



Stathern Neighbourhood Plan

2020 – 2036

Submission Version

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Descending Toft's Hill on horseback

Please note: the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has made all reasonable attempts to reference the sources of images.

Foreword

The Localism Act 2011 gave residents the power to shape the future of their communities by putting neighbourhood plans at the heart of a new planning system. Under the Act, councils and local people are able to make decisions about the impact of many aspects of future development, its design and location.

Sathern Parish Council made the decision to embrace these new powers and to draw up the 'Neighbourhood Plan', which will help to direct development across the whole parish over the lifetime of the Melton Local Plan (up to 2036). Provision is made for the Neighbourhood Plan to be kept 'live'. It will be regularly monitored and formally reviewed every 5 years or whenever there is a significant change to the Local Plan, such as an increase in housing need.

Our Neighbourhood Plan provides a local framework for future development, which must be taken into account when planning applications in the Designated Area are determined. Sathern Neighbourhood Plan has been compiled by local residents and a steering committee reporting to the Parish Council.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan of the Local Planning Authority, Melton Borough Council and the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Melton Borough Council has recognised the Designated Area of Sathern Neighbourhood Plan as the whole parish and authorised Sathern Parish Council to lead the delivery.

The preparation of our Neighbourhood Plan has seen many local consultations and surveys. The steering group has met regularly, welcoming the public to its meetings and directing the work of three theme groups, whose role it has been to develop the policies that are appropriate and meaningful to the people who live and work in our community.

This Plan, as a statutory document, will give residents a real influence in decisions on the location, character, sustainability and scope of new development and recognises the community's aspirations.

The Neighbourhood Plan is a legal document that forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the district. Planning decisions by Melton Borough Council will be made having taken this Plan into account. Our policies, as stated in this Plan, will take priority over non-strategic policies in the Local Plan, giving our community a real and lasting tool to influence the future of our neighbourhood.

Cherry Underwood

Chair, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

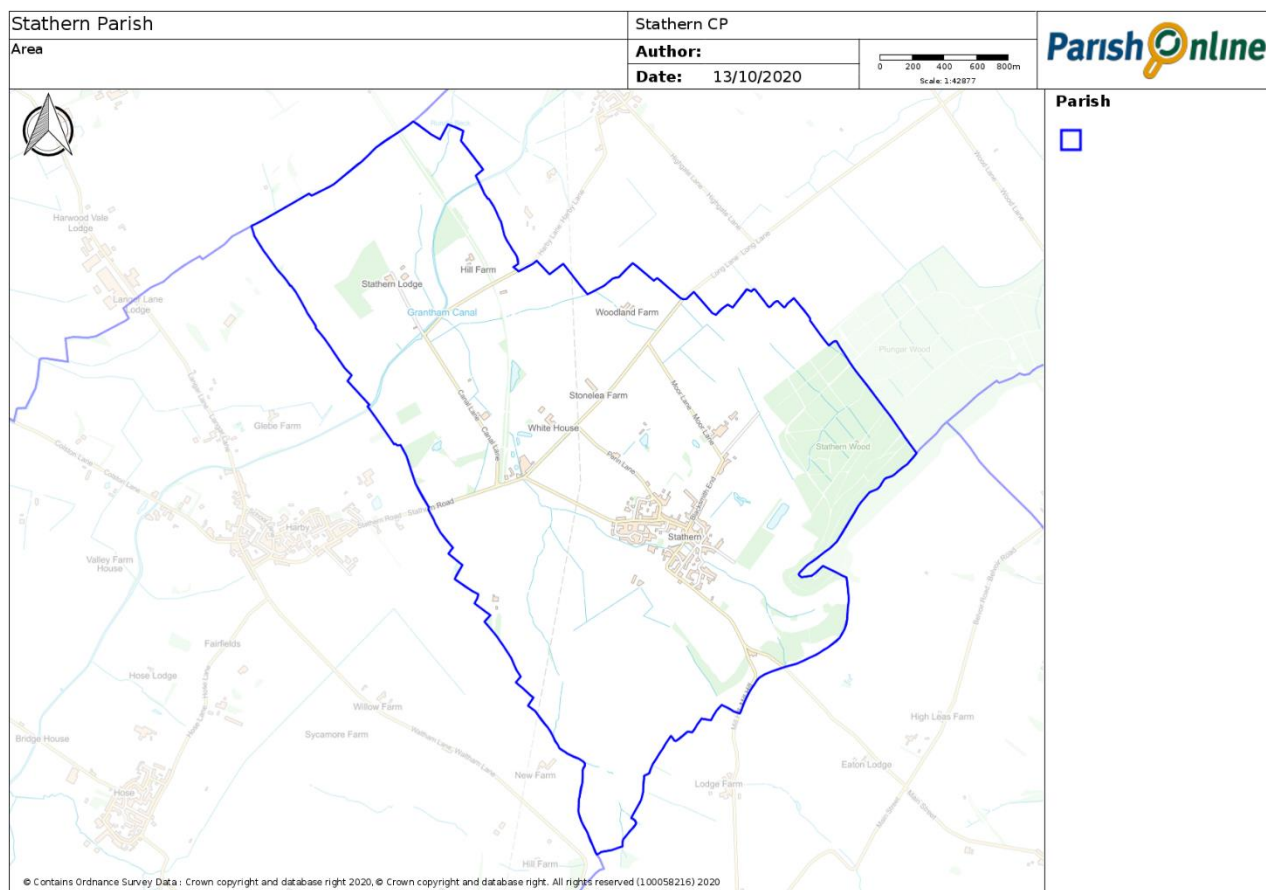
June 2020

1 About this Neighbourhood Plan

1.1 Background

Neighbourhood plans give local communities a much greater opportunity to influence future development in their areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the Government's 'bible' on planning issues. It states that 'Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community.'

Figure 1: Designated area (designated on 7 May 2019)



Other than that, the Stathern Neighbourhood Plan is able to shape and direct sustainable development in the parish. Once approved, the policies it contains will take precedence over non-strategic policies in the Local Plan.

This Neighbourhood Plan also identifies a number of community actions. These are not planning policies and are not subject to examination. They reflect future work activities that are proposed to be undertaken within the parish and involve a range of third parties to help improve the parish in line with the outcome of community consultation. On 7 May 2019, Melton Borough Council approved the application for designation as a Neighbourhood Plan area. The area to be covered by the Plan is defined by the parish boundary (see Figure 1).

1.2 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was fully established by the Parish Council and held its inaugural meeting on 17 April 2019. This group comprises both Parish Councillors and other volunteers from the community. The group members were approved by the Parish Council and given the authority and responsibility to deliver the Plan, assisted by YourLocale Neighbourhood Plan consultancy.

Three theme groups of local volunteers were formed early in the Stathern Neighbourhood Plan process to draw up policies that have informed and guided the future development described within the Plan. They focused on the following themes:

- Housing and the Built Environment
- The Natural and Historic Environment
- Sustainability: Community Facilities, Traffic and Transport, Business and Employment

The groups were guided by facilitators provided by YourLocale. They reported back to the steering group, met regularly and gathered information to support the formation of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan policies. Much of the information, which supported the decisions and provided evidence bases, has been gleaned from the extensive research, consultation and local knowledge of the group members.

1.3 The History of Stathern

The early settlement of Stathern dates from the Neolithic Era and the Bronze Age to the Anglo-Saxons, evidenced by numerous finds in the parish and around the escarpment between Toft's Hill and Mill Hill. Stathern (Staketurna, Staketherne, Stachedirne etc) was an Anglo-Saxon word for a staked enclosure, and Toft, also a Saxon word, was an enclosure larger than the site of a homestead. The Gote was the Saxon word for a watering place with stepping stones.

In Saxon times, the manor of Stathern was under the control of Leuric (Leofric) and there was probably a wooden church in the village where St Guthlac's church now stands. The remains of a Saxon cross can be seen built into the external wall of St Guthlac's Church.

As a result of the Norman Conquest, Leofric's land was confiscated and given to the Albini family of Belvoir. In 1086, it was in the hands of Robert de Toden and Geoffrey de la Guerche and was eventually divided between the Borhard and Reignes families, creating two manors in the village.

Stathern is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, the Leicestershire Survey of 1124-1129 and the Stathern Charter of 1225.



Stathern Church 1900

The church, dedicated to St Guthlac, was built in the early 1200s. There is a record in the church of the priests from Geoffrey Brito and Magister Aumaricus in about 1213 to the present day and also a record of the Chantry Priests from 1292 to 1583. The Chantry at Stathern was the earliest in Leicestershire. In the 1500s, the two manors were divided between the Belvoir Estate and Peterhouse College, Cambridge. Peterhouse College still holds the patronage of St Guthlac's Church.

In the 1600s, Stathern was affected like many villages by both the plague and the English Civil War. Entries in the Parish Register show that there were 18 deaths from the plague in six months between 1645 and 1646, including the two daughters of Colonel Francis Hacker who lived at Stathern Hall and who was a churchwarden and constable of the village. Francis Hacker was a regicide who fought against the Royalists in the English Civil War and had a leading role in the execution of Charles I. Hacker was executed in 1660 when Charles II came to the throne. His land between Toft's Hill and Mill Hill was confiscated. The house was eventually demolished and much of the stone re-utilised in the building of houses in the village.

From the 1600s to the 1700s, many charities were set up for the benefit of the inhabitants of the village. The William Hands Charity is still in existence and is administered by the Parish Council. The Charities Board can be seen in the church tower. In 1785, Revd. George Crabbe, the poet and naturalist, became the curate at Stathern under the patronage of the Duke of Rutland. He stayed for four years and described it as the happiest time of his life. During his time at Stathern he wrote "The Flora of the Vale of Belvoir", which was included in the natural history section of "Nichols' History of Leicestershire". Education in Stathern at that time was led by the clergy in the church vestry until the current school was built in 1845.

The late 1700s were a pivotal time for the inhabitants of Stathern. A meeting at Stathern in the Red Lion Inn in 1790 set out the terms for the Enclosure Act of 1792, which would change the way the village used and owned its land. The Grantham Canal was started in 1793 and completed in 1797. By the late 1800s, the canal was in competition with the railways and its use declined. The railway opened first for freight, particularly



Red Lion Street circa 1953

transporting ironstone from the quarries on the ridge. Stathern was an important junction between two railway lines, with a station located between Stathern and Harby which opened for passengers in 1879 but closed in 1953. The line was finally closed for freight in 1964.

Agriculture has always been an important part of the lives of the residents, from people in the past farming their small homesteads, keeping a cow, sheep, pigs and poultry and making butter and cheese for their own consumption, to large-scale arable farming and large milking herds supplying

the Stilton Cheese industry in the Vale of Belvoir today. Stathern had a commercial dairy making cheese in the village until WW2.

Lace-making was also introduced to Stathern, firstly on a small scale as a cottage industry and then commercially when the Braithwaite brothers built the factory in Church Lane. Lace-making was discontinued by WW1, and the factory was sold to Mr Green, who brought electricity into the village.



Church Lane Cemetery [closed] and Vale Engineering Works

In 1925, St Guthlac's Church was the first church in Leicestershire to have electricity. Today, the factory still functions as an engineering works. There was a small cottage industry of shoemaking in the village from the 19th century. A shoe factory was opened by Newbold and Burton in Blacksmith End offering local employment. It closed in the 1980s.

After WW1, as a tribute to the people who served and those who died in the Great War, the War Memorial Institute was built. It has served as a meeting place at the centre of the village for 100 years and is still in use today. In the 1920s, the Belvoir Estate auctioned properties and land in Stathern, thus loosening its ties with the village. Until the 1980s, Stathern had developed gradually. However, Stathern has been under constant pressure in the 20th century; by the exploration for oil, the threat of coal mining and the possibility of fracking in the area surrounding the village.



Aerial view of Stathern, 2010

1.4 Stathern Parish

Stathern is a substantial and attractive settlement on a 'C' class road connecting Melton Mowbray to the Vale of Belvoir. It lies some 8 miles north of Melton Mowbray at the foot of the wooded escarpment of the Vale of Belvoir. The area around the Old Rectory and St Guthlac's Church is particularly attractive with narrow lanes and pedestrian ways enclosed by high brick and stone walls. This now forms the centre of the Conservation Area which was established in 1976.

Residential development has generally been incremental but there was a surge between 1981 and 1993 when 77 houses were built, increasing the number by over 25%. In 1995, there were several facilities for the residents including Post Office, Methodist Chapel, butchers and general stores plus 2 public houses. The school had access to a sports field. Only one public house and the garage remain open with the remainder (including the sports field) either gone or threatened. Thanks to the Stathern Recreation Association, the village has a playpark, which is also used by the school for sports activity. The village has also gained the Coffee Shot café and village store adjacent to Stathern Garage.

Although census data is currently almost 10 years old, it remains the best means of comparing communities. At the time of the 2011 Census, the Stathern Parish was home to around 728 residents living in 294 households. Analysis of the 2011 Census suggests that between 2001 and 2011, the population in the local area grew by around 8% (56 people). During this period, it is estimated that the number of dwellings increased by 5% (13).

There is evidence of an ageing population, with the number of over 60-year-olds up from 22% of the total population in 2001 to 25% in 2011. In line with national trends, the local population is likely to get older as average life expectancy continues to rise.

Home ownership levels are very high, with around 81% of households owning their homes outright, or with a mortgage or loan. At 7%, the share of households living in social rented accommodation is very low when compared with regional and national rates.

There is evidence of under-occupancy, suggesting a need for smaller homes of one or two bedrooms which would be suitable for residents needing to downsize, small families and those entering the housing market. Providing suitable accommodation for elderly residents will enable them to remain in the local community and release under-occupied larger properties onto the market which would be suitable for growing families.

There is a predominance of large detached houses and an under-representation of housing for single people, with just 2% of dwellings having one bedroom. Land Registry data indicates there has been some new build housing market activity over recent years, but this has been exclusively high-value detached housing.

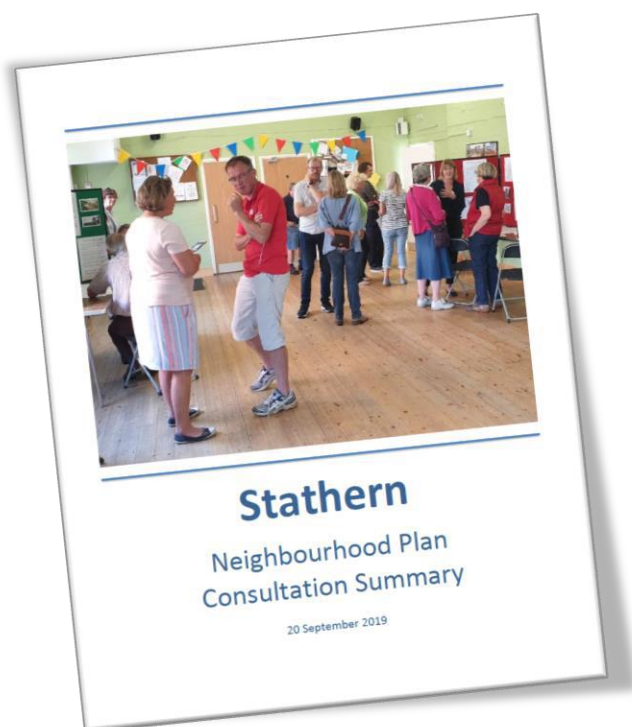
Deprivation is not a significant issue in the local area but Index of Multiple Deprivation domain data suggests that some residents may find it difficult to access owner-occupation or access the private rental market.

2 The Consultation Process

The Neighbourhood Plan steering group's mandate was to drive the process, consult with the local community, gather evidence to support emerging policies and prepare the Plan.

A detailed chronology of the approach to consultation and the outcomes is contained within the Consultation Statement that is included as Appendix 2 of the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

An open event in September 2019 was held in the 'War Memorial Institute' Village Hall and attended by 70 people. This event offered an opportunity for people to understand what the Neighbourhood Plan was about and to offer thoughts about how Stathern might look in the years to come.



Open Event at the WMI Village Hall in September 2019

The steering group also gathered statistical information about the parish from a range of sources to provide a body of evidence on which to base this Plan's emerging policies.

In October 2019, three theme groups were formed, comprising members of the steering group along with other residents and stakeholders. The groups met into 2020 and gathered the evidence needed to progress ideas and to formulate policies.

Over 30 people played an active role in the theme groups during the course of initiating, exploring, researching and drafting the plan. They have given considerable time, energy, enthusiasm, skill and experience to the whole process. The attention to detail, the due diligence and the passion for our village has been exemplary.

In our experience, and in discussions with Locality, this level of commitment and contribution is above and beyond what is normally expected. To have over 30 people actively involved, in often weekly meetings or discussions for over a year, is a real reflection of the passion in the village.

All the theme groups had to adopt their approaches and how they met when coronavirus led to lockdown. Once again, the resilience and commitment shone through and work carried on!

The Neighbourhood Plan was developed from these meetings and discussions, from all the other consultations and interviews conducted by members of the steering group and from research and evidence collected. As the policies were being developed and refined, the steering group liaised with officers from Melton Borough Council to ensure that emerging policies were in general conformity with the Melton Local Plan.

Unfortunately, Neighbourhood Plan consultation events that had been arranged to share the emerging policies with residents of the parish, had to be postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.



At the point of pre-submission consultation, the restrictions are still such that we cannot provide for a public open event and face-to-face meetings are not appropriate.

Consultations in 2019 prior to coronavirus lockdown

To ensure that as many stakeholders as possible are able to comment on the draft plan prior to submission, the Neighbourhood Plan steering group and Parish Council will share the substantive elements of the plan online through the parish website, village WhatsApp and Facebook pages. Using the volunteer network that has evolved throughout the village, we will ask for 'wardens' to notify their area that the Plan is available. If anyone would like a hard copy, this will be provided and we can follow up with a phone call in order to provide accessible consultation and involvement opportunities for everyone.

3 A Plan for Stathern Parish

The policies of the Stathern Neighbourhood Plan are set within the context of the plan-making framework for England. The scope and content of the Stathern Neighbourhood Plan has been shaped by the priorities and aspirations of the local community, led by the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan steering group. This Plan covers the period up to 2036. In drawing up this Plan, the following vision and aims have been prepared:

3.1 A Vision for 2036

Our vision for Stathern is to conserve the good things from the past whilst shaping a vibrant, tranquil, sustainable and neighbourly village fit for the 21st century.

Our aims are to:

Be Vibrant

- welcome and support a diverse community
- encourage businesses, services and amenities suitable for our evolving village
- promote Stathern's wide variety of community organisations and assets
- enable safe active lifestyle activities for all - taking advantage of our village and countryside amenities.

