquillity, wildlife; a rural, recreational amenity close to town centre)**
- e) Court View Newt Ponds (important wildlife)**

**These areas will be protected for the reasons and uses set out. Development proposals on or likely to impact on the sites will only be supported where they:**

- i) maintain or enhance the existing use and amenity value of the site;**
- ii) enhance the access to and use of the site where used for recreational purposes; and,**
- iii) have no adverse impact on the landscape, habitats or biodiversity of the site or (where unavoidable) satisfactorily mitigate such impact.”**

The government’s Planning Practice Guidance outlines the purpose of the designation:

**“Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.”<sup>i</sup>**

The purpose and criteria for designation are given in paragraphs 76 and 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

**“76. Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.”<sup>ii</sup>**

**77. The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:**

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;**
- where the green area is 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**
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”<sup>iii</sup>**

## Court View Newt ponds

### Justification for designation as Local Green Space

Court View Newt Ponds is an attractive area with plantation woodland, open water and grassland of rough grass and scrub and accessed from Stonehouse by footpath over the cutting and alongside Berryfields playing field up to Elm Rd. It is a significant local landmark of great interest for its Great Crested Newt Colony which is a European protected species. The animals, their eggs and the habitat are protected by law. The site is currently owned by Taylor-Wimpey developers who built Court View, the nearby estate. Taylor Wimpey were required to provide protection for greater-crested newts (a protected species) on adjacent land, now designated a Key Wildlife Site

The former Midland Railway cutting between Midland Road and Court View provides an important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including badgers and foxes. A footpath has been constructed along its southern edge (passing alongside and through Court View) it has considerable potential as a habitat and nature trail of great beauty. Sadly this idyllic wildlife haven is spoiled by debris thrown into the cutting and its ponds. The footpath connects with a causeway which carries the public footpath from St Cyr's Church to Elm Road.

- **Proximity and location:** Court View Newt Ponds is less than a kilometre away from Stonehouse town. It is close to the A419 and Stonehouse Court Hotel, mentioned in the Domesday book as Stanhus, for which Stonehouse is named.
- **Special to the local community, beauty, recreational value:** It is valued by local people for its beauty and for its wildlife value as somewhere to walk and study the newt colony. Local support for designating Court View Newt Ponds as a Local Green Space is evident in Neighbourhood Plan consultation results.
- **Wildlife:** The area is rich in wildlife and is a Key Wildlife Site and includes a priority habitat, open water, grass and scrub and plantation woodland and is home to rare and protected newts. An annual newt count and regular maintenance are carried out by volunteers under the guidance of a local environmental charity, Stroud Valleys Project.
- **Landscape character and beauty:** The character of the landscape is recognised by its designation as a Key Wildlife Site. It is also recognised within the Stonehouse Design Statement- Supplementary Planning Advice (2005) and Stonehouse Town Character Assessment (2016).
- **Historic significance:** The area has some historic significance for its probable connection to Stonehouse Court, a Grade II\* listed building.

### Evidence

Evidence is summarised in *Stonehouse NP Local Green Space Checklist Court View Newt Pond May 2016* and the following supporting documents:

1. Map of area proposed to be designated Local Green Space at Court View Newt Ponds
- 2 a and b. Photographs of Court View Newt Ponds
3. Map of Stonehouse NP\_Key wildlife sites
4. Extract from Stonehouse Town Council Regeneration and Environment Committee Minutes 4 April 2016
5. E-mail message of support of 6 May 2016 from Stroud Valleys Project for proposal to designate Court View Newt Ponds as Local Green Space
5. Stroud Valleys Project Newt Survey 15th and 16th April 2016
6. Stroud Valleys Project 2 year management plan Court View Newt Ponds
7. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Map of Natural habitat areas and open space - aerial - Stonehouse

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<sup>i</sup> <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>

ii [http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/8-promoting-healthy-communities/#paragraph\\_76](http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/8-promoting-healthy-communities/#paragraph_76)

iii [http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/8-promoting-healthy-communities/#paragraph\\_77](http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/8-promoting-healthy-communities/#paragraph_77)