Be Tranquil

- celebrate and cherish our delightful rural setting, nestling at the foot of the Vale of Belvoir's escarpment
- conserve the green spaces and network of footpaths, in and around the village, for the enjoyment of all
- permit measured development which preserves the character of the village and maintains safety on our roads
- reduce the environmental impact from noise and light pollution
- promote wildlife corridors, waterways and ponds, plus mature tree planting in new developments.

Be Sustainable

- encourage building with materials to respect and reflect Stathern's traditional character and setting
- develop at a pace which enables absorption and integration, with commensurate services and infrastructure
- protect views and skyline from and of Tofts Hill, and Stathern Wood - only building on lower lying land
- encourage variety on new developments with mixed housing types, plot sizes and frontages
- enhance and support the rural economy including access to high speed technology.

Be Neighbourly

- encourage neighbourliness – look out for each other and support Neighbourhood Watch
- welcome newcomers and new businesses, encouraging their involvement in village life
- encourage wide support for the village’s community and leisure activities and events
- link new developments to the village by expanding the network of footpaths
- promote communications within the village and among its organisations.

“Be the village where people still greet each other on the street”

This will be achieved by:

Housing and the Built Environment

- managing and sustaining any growth in keeping with Stathern’s village character
- locating any new housing developments on sites that minimise negative impact on existing traffic, parking, community resources and amenities, and meeting a locally demonstrated housing need including homes for older people and for young couples
- providing existing residents with accommodation suitable for their (changing) circumstances.

The Natural and Built Environment

- maintaining Stathern as an independent and distinctly separate settlement, protecting and, where possible, enhancing the open spaces within and surrounding the village
- protecting the setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets and avoiding harm to the Conservation Area
- preserving the character of Stathern by retaining important views and areas of separation
- improving access to countryside and thus promoting recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages to enjoy.

Community Facilities and Amenities

- protecting, and where possible enhancing, valued existing facilities
- welcoming new facilities where they are needed by the community
- making efforts to ensure that the Primary School thrives as an important local resource.

Traffic and Transport

- reducing the use of internal combustion engine powered transport by ensuring new development encourages the use of electric powered vehicles
- considering, where possible, the creation of footpaths and cycle ways to key village services
- discouraging new development which severely increases private commuter traffic through the village.

Businesses and Employment

- supporting employment in Stathern where there is no detrimental impact on local or residential amenity.

3.2 Planning Context

The procedure for the making of a Neighbourhood Plan is prescribed within the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Regulations have informed the preparation of policies for the Stathern Neighbourhood Plan, in particular ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan:

- contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- is in general conformity with the strategic policies of Melton Borough Council and has regard for the policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as well as meeting a range of EU obligations.

3.3 Sustainable Development in Stathern

A definition of sustainable development is provided within the NPPF. It describes three dimensions to sustainable development and these dimensions give rise to the need for planning to perform a number of roles as follows:

3.3.1 An Economic Role

This helps to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure.

Whilst the community of Stathern is primarily residential, there is a desire to safeguard its employment locations, including the farming community. We therefore wish to retain the current level of employment and develop it further where possible.

3.3.2 A Social Role

This helps to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by promoting the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and by creating a high-quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing.

The Stathern Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that any new housing delivers a mix of housing types to meet present and future needs and to ensure that we support the community's health as well as its social and cultural wellbeing. We are particularly looking to encourage the provision of bungalows for older people as well as some smaller and more affordable homes. We are also seeking to support and enhance existing community facilities and to improve services for younger people.

3.3.3 An Environmental Role

This helps to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment. As part of this, we aim to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including supporting the move to a low carbon economy. In order to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, we are seeking to ensure that:

- special open spaces within the Neighbourhood Plan area are protected from development, to protect the village identity and retain the rural nature of its surroundings
- development preserves and contributes to the attractive local countryside, including replacement of any hedging lost, improvement of existing hedging and encouraging new planting
- development recognises the need to protect and, where possible, improve biodiversity and important habitats and includes adding hedging to boundaries of new developments.

This document sets out local considerations for delivering sustainable development across Stathern. Development proposals should meet the requirements of all relevant policies in this Plan and be in line with Melton Borough and national policies.

4 Housing and the Built Environment

4.1 The Strategic Context

The Local Plan for Melton has updated the housing need across the borough and the allocation of housing within it. It states that there is a requirement to provide for at least 6,125 new dwellings between 2011 and 2036 across the borough. Of this, nearly two thirds of the dwellings needed over the Plan period will be built in the Melton Mowbray Main Urban Area, with the remainder spread across the remainder of the borough.

The Local Plan establishes a hierarchy of settlements to help to determine the most appropriate locations for the remaining development (35% of the total or 1,822 houses). On the basis of this hierarchy, Stathern is classified as a 'Service Centre'. The Local Plan describes Service Centres as 'villages that act as a local focus for services and facilities in the rural area. They have the essential services and facilities (primary school, access to employment, fast broadband, community building) and regular public transport, as well as a number of other important and desirable services such that they are capable of serving basic day to day needs of the residents living in the village and those living in nearby settlements. These villages should have all four of the essential services and a good range of important and other facilities'.

The Local Plan identifies that over the period 2011 to 2036, Stathern is required to accommodate 91 dwellings. In terms of meeting this requirement, the Local Plan also identifies that, as at 31 March 2017, 10 dwellings had been built since 2011 and there was planning permission for 10 further dwellings. This gave a residual requirement for 71 dwellings to 2036. To meet this remaining requirement, the Local Plan has allocated two sites at Stathern, Point Farm on Main Street for 65 dwellings (STAT 1) and land adjacent to Levesley House, 14 City Road for 10 dwellings (STAT 2), resulting in an estimated capacity of 75 dwellings.

Therefore, the Local Plan requirement for the village to accommodate 71 dwellings is already due to be exceeded. Furthermore, the Local Plan identifies a Reserve Site at Stathern, to come forward if it helps to meet the identified housing requirement and development needs of Stathern and if it helps to secure the sustainability of the settlement. It will also be necessary to demonstrate that the Local Plan allocations cannot meet the above requirements on their own.

In view of the extent of development that has taken place in the parish over recent years and the allocations within the Local Plan which exceed the minimum requirement for Stathern, it has been agreed that no specific residential allocation will feature in the Neighbourhood Plan. This situation will, however, be monitored and the Neighbourhood Plan formally reviewed on a regular basis to ensure continued general conformity with the Local Plan, particularly to make sure that changes in housing need are addressed appropriately.

4.2 Limits to Development

In historical terms, rural communities like Stathern have often been protected by the designation of a village envelope (or settlement boundary) adopted in a statutory Local Plan. With a settlement boundary in place, development is only permitted inside of the envelope or outside of the envelope in specified circumstances. The purpose of the Limits to Development Policy is to ensure that sufficient land to meet residential and commercial need is available in the right locations within the parish.

Limits to Development were established to clarify where new development activity is best located. They are used to define the extent of a built-up part of a settlement and to distinguish between areas where, in planning terms, development would be acceptable in principle, such as in the main settlement, and where it would not be generally acceptable, such as in the open countryside.

The new Limits to Development (Figure 2) follows the last village envelope used by Melton Borough Council but has been updated to take into account recent housing allocations and site allocations proposed through the Local Plan 2011-2036, which was adopted by full council on 10 Oct 2018.

Within the defined Limits to Development, an appropriate level of development is acceptable in principle, although some sites within the red-line boundary are protected from development and all proposed development will be required to take into account the policies within this Neighbourhood Plan. Thus, focusing development within the Limits to Development boundary will help to support existing services within the village centre and help to protect the village's countryside setting, the natural environment and the remainder of the Plan area from inappropriate development.

The parish is rural in nature and surrounded by open and attractive countryside. In planning terms, land outside a defined Limits to Development boundary, including any small groups of buildings or small settlements, is treated as countryside. This approach is also supported by this Plan in particular, because it will help to ensure that development is focused in more sustainable settlements with a greater range of services, and where facilities and infrastructure have capacity for the expansion. It will also help to maintain the special landscape character of the parish, protecting the countryside for its own sake as an attractive, accessible and non-renewable natural resource.

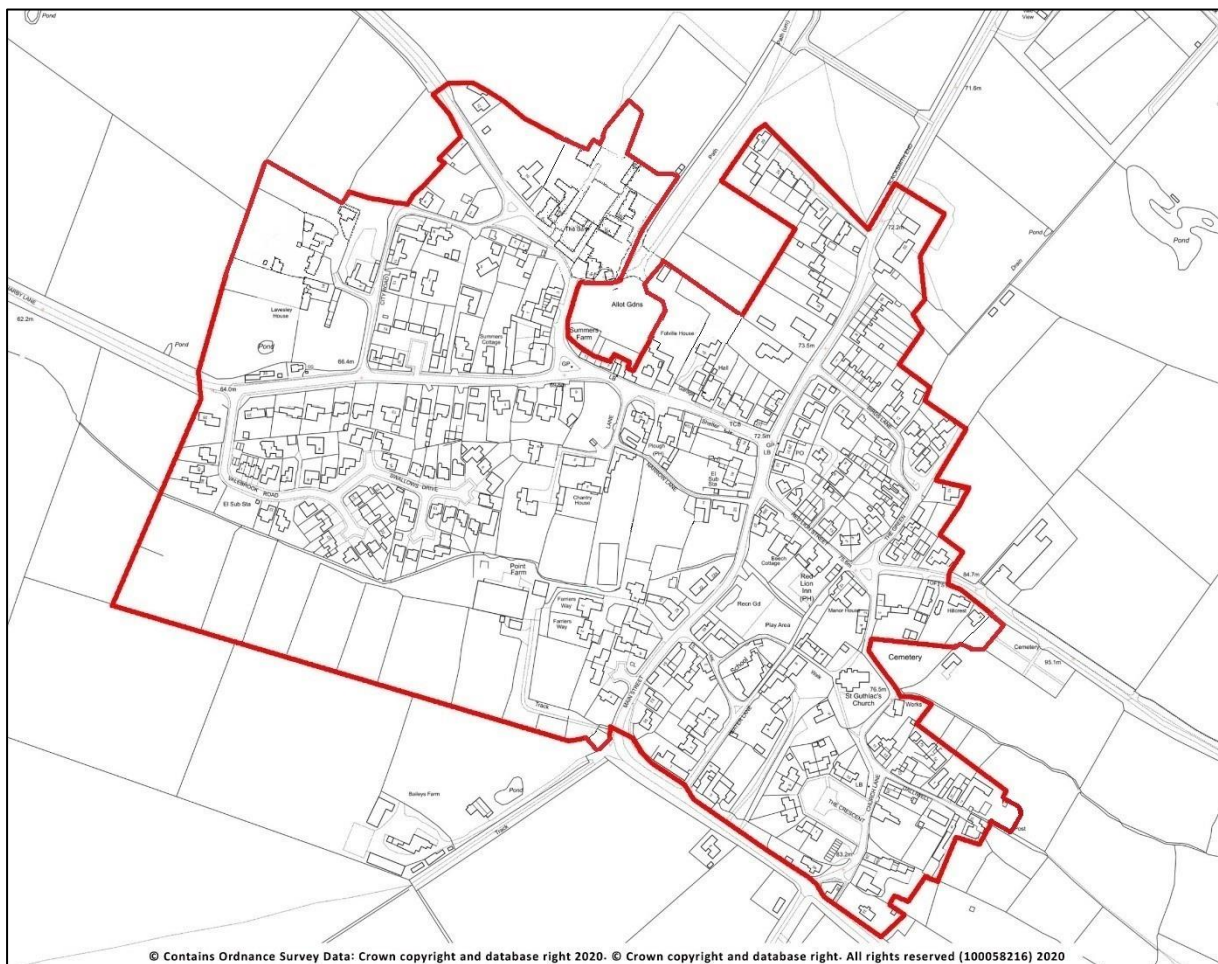
Methodology

The Limits to Development boundary has been determined using the following criteria:

1. The new Limits to Development (Figure 2) follows the last village envelope used by Melton Borough Council but has been updated to take into account recent housing allocations and site allocations proposed through the Local Plan 2011-2036, which was adopted by full council on 10 Oct 2018.
2. Approved (as of 04.07.20) or completed dwellings on the edge of the former village envelope have been included, with the Limits to Development boundary being coterminous with each development site's red boundary. Each planning application has a site plan which shows the application site in red, and any additional land in the ownership of the applicant in blue.

3. The proposed residential site allocations within the Melton Local Plan have been included.
4. Defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, woodland, gardens, streams, brooks, formal leisure uses, and roads have been used as the defined boundaries where possible or practical.
5. Non-residential land, which is countryside, agricultural, paddock, meadow, woodland and/or another green-field use, has been excluded.
6. Isolated development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement has been excluded.
7. Sections of large curtilages of buildings which relate more to the character of the countryside than the built form have been excluded.
8. The curtilages of buildings which closely relate to the character of the built form and have enclosing features have been included.

Figure 2: Limits to Development



POLICY H1: LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan area will be supported on sites within the Limits to Development as identified in Figure 2 above where it complies with the policies of this Plan. Land outside the defined Limits to Development will be treated as open countryside, where development will be carefully controlled in line with local and national strategic planning policies.

4.3 Windfall Sites

‘Windfall sites’ are expected to come forward over the lifetime of the Plan. These are small infill or redevelopment sites that come forward unexpectedly and have not been specifically identified for new housing in a planning document. These small sites often involve redundant or under-utilised buildings, including former farm buildings, or a restricted gap in the continuity of existing buildings and will usually comprise capacity for only a single dwelling, although Local Plan thresholds on page 30, para 4.2.17 of the Local Plan will apply. The windfall policy is based on experience of development within Stathern, taking into account the resultant impact on the village.

POLICY H2: WINDFALL SITES

Small residential development proposals will be supported subject to proposals meeting all relevant requirements set out in other policies in this Plan and where such a development:

- a) is within the Limits to Development of the village of Stathern
- b) helps to meet the identified housing requirement for the parish
- c) provides safe vehicular and pedestrian access without causing unacceptable impacts that cannot be mitigated
- d) is in keeping with the character of the area
- e) has roof heights limited to those of surrounding buildings
- f) does not result in a loss of amenity for neighbouring occupiers by reason of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, visual intrusion or noise
- g) retains existing important natural boundaries such as trees, hedges and streams.

4.4 Housing Mix

Providing a wide choice of high-quality homes is essential to supporting sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities. This will help to underpin a well-balanced mix, vital to the on-going viability of local services and the prosperity of the community, particularly in light of the increasingly ageing population.

The 2011 Census for Stathern and the 2017 Leicestershire and Leicester Housing & Economic Development Needs Assessment shows that, in line with national trends, the local population is likely to get older as average life expectancy continues to rise.

Evidence from Stathern’s 2011 Census shows that home ownership is high with 81% of properties owner-occupied; this is substantially higher than for Melton Borough (72%) and England (63%). Between 1991 and 2019, the number of homes in the parish increased by 23% (59 dwellings) to the current 314. Detached properties comprise 61.5% of the housing stock in the parish, dominating the mix of properties, compared with Melton Borough (41%). The average household size is 2.5 people whilst the average number of bedrooms is 3.4, implying a level of under-occupancy. This suggests a need for smaller homes of one to three bedrooms suitable for residents wishing to downsize, as well as providing homes for smaller families and those entering the housing market.

Providing suitable accommodation for older residents will enable them to remain in the local community and release under-occupied larger properties onto the market suitable for growing families.

Local responses from public consultation exercises, open events and up-to-date evidence of local need through the Stathern Housing Needs Survey suggest that there is a parish-wide need for 18 smaller homes as follows:

- a) 9 x affordable rented 1 bed homes (including 1 bungalow)
- b) 1 x affordable rented 2 bed bungalow
- c) 2 x shared ownership properties (one each of 2 and 3 bed homes)
- d) 6 x open market homes: 5 x 2 bed homes (one a bungalow) and one 3 bed house

This Plan, therefore, proposes the following policy to help ensure that housing developments address the above identified needs within the parish, and, in particular, the need for smaller family housing and homes suitable for both younger people starting on the housing ladder and older people downsizing.

POLICY H3: HOUSING MIX

New housing development proposals should provide a mixture of housing types specifically to meet identified local needs in Stathern. Priority will be given to dwellings of 3 bedrooms or fewer and to homes suitable for older people, including 2 and 3 bed bungalows and dwellings suitable for those with restricted mobility. The inclusion of four-bedroom houses in housing developments will be supported where they are fewer in number to the total of one, two and three bed dwellings in any development.

4.5 Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the definitions set by the Government in the National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2019). The definitions include:

- a) affordable housing for rent, which includes, for example, rents at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable)
- b) starter homes, as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections
- c) discounted market sales housing, which is sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value, with eligibility determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices, and with provisions in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households
- d) other affordable routes to home ownership, which is housing for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period

of intermediate rent). There is an affordable housing mismatch across the whole of Melton Borough: for general mortgage requirements the industry standard mortgage multiplier is 4x single and 3x joint salary but affordability in Melton requires at least an 8x multiple based on the house price to gross annual workplace-based earnings.

The Stathern Housing Needs Survey (HNS), undertaken by Midlands Rural Housing on behalf of Melton Borough Council in November 2019, identified local needs for additional 1 bed rented accommodation and affordable homes as well as a small number of 2 and 3 bed open market homes. Collectively, these would support the growing number of young single adults living in the family home, elderly single people living in expensive, unsuitable, privately rented accommodation and homes for people wishing to downsize. This increases the demand for additional bungalows of differing tenures, with shared garden and services suitable for people with restricted mobility or support care needs – including adaptations to existing homes where possible.

Evidence from the 2019 Stathern HNS has demonstrated support for affordable units to be provided for those individuals in housing need who have a local connection. The current parish-wide need for 9 x affordable rented 1 bed homes, 1 x 2 bed bungalow and 2 x shared ownership properties (one each of 2 and 3 bed homes) cannot currently be met by the properties available for sale or rent in Stathern, so the provision of affordable rented and starter homes, or shared ownership homes where local need is prioritised, will be supported.

The Parish Council considers that, where possible, affordable housing within the Stathern Neighbourhood Plan area shall be allocated to eligible households with a connection to Stathern defined as being where at least one member of the household:

- a) was born in Stathern
- b) presently resides in the parish and has, immediately prior to occupation, been lawfully and ordinarily resident within the parish for a continuous period of not less than twelve months
- c) was ordinarily resident within Stathern for a continuous period of not less than three years but has been forced to move away because of the lack of affordable housing; or is presently employed or self-employed on a full-time basis in Stathern and whose main occupation has been in the parish for a continuous period of not less than twelve months immediately prior to occupation
- d) has a need to move to Stathern to be close to a relative or other person in order to provide or receive significant amounts of care and support. Only where no households can be found that meet any of the above criteria shall affordable housing within the Plan area be allocated to otherwise eligible households from elsewhere across Melton Borough.

POLICY H4: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing developments of 11 or more dwellings and/or where the floorspace exceeds 1,000m² will be expected to provide a minimum of 32% affordable housing on the site (including affordable home ownership), or make an equivalent financial contribution in lieu, having particular regard to the local needs of the village, market conditions, economic viability and infrastructure requirements.

Developments should be ‘tenure blind’, where affordable housing is indistinguishable from market dwellings and is spread throughout the development. The provision of affordable homes for people with a local connection will be supported.

4.6 Housing Design

Stathern is an ancient village that has grown organically over at least the past nine centuries. The character has evolved and varies in architectural form with a wide range of building types and a fine collection of historic buildings and other heritage assets. Generally, the village form is quite loose knit with dwellings interspersed with important open areas enhancing its character. The older core of the village centred around St Guthlac’s Church and the Old Rectory is particularly attractive with narrow lanes and pedestrian pathways enclosed by tall brick and stone boundary walls. Most of the properties are two storeys with the Old Rectory being the notable exception.

Buildings vary in age, style and materials - and can be both randomly arranged or more regimented. Detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings exist in harmony, an eclectic mix right up to the pavement side or set around a grassed area or set back amongst trees and greenery. Boundary walls of all descriptions are the essence of the streets varying from green verges, boundary hedgerows and individual trees together with stone and brick boundary walls.

Building materials are varied and include ironstone and red brick cottages; rendered or whitewashed buildings; and a mixture of red, brown and blue pantiles or slate roofing. Chimneys are also a strong visual element in the street scene.

Open spaces within the settlement are important, but also, beyond the village, there are many more open areas which contribute to its attractive setting, nestling serenely at the foot of the Vale of Belvoir’s wooded escarpment.

The soft landscaping of the village is a key contributor to Stathern’s local distinctiveness. Vegetation from gardens and the remaining grass verge break up the built environment and this balances the variety of the hard and soft character of the village and leads to the varied experience of the village scene. Table 1 (below) demonstrates the local character and distinctiveness of Stathern.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be designed in accordance with current industry best practice. The SuDS Manual, CIRIA (C753), ensures that the systems deliver both the surface water quantity and the wider benefits, without significantly increasing costs. Good SuDS design can be key for creating a strong sense of place and pride in the community for where they live, work and visit, making the surface water management features as much a part of the development as the buildings and roads.

POLICY H5: HOUSING DESIGN

Proposals for new or replacement dwellings and extensions to existing dwellings will be supported where they comply with the following criteria as appropriate and relevant to the development concerned:

- a) development should enhance and reinforce the local distinctiveness, character and landscaping traditions of the area in which it is situated (see Table 1 below), particularly where schemes are located within the Conservation Area and areas impacting upon it
- b) development should incorporate, where possible, detailing of fenestration, chimneys, doors and roofline pitch to be in keeping with the local vernacular
- c) contemporary and innovative materials and design will be supported where positive improvement can be robustly demonstrated without detracting from the historic context
- d) the predominant use of slate or pantile sloped roofing and walls of ironstone, red brick or a mixture of both is supported
- e) adequate off-road parking is to be provided in line with Leicestershire Highways standards; tandem parking should be avoided
- f) houses of two or more bedrooms should have a garden or other outside amenity space appropriate to their size
- g) the development should not disrupt the visual amenities of the street scene, nor harm any significant wider landscape views or environmental asset, including significant natural habitats
- h) proposals should ensure that they do not have unacceptable impacts on general amenity, privacy, noise and ambient light levels in the immediate locality and should make appropriate provision for the storage of waste and recyclable materials and their containers
- i) development should be enhanced by fostering biodiversity and relate well to the topography of the area, with existing trees of a good arboricultural value and hedges preserved, whenever possible. Where this is demonstrably not practicable, they should be replaced with new plantings on a two-for-one basis, using native species, either on site or elsewhere in the near vicinity
- j) within new residential layouts, provision should be made for wildlife, including roof design and construction meeting RSPB guidelines for internal bird nest boxes, and use of hedges (or fences with ground level gaps) to maintain connectivity of habitat for hedgehogs
- k) lighting design, location, type, lux levels and times of use should follow current best- practice e.g. by applying the guidelines in Guidance note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK: Bat Conservation Trust / Institution of Lighting Professionals, 2018 or apply updated published guidance
- l) where possible, enclosure of plots should be of native hedging, locally sourced wooden fencing, or stone and/or brick walls of rural design. Any enclosures that are necessarily removed through the development process should be reinstated in keeping with the original
- m) development should incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques to meet high standards for energy and water efficiency, including:
 - the use of renewable and low carbon energy technology, as appropriate

- energy and communication network cabling connections should be sited below ground
 - development proposals should demonstrate that the consumption of wholesome water per dwelling is calculated in accordance with the methodology in the water efficiency calculator, and should not exceed 110 litres/person/day.
- n) having regard to climate change, development should incorporate sustainable drainage systems with viable long-term maintenance regimes to minimise vulnerability to flooding from streams, dykes and surface water run-off. All developments must consider impacts both within the site and in the surrounding area of the development within the development period
- o) for developments of greater than ten, 10% of houses should comply to a standard of housing that allows for an accessibility standard of access and use.
- p) all major developments shall ensure that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water run-off are put in place unless demonstrated to be inappropriate.
- all schemes for the inclusions of SuDS should demonstrate that they have considered all four aspects of good SuDS design: quantity, quality, amenity and biodiversity, and that the SuDS and development will fit into the existing landscape
 - the completed SuDS schemes should be accompanied by a maintenance schedule detailing maintenance boundaries, responsible parties and arrangements to ensure that the SuDS are maintained in perpetuity
 - where possible, all non-major development should look to incorporate these same SuDS principles into their designs
 - SuDS should be designed in accordance with current industry best practice
 - developers should consider opportunities to incorporate water re-use within developments.
- q) all applications for new development shall demonstrate that all surface water discharges have been carried out in accordance with the principles laid out within the drainage hierarchy below, in such that a discharge to the public sewerage systems are avoided. Generally, the aim should be to discharge surface water run off as high up the following hierarchy of drainage options as reasonably practicable:
- 1 Into the ground (infiltration), albeit due to high ground water and low permeability in the area covered by this NHP, this is generally not seen as appropriate.
 - 2 to a surface water body
 - 3 to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system
 - 4 to a combined sewer.

Table 1: Stathern - local character and distinctiveness

1 Building Types



Through the centuries



Heritage



Eclectic

2 Materials



Ironstone and whitewash



Brick



Mixed 'modern' materials

3 Layout and Plot Usage



House set back, down a drive

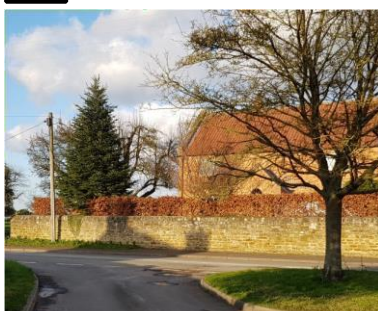


Boundary at the roadside



Front gardens with parking

4 Walls and Hedges



Wall and beech hedge



Evergreen



Stone walls

5 Scale and Height



Mixed heights and storeys



Bungalows



Traditional rural

6 Road and Street Scenes



Birds Lane



Valebrook



School Lane

7 Roof shapes and coverings



Slates, pantiles and chimneys



Pitched roofs and pantiles



Dormers and gable ends

8 Green Space and Trees



The Paddock, Main Street



City Road



Green swathes

5 The Natural and Historic Environment

5.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Neighbourhood Plan deals with the *environmental agenda* of *sustainable development* together with open spaces of community value from the *social agenda*, as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), page 5. The chapter aims to balance the requirement for appropriate development in the Plan area against the value of environmental and other features that are both *special* – appreciated, in their own right and as community assets, by local people - and *significant* for their wildlife and history. It also deals with broader environmental issues of concern to the community, including protection and enhancement of local biodiversity and planning for resilience to climate change.

5.1.1 Environmental protection as part of sustainable development

Care was taken during preparation of the Plan to ensure that the policies (and the sites and areas of environmental significance covered by them) were not unduly restrictive on development during the Plan's lifetime. Of the total area of all the open and currently undeveloped land in the parish, 23% is protected from potential environmentally damaging development, while less than 8% of the settlement and immediately adjacent area restricts development for reasons of environmental protection. The key statistics are:

1. Total area of Neighbourhood Plan area	c.900 ha
2. Open and undeveloped land	c.872ha
3. Area designated or recognised in this Plan for environmental protection	c.200 ha
4. Area within the Limits to Development	c.28 ha
5. Environmental protection within number 4 above	c. 2.2 ha

5.1.2 Landscape, geology and setting

The Plan area extends north-west to south-east from the middle of the Vale of Belvoir to the rim of the Belvoir Escarpment, a vertical difference of 135m (nearly 450 feet). Combined with the steepness of the escarpment, this provides the area with spectacular (for Leicestershire) views, a deeply rural character and a sense of space. Whilst the Vale has large fields – both pasture and arable – the areas around Stathern village, and up the slope of the escarpment, have smaller fields, many of which are under permanent grass, with hedges and standard trees. The village and escarpment are well-wooded – also unusual for north-east Leicestershire – although the larger area of the Vale has only small plantations and copses. The Grantham Canal, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for aquatic wildlife and a site of historical significance, winds across the Vale, and the course of the long-disused Great Northern and London & North Western Joint Railway runs south to north, passing through the site of Harby & Stathern Station.

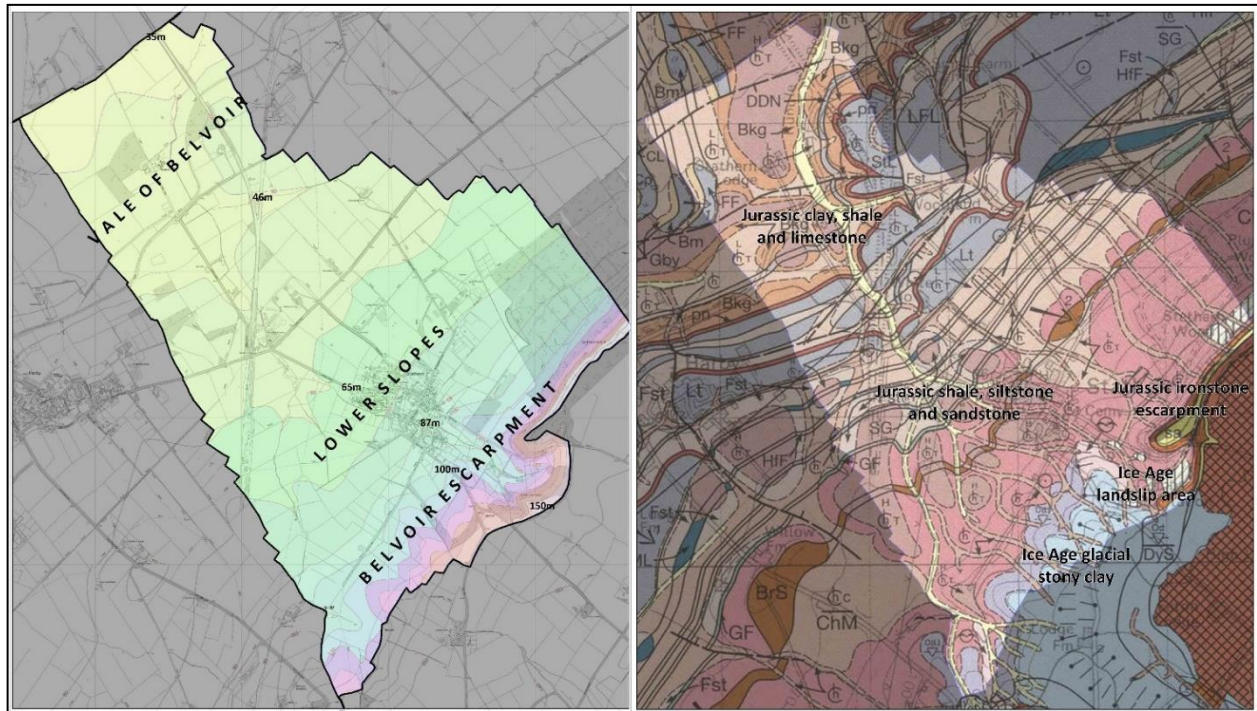
The whole area is underlain by gently south-east dipping layers of alternating clay, siltstone, limestone and ironstone of Jurassic age (about 200 million years old); the different hardness of these rock types, the gentle dip and erosion have combined to produce a landscape in the Vale of

low steps and ridges. The village of Stathern is located on one of these steps while the escarpment that rises steeply above it is the result of an outcrop of a thicker and harder layer of rock which has resisted erosion. The area is of particular interest to geologists and geomorphologists, partly for the fossils of Jurassic age that can be found here, but mainly for the Ice Age landforms that survive: the Vale of Belvoir was the site of a huge mass of stagnant ice which rested against the escarpment. When the ice finally melted, the edge of the escarpment collapsed, causing giant landslips whose traces can still be mapped today.

Figure 3: Topography (left) and geology of the Plan area.

Geological map adapted from British Geological Survey online mapping.

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5.1.3 Historic environment

The characteristic landscape and environmental features of Stathern are largely the result of its history: who has lived here, and what they have bequeathed to the layout and appearance of the Plan area. Archaeology shows that people were here in Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age times, and that there was at least a building or farm and associated fields close to the modern village site during the Roman occupation. However, visible evidence of history begins with the village itself, which must date from soon after the arrival of Anglo-Saxon people in about the 6th century.

History from the place-name

Stathern

Literally a 'stake-thorn'; this compound may describe a particular kind of thorn or perhaps a thorn tree marking a boundary.

Elements and their meanings:

- Staca (Old English) a stake
- Pyrne (Old English) a thorn bush

Source: Key to English Place Names, University of Nottingham
<http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/>

The place-name Stathern is Old English – the language of the incomers, who adopted and adapted the landscape of, and interbred with, the native British people who had lived through and assimilated Romano-British culture. Despite significant changes after the Norman invasion and in the late 18th century, the broad layout of the parish – the village, its fields, woods and roads – is

a legacy of these ‘dark ages’ and early medieval people. The parish church, although a 13th century building, is likely to be on an older sacred site in the original Anglo-Saxon village, as its dedication is to Guthlac (674-714), a 7th century hermit-saint.

Stathern medieval township (village and fields) was farmed using the open field system; some areas of ridge and furrow (produced by centuries of ploughing) survive in the modern fields. The open fields were ‘Enclosed’ in 1793, and many of today’s hedges and field names date from this event. The woods on the crest of the escarpment have probably not been farmed for most of 1400 years; by 1793 they were part of the Belvoir Castle Estate. Some hedges may be older than 1793, but the Enclosure Map shows how many of the field boundaries in the Plan Area are at least 220 years old and therefore of historical and ecological significance in their own right.

Stathern maintained its rural economy and aspect through the Industrial Revolution – as it largely still does – although it was crossed by the Grantham Canal (1797) and the railway (1879), both of which may have been seen as intrusive at the time, but are now highly valued components of the historic landscape. 19th century buildings in the village are an indication of the local importance of agriculture and small-scale manufacturing at that time, while 20th century housing places the parish in a wider context of quarrying and dairy farming. A lot of residents continue to work in or near the village; many are involved with agriculture and farming and others work in businesses in the village such as the pub, the shop, garage and in the school. There are also residents who work in the nearby towns and others who are retired.

5.1.4 Natural Environment

The history of land use in the Plan Area described above – it has been cleared and more or less managed by its human inhabitants for at least 1500 years – means that all ‘natural’ environment is actually *semi-natural* (as classified by Natural England). This does not imply, however, an absence of wildlife, because animals and plants have adapted and evolved, even moved in, to occupy the landscape features created by human occupation and use. While Stathern has only one nationally important wildlife site (itself a naturally colonised artefact), it does have a number of local features and habitat areas whose ecological value makes a vital contribution to English biodiversity (see Policy ENV 5). They include watercourses and wetlands, ancient woods, species-rich pastures, plantations and copses, hedgerows, gardens and churchyards, arable field margins and other ‘re-wilded’ places. Important remnants of the natural environment survive in all of them.

5.1.5 Existing Environmental Designations

The Plan Area is located in National Character Areas (as defined by Natural England to inform Planning decisions) *74 Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds* and *68 Trent and Belvoir Vales*, and in the Melton Borough Council Landscape Character Areas (2011) *1 Vale of Belvoir* and *3 Wolds Scarp*. There are 19 Listed Buildings, 17 further sites and features of historical significance (LCC Historic Environment Record / Historic England), one SSSI, 24 areas of *Priority Habitat* and *National Forest Inventory* sites (as defined by Natural England), 17 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS; Leics. CC) and 5 historic LWSs from earlier Phase I Habitat Surveys by Leics. CC.

5.1.6 Environmental Inventory

An environmental inventory (Appendix 6) of Stathern was carried out between December 2019 and April 2020. The work comprised the following two elements:

- review of all existing designations and other available information in the public domain
- fieldwork to identify and confirm environmentally significant (in the context of the Plan Area) sites and features.

The review compiled information from many sources, including DEFRA, Natural England, Historic England, Leicestershire Historic Environment Records, Leicestershire Environmental records (biodiversity and geology), Melton Borough Council, Environment Agency, British Geological Survey, Ordnance Survey Historical map archives, local history and archaeology, publications and local knowledge.

Fieldwork reviewed all open and currently undeveloped land in the Plan area. Significant species, habitats, public open spaces, landscape characteristics, earthworks and other extant heritage features, views and viewpoints were checked and recorded.

These data, along with all relevant site-specific information from the existing information review, were mapped and tabulated, and each site was scored and evaluated using the criteria for Local Green Space selection in the *National Planning Policy Framework* 2019, as described and explained in the Environmental Inventory (Appendix 6).

5.2 Local Green Spaces

The approximately 200 parcels of open land in the parish were surveyed and scored, using the criteria for Local Green Space designation noted in the *National Planning Policy Framework* 2019. Some 85 were identified by this method as having notable environmental (natural, historical and/or community) features. Of these, five sites score 72% or more of the maximum possible (18+/25) and meet the essential requirements for designation as Local Green Space as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019, paragraph 100).

Their statutory protection will ensure that these most important places in Stathern's natural and human environment are protected.

POLICY ENV 1: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, the following Local Green Spaces (details Appendix 6; map Figure 4) will not be permitted other than in very special circumstances. Development of flood resilience schemes within Local Green Spaces will be supported provided the schemes do not adversely impact the primary function of the green space.

182 Penn Lane Allotments (MBC designation, supported by this Plan)

185 Recreation Ground and Play Area, Water Lane/Main Street (MBC designation, supported by this Plan)

186 Church Lane cemetery

187 Tofts Hill cemetery

189 St Guthlac's churchyard (MBC designation, supported by this Plan)

Figure 4: Local Green Spaces

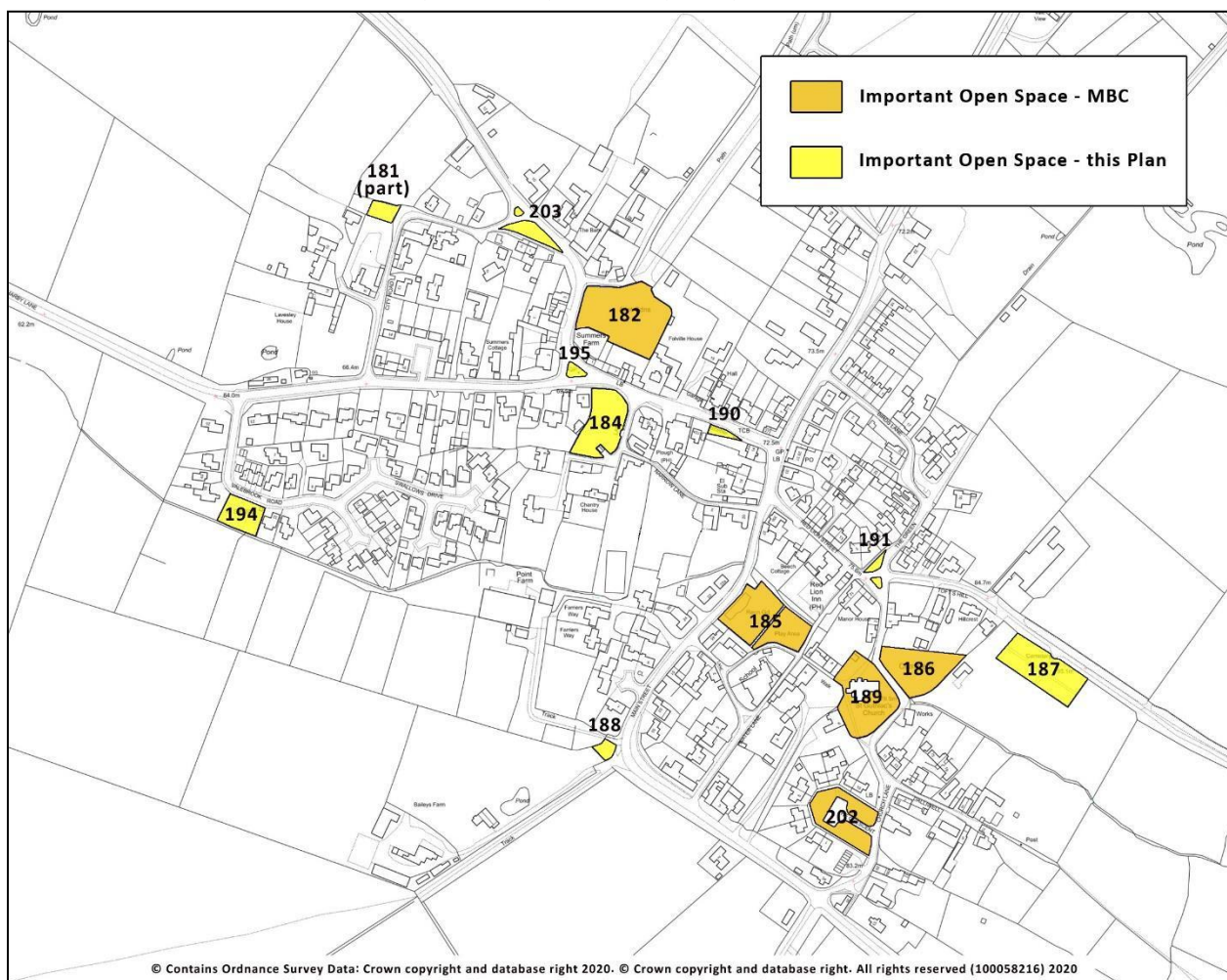


5.3 Important Open Spaces

A group of sites were identified through the inventory process (high scores in the relevant criteria, supported by local knowledge and fieldwork) as having high community value. Six are already recognised by Melton Borough Council as Open Space, Sport & Recreation (OSSR) sites (Melton Borough Council *Open Space Assessment Report*, 2014). The remainder are designated in the Neighbourhood Plan, under the relevant Melton Borough Council (MBC) typologies, for the same protection in the planning system; they have demonstrable value, either through their designed functions or as important open spaces that help to define the form and character of the village. Several are already Stathern Parish Council assets.

Their value as open space *within and close to the built-up areas* and/or their current, planned or inherent value as community resources are recognised in this policy.

Figure 5: Important open spaces



POLICY ENV 2: IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES

The following open spaces in Stathern (and Figure 5) are of high value for recreation, beauty, amenity and/or tranquillity, or as green spaces within or close to the built-up area. Development proposals that result in their loss, or have a significant adverse effect on them, will not be supported unless the open space is replaced by equivalent or better provision in an equally suitable location. Development of flood resilience schemes within Important Open Spaces will be supported provided the schemes do not adversely impact the primary function of the open space.

Important Open Spaces recognised by Melton Borough Council:

- 182 Penn Lane allotments** (allotments; inventory 182; MBC 2014 Open Space #95)
- 185 Water Lane Recreation Ground** (amenity greenspace; inventory 185; MBC 2014 Open Space #182)
- 185 Water Lane Play Area** (provision for children and young people; inventory 185; MBC 2014 Open Space #182.1)
- 186 Church Lane cemetery** ([closed]; cemeteries and churchyards; inventory 186; MBC 2014 Open Space #24)
- 189 St Guthlac's churchyard** (cemeteries and churchyards / natural and semi-natural greenspace; inventory 189; MBC 2014 Open Space #121)
- 202 The Crescent** (amenity greenspace; inventory 202; MBC 2014 Open Space #165)

Important Open Spaces identified in this Neighbourhood Plan:

- 181 **The Horse Pond**, City Road (Registered Common Land #CL.48, Leics. CC, 1965; Stathern Parish Council; inventory 181, this Plan)
- 184 **Chapel Lane paddock** (amenity greenspace; inventory 184; this Plan)
- 187 **Toft's Hill cemetery** (cemeteries and churchyards, inventory 187; Stathern Parish Council, this Plan)
- 188 **Mill Hill spinney** (natural and semi-natural greenspace; inventory 188; this Plan)
- 190 **Harby Lane green** (amenity greenspace; inventory 190; this Plan)
- 191 **The Green, Church Lane / Red Lion Street** (amenity greenspace; inventory 191; this Plan)
- 194 **Valebrook Road greenspace** (amenity greenspace; inventory 194; this Plan)
- 195 **Millennium Green**, Main Street / Harby Lane (amenity greenspace; inventory 195; this Plan)
- 203 **Penn Lane / City Road green** (amenity greenspace; inventory 203; this Plan)

5.4 Natural Environment and Biodiversity

5.4.1 Sites of Natural Environmental Significance

A group of inventory sites scores highly for 'wildlife' (scoring at least 3/5 under this criterion). The features for which the identified sites have been selected and notified are listed in the environmental inventory (Appendix 6). These natural environment sites comprise:

- a) statutorily protected sites
- b) those where priority habitats occur (Natural England mapping) or where biodiversity action plan (BAP) species have been recorded as breeding or as regular visitors
- c) sites identified as ecologically significant by Leicestershire County Council, including Local Wildlife Sites
- d) sites identified during the inventory process as being of high biodiversity significance in the context of the Plan area. The map (Figure 6) shows their locations.

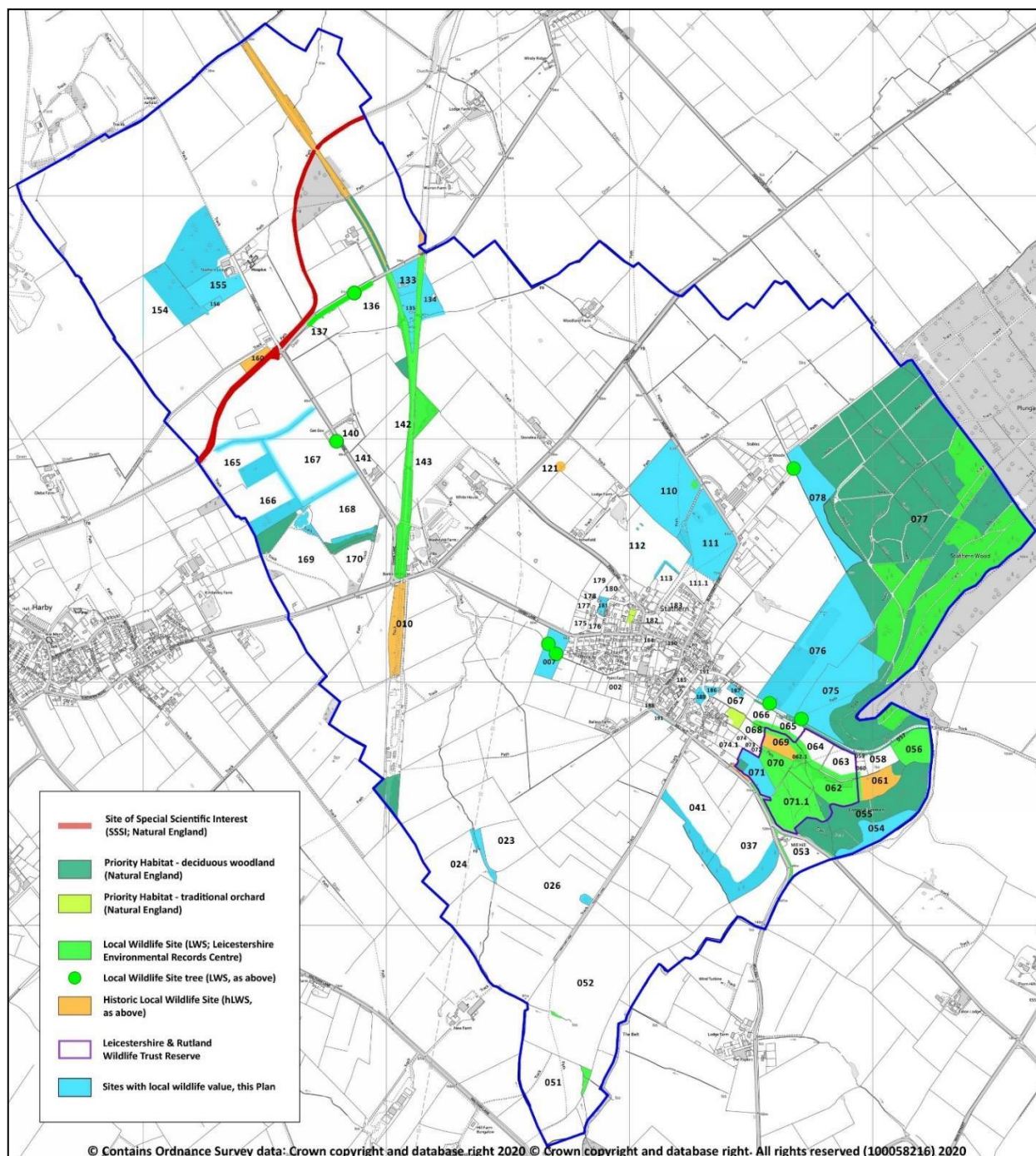
Policy ENV 3 delivers site-level compliance in the Plan area with the relevant Melton Borough Council policies, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the European Habitats and Species Directives / Transitional legislation in the Withdrawal Act 2018 / Draft Environment Bill 2019. It also protects the areas of semi-natural and planted woodland surviving in what is, for historical land-use history reasons, a parish which has very little of this important ecological and environmental (for carbon sequestration etc.) habitat.

The sites and features mapped here (Figure 6) have been identified as being of at least local significance for their natural environment significance. They are ecologically important in their own right, make a local contribution to carbon sequestration, and are locally valued.

POLICY ENV 3: SITES AND FEATURES OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

Development proposals that affect sites of natural environment significance shown in Figure 6 will be expected to protect the identified habitats and/or species, according to their status, and to give appropriate weight to the contribution they make to the wider ecological network. Development proposals should demonstrate that the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh the ecological loss.

Figure 6: Sites of natural environmental significance



5.4.2 Woodland, Trees and Hedgerows

Leicestershire is one of the least wooded counties in England, so the conservation of existing and planting of new trees and woodland is an important factor for protecting and enhancing the natural environment locally.

Stathern is in two parts from the point of view of woodland and trees. The east is well-wooded compared with most of the East Midlands and the parish, thanks to the regionally important group

of deciduous woodlands on the Belvoir escarpment; most of these areas have been mapped as Priority Habitat by Natural England. The middle and west of the Plan Area has very little woodland, other than ornamental plantings in the village and a few other small copses, together with a small number of species-rich hedgerows and notable trees, some of which are designated as Local Wildlife Site status (Phase 1 Habitat Surveys, Leicestershire County Council, 2005-2015).

Hedgerows provide essential habitat and connective corridors for wildlife, as well as characterising the rural landscape. They hold intrinsic value; many of the hedgerows in the Plan Area are comprised of 80% native species and are considered Habitat of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Priority Habitat under the Leicestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP). Mature trees and broadleaved woodland trees are also a priority in the LBAP. Protection of existing hedgerows and the creation of new hedgerows and the vital links they provide through the landscape is a key factor in local biodiversity conservation.

POLICY ENV 4: WOODLAND, TREES AND HEDGEROWS

Development proposals that result in the loss of trees of biodiversity, landscape, amenity or arboricultural value, or result in loss or damage to woodland, will not be approved unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

Where possible, development proposals should seek to increase tree and woodland cover with appropriate planting both on new sites and to complement and/or enhance existing occurrences.

Hedgerows should be retained and protected. Where loss is unavoidable, it must be minimised, and loss mitigated with replacement planting of locally appropriate native species to provide a demonstrable net gain in hedgerow length either on-site or locally within the Plan area.

Where watercourses (including ditches) are adjacent to or within a development site, they should as much as possible be retained as open features within public open spaces, to prevent any increase in flood risk or damage to biodiversity.

5.4.3 Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity

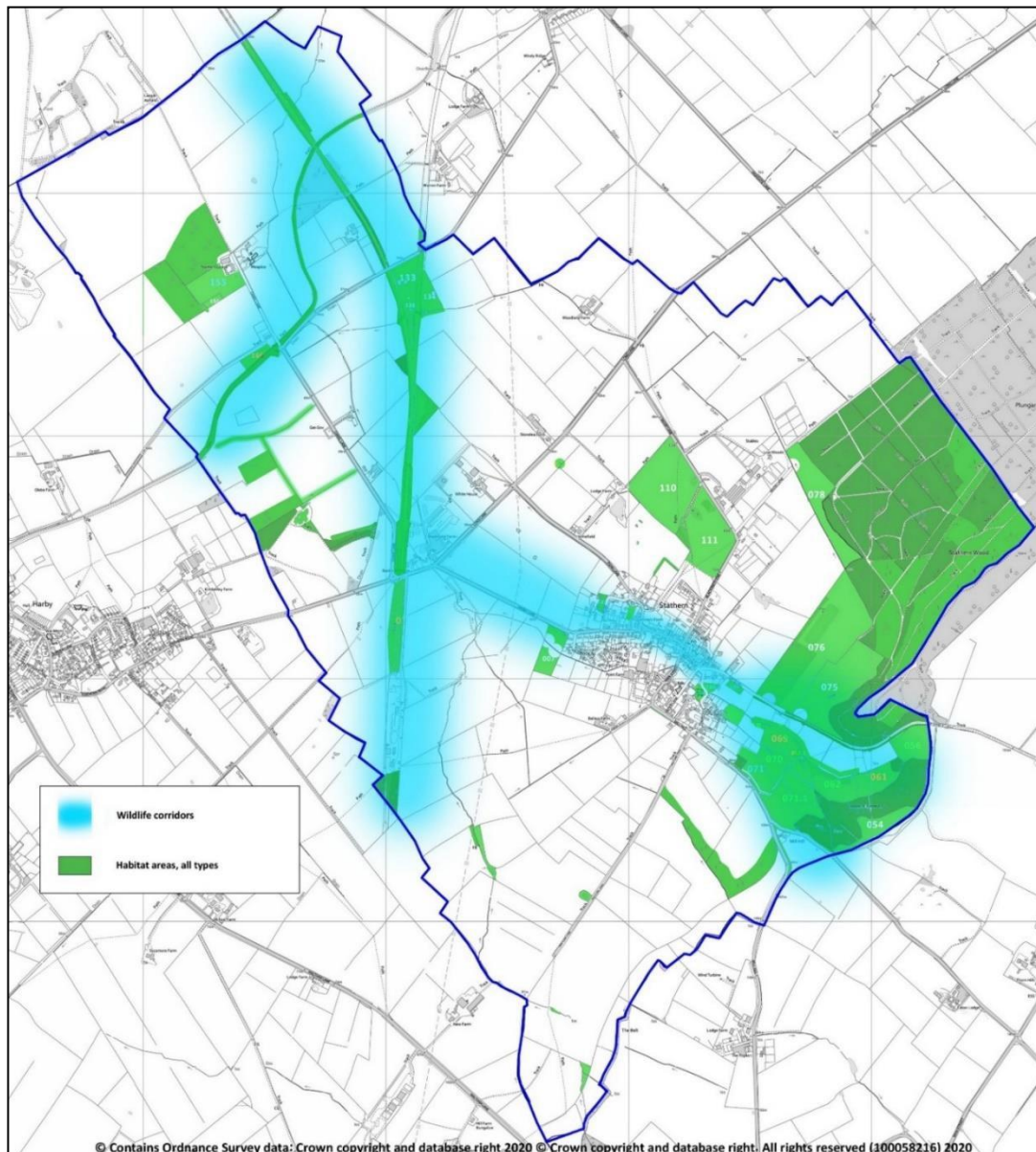
It might be said that Stathern is a 'typical' area of English Midlands countryside because it has only one nationally important wildlife site, and thus that it has little or no biodiversity significance to be taken into account in the planning system. This would be a misunderstanding of the concept of biodiversity. England's biodiversity is entirely, and only, the sum of the wildlife in all of its individual parishes: Stathern is as important in this regard as every other parish, and residents want it to play its essential part in protecting what remains of England's threatened and diminishing biodiversity.

Connectivity is an essential component of biodiversity. Isolated populations of animals and plants are at risk of destruction or of simply 'dying out'. Wildlife Corridors aim to re-connect populations and habitats within parishes and more widely. A network of parish wildlife corridors (Figure 7) connecting the main groups of habitat sites and passing through the village has been identified during the preparation of this Plan.

This policy is about parish-level compliance with the relevant Melton Borough Council Local Plan policies, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (as amended), the European Habitats and Species Directives [or their transitioned English equivalents]

and other relevant English regulations – and about how Stathern can play its part in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity by taking it into account, at a Neighbourhood Plan level of detail, in the planning system. The policy is supported by National Planning Policy Framework (2019) paragraphs 170 (a) and (d); 174; 175 (a) on which this policy’s wording is partly based; 175(c); and 177. The community expects planning decisions affecting Stathern to follow the spirit of the Government’s *25-year environment plan (2018)* and the *Environment (principles and governance) Bill (2018)*.

Figure 7: Wildlife corridors providing habitat connectivity



POLICY ENV 5: BIODIVERSITY AND HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

All new development proposals will be expected to safeguard habitats and species, including those of local significance. If significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided (through relocating to an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or compensated for, planning permission should be refused, in conformity with paragraph 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Development proposals should not damage or adversely affect the habitat connectivity provided by the wildlife corridors identified in Figure 7.

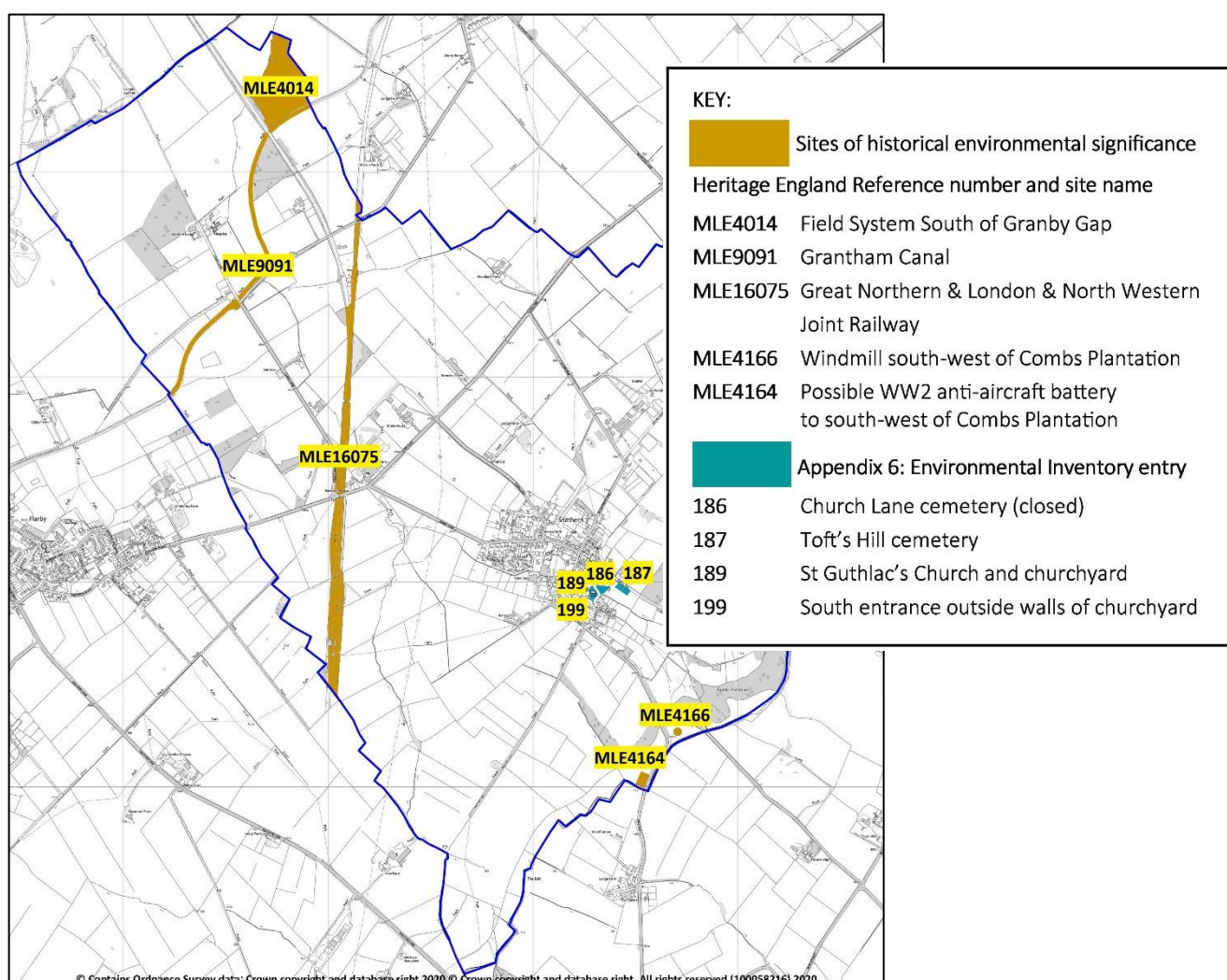
5.5 Historic Environment

5.5.1 Sites of Historic Environmental Significance

A group of inventory sites scores highly for 'history' (scoring at least 3/5 under this criterion). The features for which the identified sites have been selected and notified are listed in the environmental inventory (Appendix 6). The map (Figure 8) shows their locations.

These historic environmental sites comprise a) sites with *extant and visible* archaeological or historical features or proven buried archaeology, as recorded in the Historic England or Leicestershire *Historic Environment Records* databases, and b) other sites of historical and social significance identified in local records and during the inventory process.

Figure 8: Sites of historic environmental significance
(for sites with Ridge and Furrow see Figure 11)



POLICY ENV 6: SITES OF HISTORIC ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

The sites mapped in Figure 8 (details in Appendix 6) have been identified as being of at least local significance for their historical features. The features are extant and have visible expression or there is proven buried archaeology on the site, and they are locally valued. The significance of the features present should be balanced against the local benefit of any development that would affect or damage them.

5.5.2 Statutorily Protected Heritage Assets

Nineteen buildings and structures in the Plan area have statutory protection through listing at Grade II* or II. The Neighbourhood Plan lists them in Appendix 9 for reference. New development will be required to take the buildings and their settings into account when determining relevant planning applications.

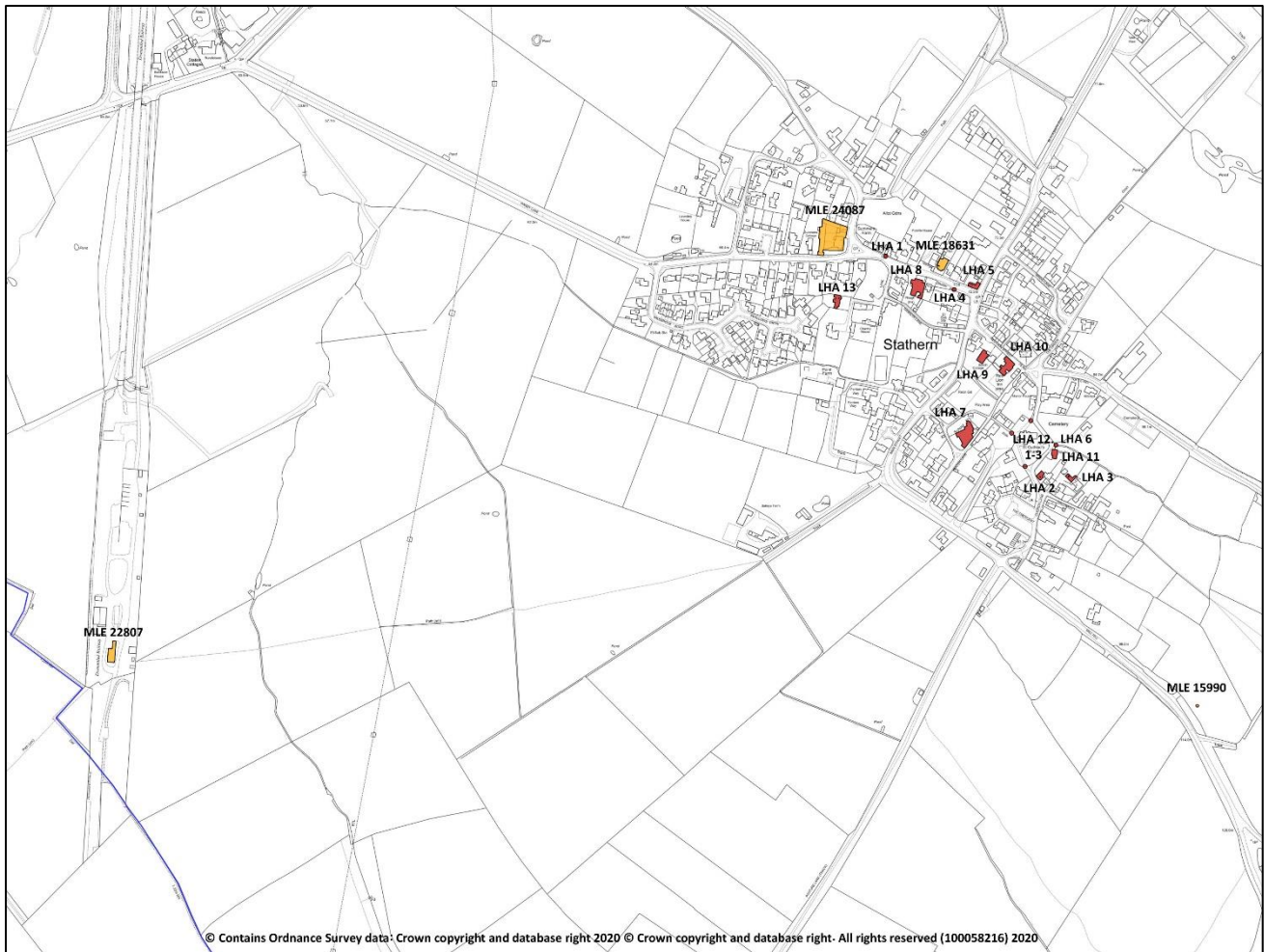
Figure 9: Listed buildings (Historic England mapping, via Parish Online)



5.5.3 Local Heritage Assets

Leicestershire County Council recognises four ‘non-listed historic buildings’ in the Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies a number of other buildings and structures in the built environment of Stathern that are considered to be of local significance for architectural, historical or social reasons (details in Appendix 8). The inclusion of both sets here records them in the planning system as *non-designated heritage assets* in order that they can be afforded protection at the appropriate level, as described in footnote (63) to NPPF 2019 paragraph 194.

Figure 10: Local Heritage Assets (LHA)



POLICY ENV 7: LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS

The structures and buildings listed here (and Figure 10) are non-designated local heritage assets. They are important for their contribution to the layout and characteristic mix of architectural styles in the village, and their features and settings will be protected wherever possible. The local benefits of a development proposal, or of a change of land use requiring planning approval, will need to be judged against their significance as heritage assets.

MLE 15990	World War II pillbox , Mill Hill (LCC Historic Environment Record MLE 15990)
MLE 18631	War Memorial Institute , Main Street (LCC Historic Environment Record MLE 18631)
MLE 22807	Great Northern and London & North Western Joint Railway goods shed , Harby and Stathern Station (LCC Historic Environment Record MLE 22807)
MLE 24087	Sumner's Farm , 2 Main Street (LCC Historic Environment Record MLE 24087)
LHA 1	Wall-mounted post box , opposite the junction of Main Street/Chapel Lane
LHA 2	Laburnum House , 11 Church Lane
LHA 3	The Old Reading Room , 15 Church Lane
LHA 4	K6 red telephone box , Main Street

LHA 5	Former butcher's shop, 27 Main Street	LHA 9	The Beeches, 35 Main Street
LHA 6	The Gote, Church Lane	LHA 10	The Red Lion Inn, Red Lion Street
LHA 7	Stathern Primary School, Water Lane	LHA 11	Vale Engineering Works, Church Lane
LHA 8	The Plough Inn, Main Street	LHA 12.1-3	St Guthlac's churchyard gates
		LHA 13	The preserved dovecote wall of the old Chapel, 9 Chapel Lane

5.6 Ridge and Furrow

The medieval township of Stathern was primarily agricultural and, beginning in the 7th or 8th century AD, was farmed using the *Open Field* system. All the open land, except for small fields (closes) backing onto the village, meadows in stream valleys and a few patches of woodland or waste, was worked in a seasonal and yearly rotation of arable crops (cereals, beans), grazing and fallow. Medieval ploughs were pulled by oxen and, because they were not reversible, the soil was always turned rightwards as the plough team progressed up and down the furlongs, to produce a corrugated pattern of ridges and furrows whose dimensions increased with every season. The difference in height between ridge crests and furrows could be as much as 2-3 metres; this had real advantages in the heavy clay of the Midlands, with ridges remaining dry and the furrows acting as drains.

Figure 11.1: Map (1793) regarding the Enclosure Award for Stathern

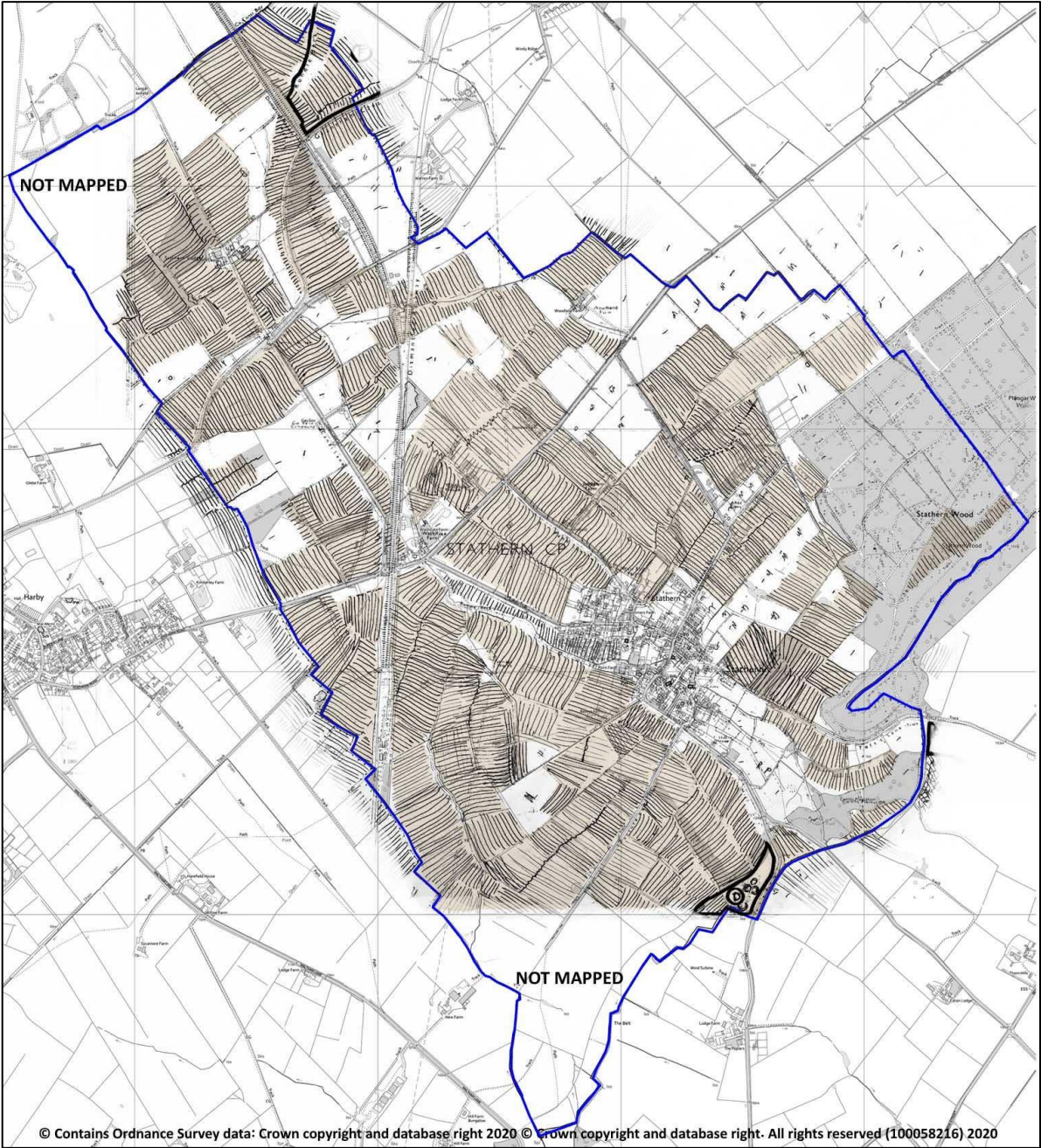


The open field system was practised in Stathern for almost all of the medieval period – perhaps 800 years – until changes in land ownership and an ‘agricultural revolution’ gave rise to a change from large communal open fields to enclosed, privately-owned small fields with hedged boundaries, and a change from arable to pastoral (livestock) farming. Parts of the Plan Area, especially areas in the Belvoir Estate’s landholding, had been enclosed during the 17th century, but the Parliamentary Enclosure of the parish in 1792 completed the process.

The result of Enclosure, although socially disruptive, was to ‘fossilise’ the ridges and furrows under grass and hedgerows, and this situation persisted (Figure 11.2) until the mid-20th century, when a second agricultural revolution after the Second World War effectively reversed the first one. British governments, later the European Union, encouraged farmers, mainly through subsidies, to plough the pastures and turn them over to intensive arable production. Wherever this happened, modern reversible ploughs quickly obliterated the Ridge and Furrow. In most English open field parishes, the loss of Ridge and Furrow

since 1950 has been over 90%. In the 1990s, English Heritage (now Historic England), realising the scale of this destruction, undertook the first of a series of surveys across the Midlands, including Leicestershire, and made recommendations for protection and management. In English legislation, Ridge and Furrow fields (except for the few that are Scheduled Monuments) are not statutorily protected, despite recognition that “as the open field system was once commonplace in NW Europe, these [surviving] sites take on an international importance” (English Heritage, 2001).

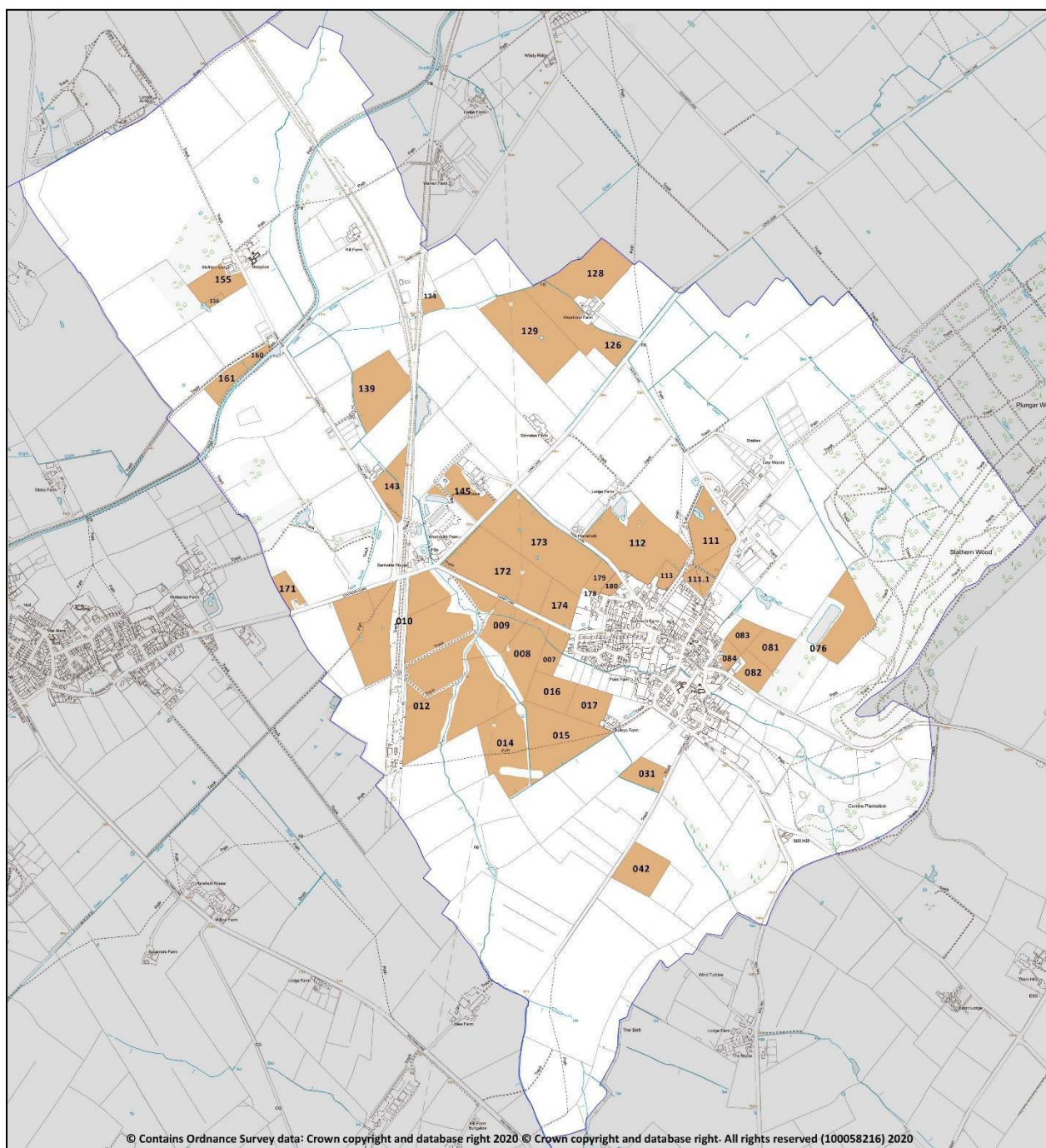
Figure 11.2: Ridge and Furrow circa 1947
(adapted from mapping by R.F Hartley (Leicestershire CC), Leicestershire Historic Environment Record)



The 1947 map was used as a baseline for a new survey, undertaken as part of the inventory for this Plan in 2019. The summary results show the decline since 1947 by area:

1947	c.450 ha	
2020	c.85 ha	

Figure 11.3: Ridge and Furrow in 2020



This represents a survival rate in Stathern of almost 20% by area; in terms of archaeology, this relatively high rate is significant because coherent groups of fields with lands, strips and the dividing headlands and baulks can still be seen. In numbers of fields, 147 fields in 1947 with Ridge and Furrow have been reduced to 35 (80% loss) in 2020. While the individual fields with surviving Ridge and Furrow in Stathern are not claimed to be of international importance, the survival of parts of complete field systems in the Plan area compared with the rarity of similar groups across the Midlands means that any further, avoidable, loss would be irreversibly detrimental. In conformity with paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (including footnote 63) and following the recommendation of Historic England, all surviving Ridge and Furrow in the Plan area should now be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset and taken into account in the planning

system; these fields are the visible evidence of an element of national heritage arguably comparable in significance to that of our medieval parish churches.

POLICY ENV 8: RIDGE AND FURROW

The areas of Ridge and Furrow earthworks mapped in Figure 13 are non-designated local heritage assets. In assessing development proposals which would involve any loss or damage to an identified area of Ridge and Furrow earthwork on Figure 11.3, the benefits of the development will be balanced against the significance of the feature concerned as a heritage asset.

5.7 Important Views

Consultation during the Neighbourhood Plan's preparation identified a widely held wish to protect Stathern's rural setting, in particular its visual relationship with the surrounding landscape, including its relationship with the Vale of Belvoir, with open farmland and canal, and with the Belvoir Escarpment that forms the backdrop to the village.

One of the main ways in which residents expressed this wish was by describing several highly valued views within and around the village and toward the surrounding countryside. These consultation findings were supported by the environmental inventory, which, although principally aimed at identifying sites of environmental significance, also confirmed the sightlines of the suggested views and mapped them (Figure 12).

POLICY ENV 9: IMPORTANT VIEWS

Development proposals should, whenever possible, respect and protect the views described in Appendix 10 and shown in Figures 12.1 and 12.2. Development which would have an unacceptable impact on the identified views will not be supported.

- 1. From the north (bottom) end of Moor Lane;** a broad panorama east along the escarpment towards Belvoir Castle, south-east to the village and south along the whole extent of the Vale of Belvoir
- 2. Panorama north-west, west and south-west from the crest of the escarpment** overlooking Stathern village and across the Vale of Belvoir
- 3. From the top of Mill Hill,** north-west across the village and south to the Vale of Belvoir and the edge of Leicestershire
- 4. From the bottom of Harby Lane,** south-eastwards along the road back to Stathern village with the ridge of the escarpment behind
- 5. From the canal bridge,** north-east along the towpath with successive ridges of low hills with the centre of the Vale of Belvoir in the background
- 6. From in, and east of, the cemetery on Toft's Hill,** looking west to the church and old village, and east up the hill and over the small valley and Coombs Meadows (LRWT reserve)
- 7. From above the cemetery on Toft's Hill**
- 8. From the edge of the village on Blacksmith End** with views to open countryside and the escarpment

9. From Main Street (west end) looking over the paddock
10. Various views approaching the east end of the village from Toft's Hill
11. From Red Lion Street/Church Lane, south past historic buildings to St Guthlac's Church
12. At the corner of Church Lane with Dalliwell, north-west along Church Lane to St. Guthlac's Church
13. Views from Pasture Lane and the bottom of Mill Hill at the southern end of the village
14. From Main Street east over the recreation ground (playpark)
15. From Red Lion Street west to Main Street
16. From the Millennium Green at the west end of Main Street.
17. Looking towards Blacksmith End and down Main Street
18. View along Water Lane by School Lane looking across to the church and the Old Rectory.

Figure 12.1: Important views in the open countryside

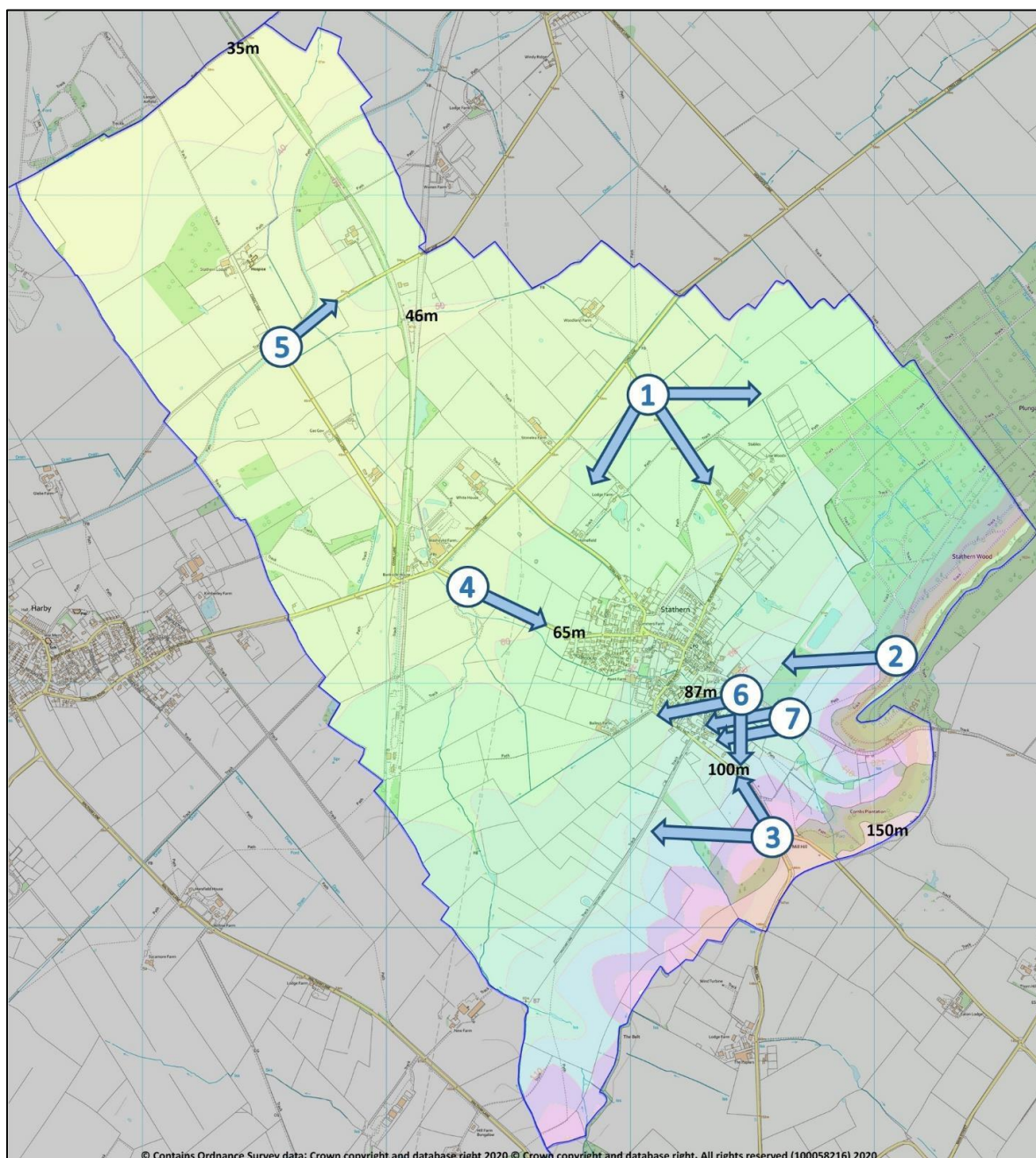


Figure 12.2: Important views in the built-up area



5.8 Footpaths, Bridleways and Other Walking Routes

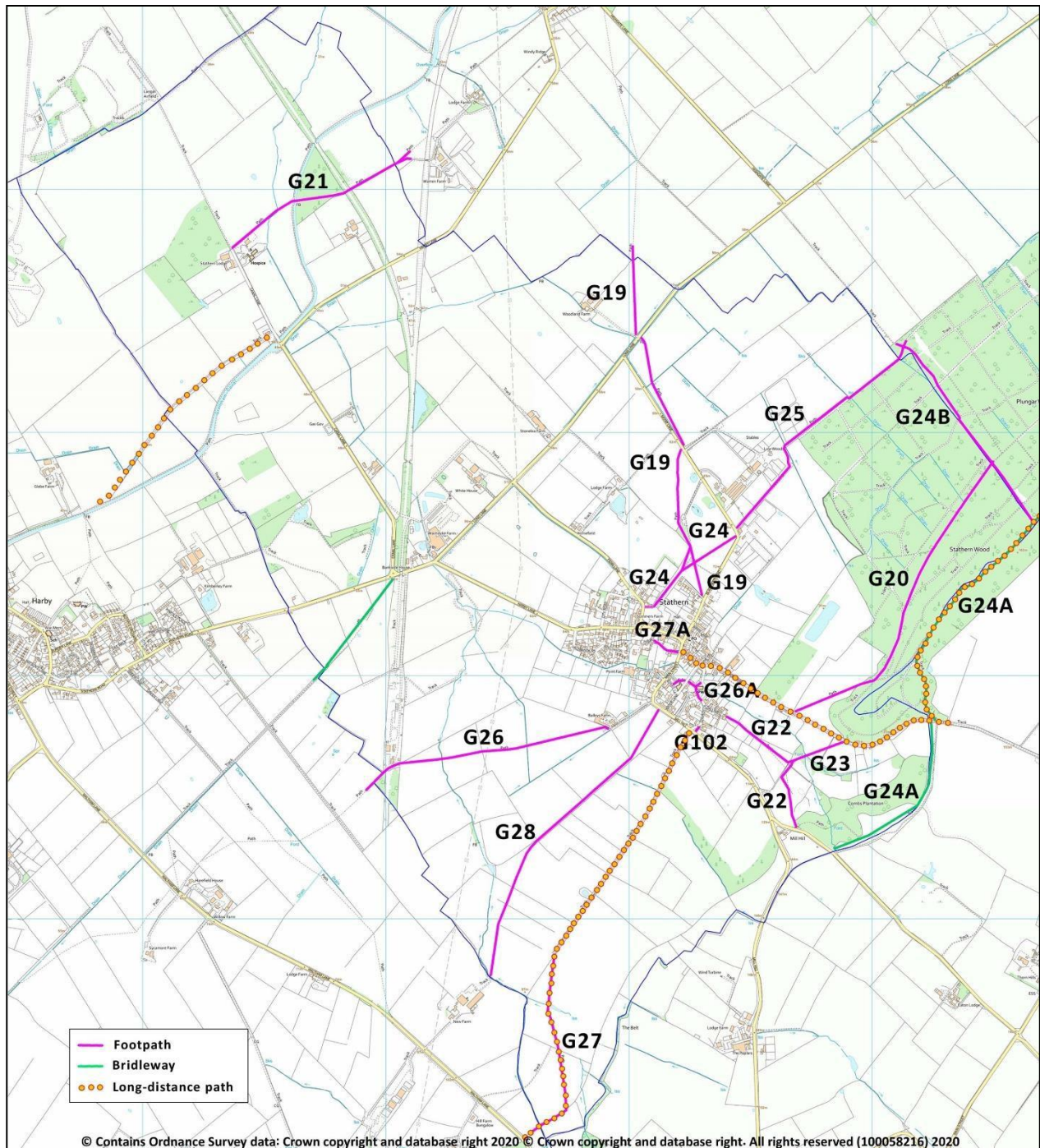
Stathern benefits from several circular and radial footpaths and bridleways. All are well-used and highly valued by villagers and visitors alike as they provide important health and wellbeing opportunities. There are regular guided walks by local rambling groups. The footpaths and bridleways contribute significantly to the sense of community, as well as providing opportunity for open-air exercise and socialising. For historical land-ownership reasons, there is a notable lack of public footpaths in the area to the north-west of Stathern village, but elsewhere the expected pattern of routes radiating out from the settlement toward neighbouring villages is seen. Additional opportunities for walking etc. are afforded by the canal towpaths, several sections of long-distance paths, and the tracks and rides through the Belvoir escarpment woods. All these paths are well used, including by horse-riders where permitted.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports additional or extended footpaths which service new developments and connect them to the existing pedestrian footpath network; encourage walking over car use for making journeys within the parish; and provide an improved and more extensive footpath network to support exercise and leisure activities for Stathern Parish residents and visitors.

POLICY ENV 10: FOOTPATHS, BRIDLEWAYS AND OTHER WALKING ROUTES

Development proposals that result in the loss of, or have a significant adverse effect on, the existing network of footpaths (Figure 13) will not be supported without appropriate mitigation. The upgrading and, where appropriate, extension of the public footpath network in the parish, including bridleways, will be supported.

Figure 13: Footpaths, bridleways and other walking routes



5.9 Flood Risk Resilience

Even if international cooperation and national strategies and policies eventually succeed in halting the human and industrial contributions towards climate change, the effects of recent and current warming on weather events will be likely to persist for decades. It is therefore desirable to plan for a medium-term future, in which weather events will continue to become more extreme, by putting in place measures that mitigate the challenge of climate change for the lifetime of this Plan and beyond. This objective is explicitly supported by the Environment Agency (EA) draft National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England (2019), in which the strategic emphasis for the EA shifts from mitigation to resilience; in other words, shifting from the requirement for new development to reduce its adverse effects on flood risk, to a complete avoidance of creating or adding to flood risk at all.

While there is no risk of flooding from main rivers in the present built-up areas of the parish, surface water and flooding associated with local watercourses has always been an issue in and around the village for reasons of geology, topography and land use. Geology and topography (see Figure 3) are significant local factors. The village is situated adjacent to a small side valley near the bottom of a 100-metre escarpment; this is topped with permeable ironstone but is otherwise composed of layers of variously impermeable clay and other rocks.

The result is that the village is in the path of both surface water run-off down the escarpment face, across the fields and down ditches and roads, and of ground water arising from numerous small springs. Local experience in recent years, including during the



Flooding - Blacksmith End, October 2019

time of preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan (2019-2020), is that these types of flooding, together with that caused by flow from an over-capacity water table, have increased in extent, duration and severity. In light of this, it is particularly important that the location and technical standards of all new development proposals in the Plan Area should in future be judged on their likely contribution to flooding in a climate change world.



Flooding - City Road, Spring 2020



Flooding - Church Lane, Spring 2020

In parallel, the community will support proposals to improve the infrastructure within the built-up areas for managing flash-flooding and surface water run-off events, providing this is not unnecessarily detrimental to the historic built environment, biodiversity sites, or open and green spaces.

This policy supports and is in conformity with NPPF paragraphs 155, 156 and 157, especially (b), and is strongly supported by the 2019 draft National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England, particularly the strategy's recognition of the need to build flood resilience into future strategic development planning. It is also in general conformity with Melton Borough Council Local Plan policies EN8, EN11 and EN12.

Figure 14.1:
Areas susceptible to flooding from surface water and watercourses,
based on Environment Agency mapping

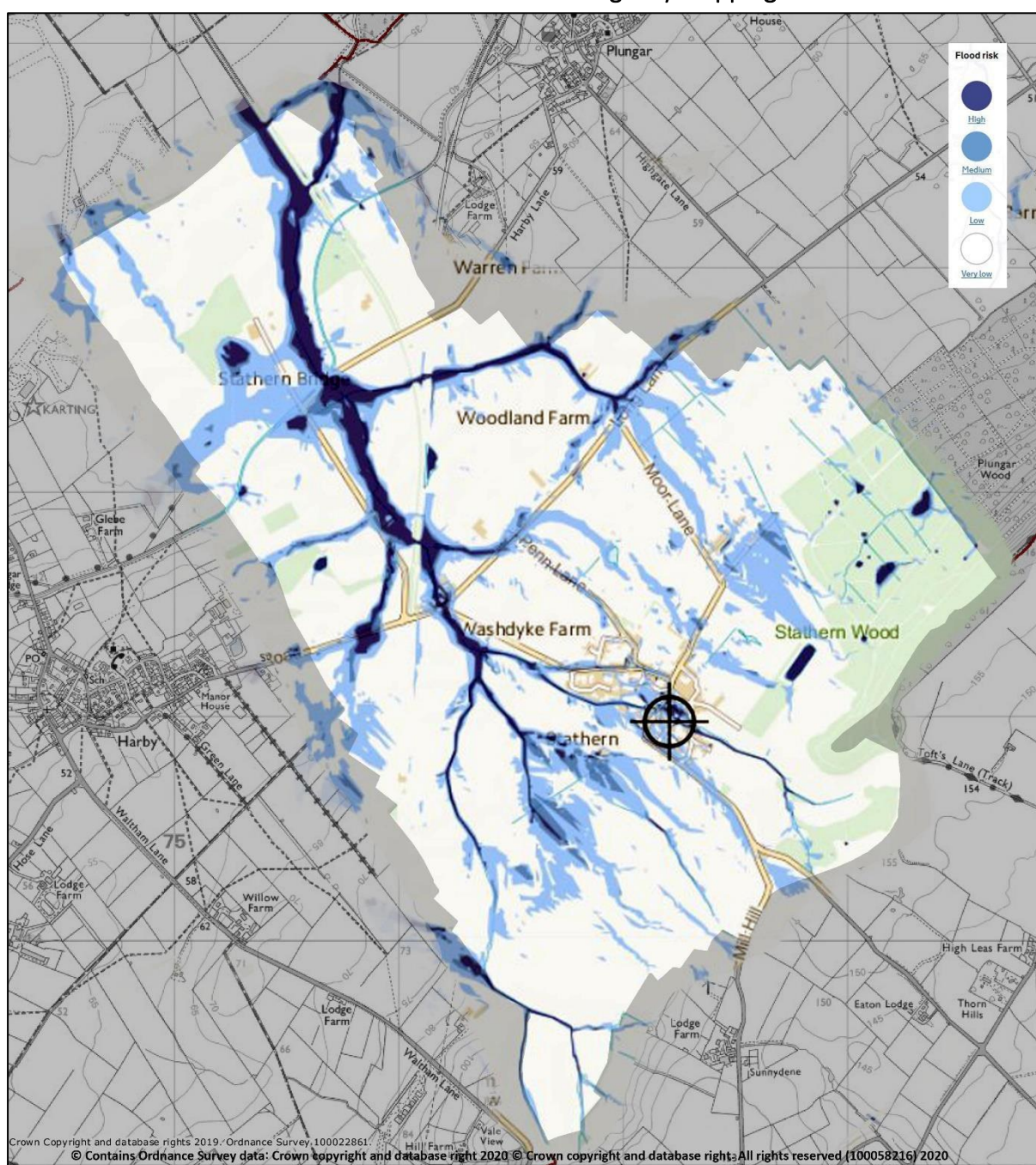
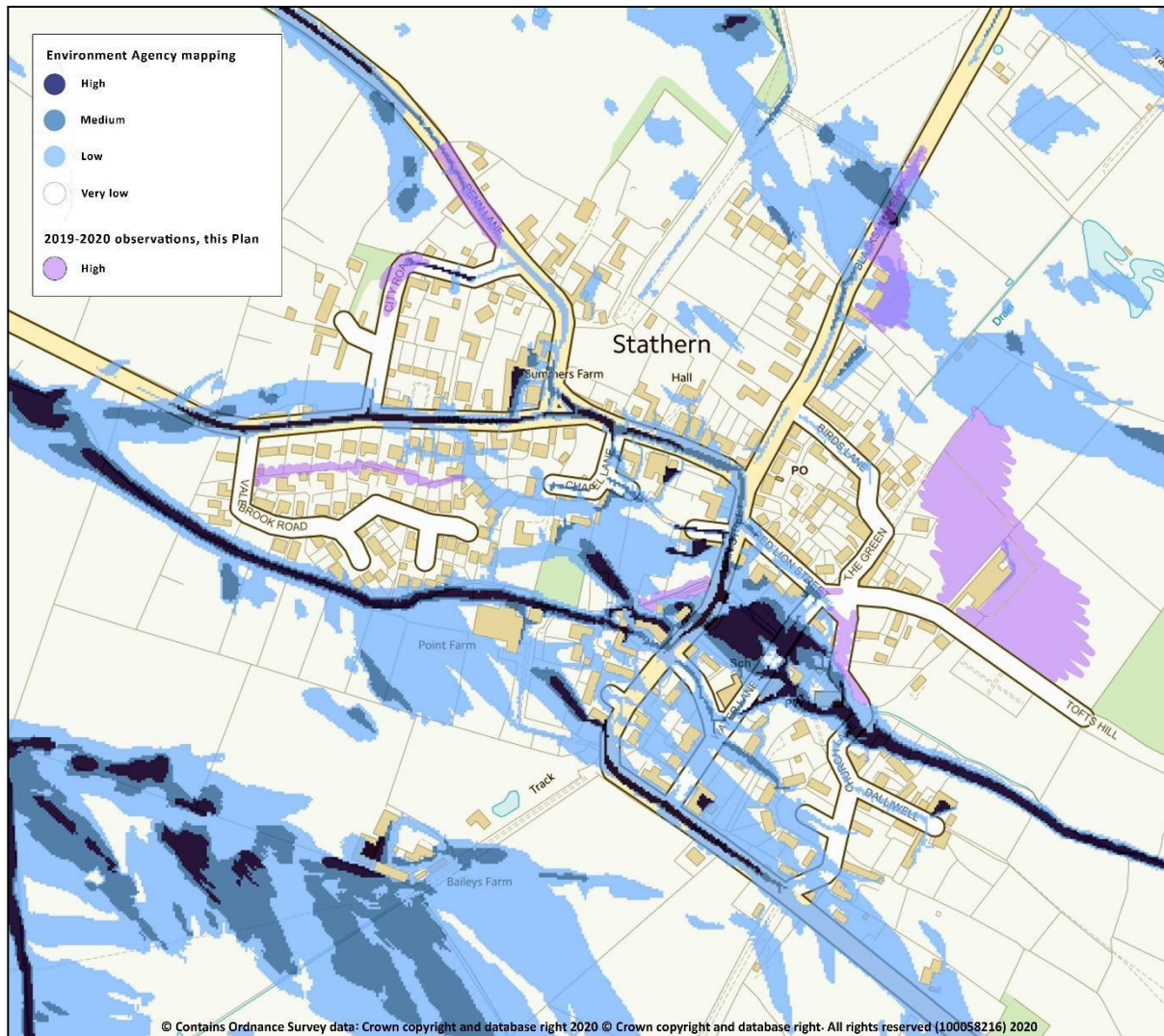


Figure 14.2: Areas susceptible to flooding from surface water, ground-water and watercourses in the village based on Environment Agency mapping and local observations 2019-20



POLICY ENV 11: FLOOD RISK RESILIENCE

Development proposals in flood risk zones 2 and 3 and within the areas of surface water flood risk indicated in Figures 14.1 and 14.2 will be required, where appropriate, to demonstrate that the benefit of development outweighs the harm in relation to its adverse impact on national and Melton Borough climate change targets, and that it will not conflict with locally applicable flood resilience strategies and mitigation infrastructure. Proposals, therefore, to construct new (or modify existing) floodwater management infrastructure (ditches, roadside gullies, retention pools, etc.), including within the built-up area, will be supported.

Development proposals for one or more new dwellings and/or for employment development should demonstrate that:

- if in a location susceptible to flooding from rivers or surface water, an alternative site to meet the local residential development need is not available
- its location and design respect the geology, flood risk and natural drainage characteristics of the immediate area and is accompanied by a hydrological study whose findings must be complied with in respect of design, groundworks and construction

- c) it includes a surface water drainage strategy which demonstrates that the proposed drainage scheme, and site layout and design, will prevent properties from flooding from surface water, including allowing for climate change effects. It also demonstrates that flood risk elsewhere will not be exacerbated by increased levels of surface water runoff, and that these will not threaten natural habitats and water systems
- d) its design includes, as appropriate, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) with ongoing maintenance provision, other surface water management measures and permeable surfaces
- e) it does not increase the risk of flooding to third parties
- f) proposed SuDS infrastructure includes, where practicable, habitat creation comprising e.g. landscaping, access and egress for aquatic and terrestrial animals, and native species planting
- g) it takes the effects of climate change into account.

5.10 Renewable energy generation infrastructure

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 paragraphs 152 - 154 make it clear that all communities are responsible for reducing emissions as part of the necessary approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Residents of Stathern wish to play their part, but at a scale appropriate to the sensitive landscape of the Plan Area. The impact of wind generation projects on communities has been recognised by the Government; a ministerial statement made on 18th June 2015 notes that suitable areas for wind energy development must be identified in local plans (as has been done in the *Melton & Rushcliffe Landscape Sensitivity Study 2014*, which was part of the evidence base for the 2011-2036 Local Plan), and that any such developments must have the support of local communities.

POLICY ENV 12: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Proposals for single small-scale (turbines less than 30m), local resident, business, amenity or community-initiated, solar and wind generation infrastructure will be supported, subject to their complying with the environmental protection conditions listed in MBC Local Plan (2011-2036) Policy EN10.

Large and medium-scale (one or more, larger than 30m) turbine developments will not be supported, following the Plan Area's designation in the *Melton & Rushcliffe Landscape Sensitivity Study 2014* as an area of high landscape sensitivity to larger turbines and in conformity with MBC Local Plan (2011-2036) Policy EN10.

6 Community Sustainability

6.1 Community Facilities and Amenities

6.1.1 Existing Facilities and Amenities

Community facilities and amenities make a significant contribution to the vitality and viability of Stathern, having a positive impact on the sustainability of the parish, enhancing the quality of life, and providing an important focal point for social interaction. They provide local employment, reduce the need to travel, and offer important services, particularly for those who do not have access to a car. However, the loss and threatened closure of such services is a common feature in rural villages. This trend is likely to accelerate in the future as an increase in car ownership and frequent commuting to work and for leisure activities renders many rural services financially unsustainable.

Stathern has fewer shops than might be expected in a parish of its size. This increases the need to travel, often by car, to nearby towns such as Melton and Leicester. The need to travel outside the parish to access basic services is one of the main reasons for the high levels of car ownership in the parish. It also creates challenges for those residents without access to a car. Reductions in the frequency of local bus services compound the issue.

The main community facilities within the parish are:

The Parish Church of St Guthlac

This is situated in the village's Conservation Area. The Conservation Area around the church is itself particularly attractive, with cottages, listed buildings and small open spaces. Residents consider it vital that the Conservation Area is protected from further development. The church is Grade II* listed, is built of local ironstone, and dates from circa 1200AD. Considerable modifications were made in the 15th and 16th centuries and in Victorian times. More recently a vestry kitchen, an outside toilet, a store, facilities for the disabled, and better heating, lighting and seating have been installed. The church now requires works to stabilise movement of the chancel walls, and weathering of the friable ironstone presents an ongoing maintenance issue. Services are held on 3 Sundays per month, plus additional festival services, weddings, and funerals. Stathern Primary School also uses the church on a regular basis, and the church is host to the annual Horticultural Show, concerts and exhibitions.



The Stathern 'War Memorial Institute' Village Hall



The WMI, commemorating our service men and women, serves as Stathern's village hall. The Parish Council owns the property and is a Custodian Trustee, and the hall is run as a registered charity by a committee of Managing Trustees comprising a group of volunteer village residents. These ensure, via fundraising events and rental income, that there is sufficient revenue

generated to meet the annual running costs and develop opportunities to support the parish. There are several long-standing regular users of the facility, and Stathern Primary School uses it for a sports hall. It is also available for rent by ad-hoc users for celebrations, parties, training events, etc.

The village is on the threshold of significant growth, as identified in the Melton Local Plan, and it is important that the WMI is recognised as a vital community asset and social hub. An application for an allocation of Section 106 monies (developer contributions) will arise if approval for the circa 74 houses is eventually granted by Melton Borough Council (STAT 1 in the current Melton Local Plan). Demand for the facilities is high, and pressures on availability are likely to increase as the village grows, and, in the future, more funds will be required to remodel, improve, and extend the facilities.

Pubs, Garage Services, Café and General Store

The village centre is home to several important businesses that provide not only their goods and services to customers, but which also are hubs where residents can access, often free of charge, other community services.

The landlords of the remaining village pub, The Plough, in addition to serving customary



drinks and meals, generously allow various community groups the free use of the function room for meetings. This includes Women's Institute meetings, the Horticultural Society and the Royal British Legion amongst many others. Since the closure of the village post office, they have allowed

the lounge bar to be used three mornings per week by Post Office Counters Ltd., which is able to provide many basic post office services.

On the other side of Main Street, adjacent to the WMI, stands Stathern Garage Services and M.O.T. station, together with the Coffee Shot café and general store. All of these are owned and run by a long-established Stathern family. In addition to meeting customers' needs, the Coffee Shot also provide a conveniently located "communications centre" for residents to access hard-copies of village communications, such as the Stathern Star. Following the closure of the former Stathern Stores at the end of 2019, the Coffee Shot has both expanded their range of general foodstuffs, and established a free delivery service for residents who are unable to go to the store themselves. The café area, including outdoor picnic tables, is not only popular with residents but is also well-used by cyclists and walkers visiting or passing through.

The Red Lion Public House Inn and Car Park

The Red Lion Public House, a 16th century inn, was a popular destination for villagers and visitors alike. It closed for business in 2017, and such was the value placed on it that the village sought and obtained "Asset of Community Value" status for both the building and its car park, (expires May 2023). It provided a significant draw for visitors, income into the village, and an important



meeting place and social hub for the local and surrounding communities. Closure had a significant negative impact on the village, with tourist-related businesses particularly affected. The community would like the Red Lion Inn to re-open and to engage the present owner in negotiations to achieve this for the mutual benefit of the freeholder and the village. As the building and car park are within the Conservation Area, and are currently

showing signs of external deterioration, resolution regarding the future of the property is considered to be of high priority. It is hoped that in the future this asset could be used to further the community wellbeing and social interests within the wider local area.

Children's Playpark

Field number 185 Recreation Ground and Play Area, Water Lane/Main Street. Located in the heart of the village, the playpark occupies glebe land owned by the Diocese of Leicester. Stathern Parish Council has a 20-year lease and pays an annual rent. Running costs are funded by the Stathern Recreation Association, chaired by a parish councillor. It is a popular venue for local families

and young people and is used as a sports field by Stathern Primary School. It is the focus for the annual mid-summer “Stathern Party-in-the-Park”. Fundraising has been vigorous and successful over many years.

Parish Allotments

There are 35 Parish Council-owned allotments. All are currently let, and a waiting list exists for vacant lots that arise. The rental income generated covers the running costs.

Stathern Post Office

The village post office closed several years ago. There is now a part-time facility, located in the lounge bar of the Plough Inn, for general Post Office business. This is currently available on 3 mornings per week.

Telephone Box Library

The redundant BT telephone box was purchased for the village several years ago. It now houses a free library. This facility is volunteer-managed and maintained, with ad-hoc financial contributions from the Parish Council for repairs as they become necessary. The stock of books is replenished and rotated from donated items.

Defibrillators

Stathern has 2 public access defibrillators; one located on the front wall of The Plough Inn, and the other on the exterior wall of the churchyard toilet block. The defibrillators are managed by the Community Heartbeat Trust charity, whose National Secretary lives in the village. The Parish Council offers an annual grant towards their support. Awareness training for the defibrillators and first aid training are also offered. A plan to establish a team of village 'responders' is also in an advanced stage of planning.

Cemeteries

The churchyard cemetery is closed for burials, but an area for cremated remains has been created. Toft’s Hill cemetery is the current cemetery. It has a limited number of vacant burial plots. A new ‘natural burial ground’ (i.e. no headstones) is located at Moor Lane.

Grantham Canal

The canal was completed in 1797, spanning 33 miles from the River Trent to Grantham. Approximately one mile is within the Parish of Stathern. Closed in 1936, the canal was ear-marked for refuse infill in 1969. To prevent this, the Grantham Canal Society (GCS), was formed and it now works with the Canal and Rivers Trust to maintain and restore the canal and associated locks. The Stathern section is part of a four-mile Site of Special Scientific Interest-designated (SSSI), which stretches from Rectory Bridge No. 44 at Harby to Redmile Mill Bridge No. 53. The towpath is a popular recreational route. Stathern Bridge No. 45 is a classic hump-backed bridge, beside which is a winding-hole (a wider section of canal for boats to turn).

Dove Cottage Hospice, Tea-rooms and Charity Shop

These are situated at the western parish boundary. The hospice is a non-residential, day respite-care centre located at the end of Canal Lane, run mainly by voluntary help. The hospice also runs the tea-room and charity shop, again, mainly staffed by volunteers. It is popular with walkers, cyclists, visitors and locals alike.

Other Community Assets

Stathern is a thriving village with a number of resident-led activity groups, including the Women's Institute and the Horticultural Society. There is a village-focused magazine, edited and published six times per year by village residents ('Stathern Star'); a quarterly St. Guthlac's Church pamphlet ('Contact') which is hand-delivered to every home in Stathern by volunteers; several Facebook groups; an active WhatsApp group "Stathern Chat" and an ad-hoc newsletter ('Stathern Housing Matters') helping to keep residents informed about development applications affecting the village.

The parish has six dog waste bins and 18 public bench seats. A Leicestershire County Council Mobile Library visits the village every second Thursday in the month. Stathern is an active Neighbourhood Watch area and alerts are issued via email to registered households. The Parish Council has 40 streetlights to maintain and has adopted a planned conversion of five units per year from incandescent lights to LEDs.

POLICY CFA1: RETENTION OF COMMUNITY ASSETS AND FACILITIES

Proposals leading to the loss of existing community facilities, or having an adverse impact on them, namely: the Parish Church of St Guthlac; the Stathern 'War Memorial Institute' Village Hall; the Red Lion Inn and car park; the children's playpark; the parish allotments; The Plough Inn; the telephone box library; the defibrillators; the cemeteries; the Grantham Canal; Dove Cottage Hospice, tea-rooms and charity shop; will be supported only where it can be proven that:

- a) there is no longer any need or demand for the existing community facility
- b) the existing community facility is no longer economically viable or able to be supported by the community, such viability and support includes fundraising and volunteering by residents and others
- c) the proposal makes alternative provision for the relocation of the existing community facility to an equally or more appropriate and accessible location within the parish, and which complies with the other general policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.2 New and Improved Community Facilities

The parish encourages the provision of new and improved facilities. At present, there are no sports clubs or sports fields within the parish boundary. People are obliged to travel to neighbouring villages and towns to engage in sports. Parish-based facilities would be welcomed.

At the public open event, held in the WMI in September 2019, numerous attendees identified the lack of a public car park as a significant concern and would welcome input from developers as to how to address this. The other main facility lacking in the village that attendees identified as being important was provision for young people, to encourage their interest in the life of the community. Again, the village would welcome contributions from developers in order to address this perceived lack of facility.

POLICY CFA2: NEW OR IMPROVED COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Development proposals that improve the quality and/or range of community facilities will be supported where the development:

- a) meets the design criteria stated in the Neighbourhood Plan Policy H5
- b) will not result in unacceptable traffic movements or other disturbance to residential properties
- c) will not generate a need for parking that cannot be adequately catered for on-site
- d) is of a scale appropriate to the needs of the locality and conveniently accessible for residents of the village wishing to walk or cycle
- e) takes into full account the needs of people with disabilities.

6.3 Stathern Primary School

The school is Local Authority controlled and is also located within the Conservation Area. It is close to the church and playpark and makes extensive use of both of those community assets as well as the WMI Village Hall. Nature studies are facilitated with the proximity to Toft's Hill. Currently rated as OFSTED "Outstanding", the school has 119 places of which 18 are currently vacant. The Friends of Stathern School group (FOSS) actively raises funds for the school. The headteacher was tasked in 2019 to prepare a feasibility study for the provision of an additional 40 places. This presents challenges as the school has limited space within the existing building, and the asphalt playground area has already been reduced to provide off-street car-parking spaces for staff.

POLICY CFA3: STATHERN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Proposals for replacing or expanding the facilities of the primary school in the parish will be supported where it can be demonstrated that development:

- a) will have appropriate vehicular access and parking and does not have a significant adverse impact upon traffic circulation
- b) will not result in a significant loss of open space and amenity to local residents or other adjacent uses.

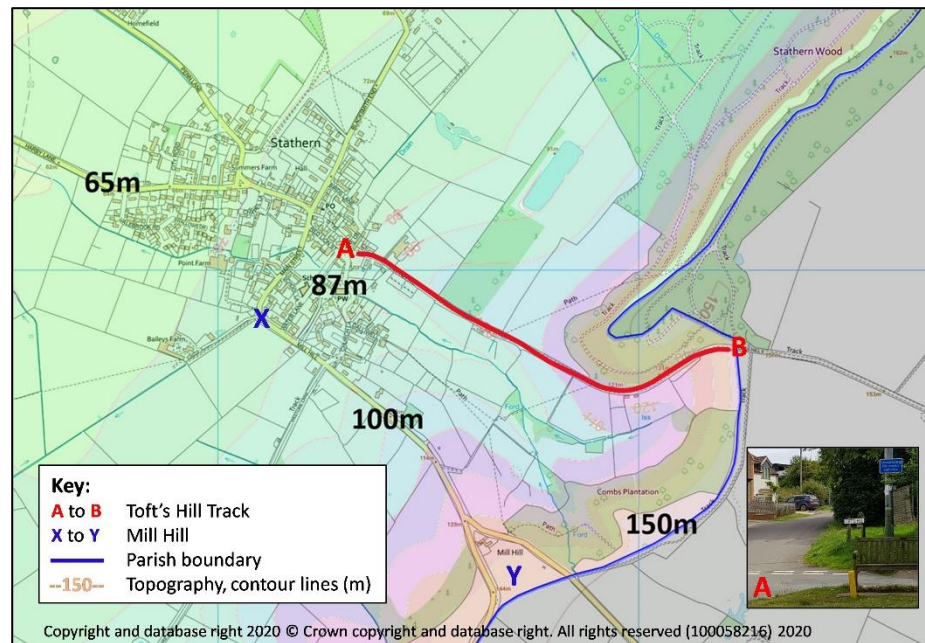
6.4 Toft's Hill

Toft's Hill, and its contiguous land, are the parish's defining natural assets. It has fine views over the church, the village, and the Vale of Belvoir beyond. It is the approach to Stathern that encapsulates the village's rural setting and character.

This ancient track

climbs steeply out of the village from the junction with Red Lion Street, Church Lane and The Green. It leads in a south-easterly direction up the escarpment, which runs to the north-east of the village. There are houses for the first 150m. The last property forms part of the Limits to Development boundary in this Plan. To the right of the track lie the cemetery, including Commonwealth War Graves and open fields, with Stathern Wood to the left.

Figure 15: Toft's Hill, Mill Hill and escarpment location map



Views across Stathern and the Vale of Belvoir from Toft's Hill

The track and the contiguous land bring together many of the fine characteristics enumerated in this Plan: the views, the footpaths, the wildlife routes and the rural environment.

Melton Borough Council's 'Conservation Area Appraisal' for Stathern states: *"Views from this elevated vantage point over the village roofscape to open countryside beyond are quite stunning."*

Toft's Hill is a treasured community amenity. It is used by families with young children, runners, horse-riders and many walkers for the safe and peaceful enjoyment of the landscape with its magnificent views and tranquillity. These are all characteristics protected by Policies EN1, EN4 and EN6 of the Melton Local Plan. Toft's Hill track forms part of the Cross Britain Way, a long-distance

path (see Figure 13: Footpaths, bridleways and other walking routes), and it is a significant wildlife corridor (see Figure 7: Wildlife corridors providing habitat connectivity).

The Toft's Hill Light Detection and Ranging image (Figure 16), shows the lower part of Toft's Hill and Stathern's eastern fringes. Using laser-generated three-dimensional light waves, it shows clearly the medieval Ridge and Furrow features (C). These act as drainage channels, channelling water down the hill towards the village. There is also evidence of potentially important earthworks which may mark the location of a moated medieval site (D).

Figure 16: Toft's Hill LiDAR image

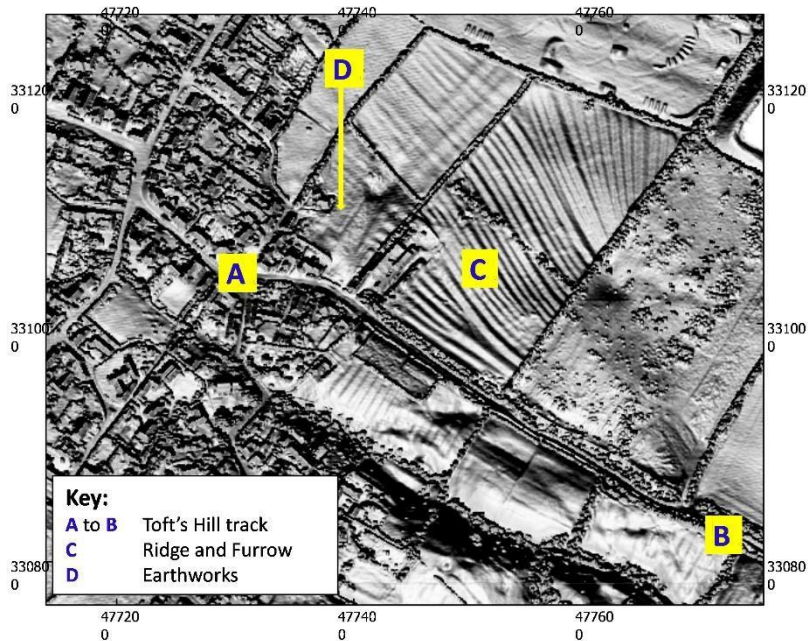
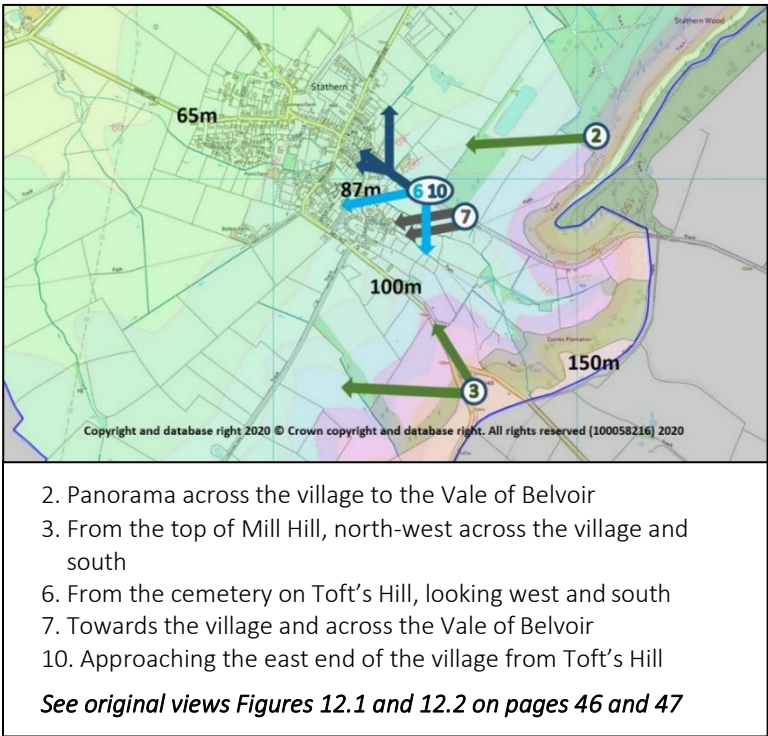


Figure 17: Toft's Hill and environment - important views



- 2. Panorama across the village to the Vale of Belvoir
- 3. From the top of Mill Hill, north-west across the village and south
- 6. From the cemetery on Toft's Hill, looking west and south
- 7. Towards the village and across the Vale of Belvoir
- 10. Approaching the east end of the village from Toft's Hill

See original views Figures 12.1 and 12.2 on pages 46 and 47

Appendix 1 (page 51) of the Melton Local Plan says of Stathern:

"The village lies at the foot of the escarpment which forms the Vale of Belvoir. The existing pattern of development spreads up the lower parts of this slope; however, it would be inappropriate in landscape and development pattern terms to continue this pattern of development."

In 2006, the village survey asked what was considered "important to the character and heritage of Stathern". Toft's Hill topped the list with 96.6% of respondents voting for it. Every survey since has reaffirmed this; it has consistently been the least-favoured site for any development.

POLICY CFA4: PROTECTION OF TOFT'S HILL ENVIRONMENT

Development of land contiguous with, or accessed from, Toft's Hill (map points A to B) will only be considered in the light of the statement in Appendix 1 of the Melton Local Plan which states, "The village lies at the foot of the escarpment which forms the Vale of Belvoir. The existing pattern of development spreads up the lower parts of this slope; however, it would be inappropriate in landscape and development pattern terms to continue this pattern of development".

7 Transport and Traffic

The village roads include one major route to the south (Mill Hill), and two to the north (Harby Lane and Penn Lane). There is a further subsidiary single-track route to the north-east (via Blacksmith End and Moor Lane). These routes are used by through traffic, emergency and service vehicles, and by public transport. Where there are pedestrian pavements alongside these main routes, they are generally narrow, discontinuous, and poorly maintained. There is no public off-road parking in the village, and on-street parking particularly, but not exclusively, on the through routes causes frequent congestion and potential for road safety issues for non-vehicular road users.



**Blacksmith End/
Birds Lane poorly
maintained pavement**



Main Street traffic congestion

The concentration of community assets on Main Street, plus the village shops, garage service, bus route and pub exacerbate the traffic and parking related issues. These are of concern for most residents, and especially relevant for those with prams, pushchairs and toddlers, disabled residents, and users of disability aids such as mobility scooters and wheelchairs.

Car ownership in the village is high, and, with limited local employment opportunities, working residents commute to neighbouring towns. There is no convenient local railway access and timetabling issues make use of the buses at peak commute time very difficult.

Residents, when responding to planning applications appearing on the Melton Borough Planning website, frequently cite concerns that more permitted housing will generate further increases in traffic, exacerbating existing problems. Leisure visitors, such as walkers and cyclists using Toft's Hill, park at the roadside on The Green. Often at weekends, there are considerable numbers of cyclists taking part in events, passing through the village. Horse-riders are also frequent users of the congested through-routes, although traffic generally accommodates them without problems. It should be noted that, even though there are restrictions on heavy goods vehicles passing through the village, those that legitimately come into the village could affect the structural stability of older buildings, especially in the Conservation Area.

Two public bus services link Stathern to some neighbouring villages and towns where health, education, employment and other services are located. A recent cost-saving exercise by Leicestershire County Council has resulted in both services being retained, but with frequency of service much reduced. The junction of Main Street and Blacksmith End is used as a turning area by public transport and dedicated school buses alike, posing additional road-safety issues.

POLICY TR1: PARKING AND ROAD SAFETY

The cumulative residual impact of all new development on traffic flows in the village (taking account of proposed mitigation measures) should not be so severe that the residents' safe use of the footpaths and road network is prejudiced.

7.1 Parking and Traffic Issues

In keeping with many rural communities, much of the layout of the village was created before the advent of widespread car ownership. Consequently, Stathern has a lack of public off-road car parking, and, as a through-route and bus route, existing congestion and road-safety concerns.

Main Street is the main through-route, and midway along this road are situated the retail business premises: The Plough Inn, the WMI Village Hall, Stathern Garage, and the Coffee Shot café and shop. The conflict of through traffic and village traffic results in frequent congestion and road-safety concerns. The junction with Blacksmith End, at a right-angled obscured-visibility bend, is used by school and public bus services as a turning area, again posing road-safety concerns.

Away from Main Street, Blacksmith End is a narrow road that becomes single-track as it leaves



Blacksmith End - parking

the village. It has a mix of properties including terraced housing; part Local Authority owned and part privately owned. Many of the terraced properties have no off-road parking space, and visitors to the village often add to the parking congestion along the road. Parking along both sides of the road effectively reduces Blacksmith End to a single-track even before it exits the village, whereupon it does become single-track (without passing places).

Roads adjacent to Stathern School, including Red Lion Street, School Lane, and even Mill Hill, experience traffic and parking overload at the start and end of the school day. The designation of land at the bottom of Mill Hill as the preferred development site for circa 74 new homes, with a single point of exit and egress directly onto the bend where Mill Hill becomes Main Street (see photo), is likely to further exacerbate the traffic, parking, and road-safety issues.



**Main Street/Mill Hill –
school drop off at peak time**

Church Lane, which runs through part of the Conservation Area, has a tight double bend adjacent to the church. At this point, the road is narrow and difficult to negotiate even in a small car. However, it is identified as being suitable for all traffic on satellite navigation systems and is used regularly by trades-people's vehicles. This presents a road-safety



Churned verge on The Green

threat to pedestrians as there is no pavement. Traffic and parking issues are already being experienced in the area of Toft's Hill/The Green/Birds Lane, an area where a planning application for 9 houses is currently being considered by Melton Council, owing to: another tight double-bend on narrow roads; an absence of off-road parking for the older former Housing Association and former Local Authority properties on Birds Lane and The Green; and 5 recently built houses at the junction of

Birds Lane and The Green. The verge at the double bend is already churned by dustbin lorries and large trades' vehicles, resulting in mud-slicks washing down the road and excessive silt entering the drains, building up problems for the future with potential blockages and flooding.

Parking and traffic issues resulting from the lack of public car parks, and established housing with no off-road parking space are compounded by the use of many garages for storage, or as workshops. They are often converted to other use, such as an extra room. The few rented garages, such as those in Church Lane, are often not used for cars, being either used for storage or left disused and in a state of disrepair.

POLICY TR2: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

With particular regard to the rural highway network of the parish and the need to minimise any increase in vehicular traffic, all housing and commercial development must:

- a) not remove or compromise the use of any existing off-road parking areas unless a suitable equivalent alternative is provided
- b) provide any necessary improvements to site access, communal parking and the highway network either directly or by financial contributions
- c) consider, where appropriate, the improvement and where possible the creation of footpaths and cycle-ways to key village services.

7.2 Speeding

Speeding evidence is provided by the village's Speed Indicator Device (SID) that is deployed in rotation at key points of entry into the village where the 30 m.p.h. traffic signs are (Mill Hill, Blacksmith End and Penn Lane). It indicates that there are sufficient incidents of vehicles travelling in excess of the speed limit to merit consideration of further traffic calming measures. The Parish Council continues to consider and address this important issue, and to explore the best traffic calming solutions available to it, e.g. the electronic speed sign (with the possible purchase of additional units so they can be left permanently at each strategic point).

7.3 Electric Vehicles

UK Government announcements regarding climate change and carbon emission targets imply that there is likely to be a significant increase in the number of electric vehicles and the need for battery charging points. Home-charging is currently the norm. In addition, on-street charging points are likely to be required as not all properties have facilities for off-street charging at home. Commercial/communal rapid charging facilities are likely to be required in the future.

POLICY TR3: ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Residential development involving new-build or changes of use of one dwelling or more should provide 7kW cabling, or better if feasible, to the most practical point in the home to facilitate subsequent installation of a home electric vehicle charging point.

The provision of communal vehicular charging points within the parish will be encouraged where there is universal access and their presence does not impact negatively on existing available parking in the parish or traffic flow.

8 Businesses and Employment

8.1 Existing Business and Employment

Stathern has evolved from a rural hamlet, providing homes in its early days for those employed primarily in agriculture and associated rural activities, including quarrying and brick making. Cottage industry in the form of lace-making developed, providing employment for farm workers' spouses and children. In the late 19th century, a small lace-making factory was built on Church Lane (now a light engineering works), and in the centre of the village were 2 dairies producing cheese. A boot and shoe factory, which was built in the early 20th century along Blacksmith End, provided local employment until it was closed in the 1980s. The site was eventually redeveloped with a small number of detached houses being built. This development forms the north-eastern boundary of the village envelope, with fields beyond.

8.1.1 Former Railway Line and Station Yard

A railway line was developed for the distribution of locally quarried ironstone, and to provide commuter transport. The line suffered final closure in 1964, and, despite feasibility studies, is not presently considered viable for reopening. The railway embankment and course of the former track form a clear and physical boundary to the parish. The former station yard area of 19 acres (9 acres being embankment and former trackway) was acquired by a village resident and has been developed as an industrial site.



Station Yard

Currently, the site houses a classic-car renovation business, a haulage firm, a landscaping concern, a coal merchant's business, a car-repair workshop, a glass-fibre model airplane business, and 3 builders' yards. The current owner (the owner of the coal merchant's business) has expressed an interest in further developing this industrial and storage area. The site, being 0.5 miles from the village centre, with direct access on to Long Lane, which connects Harby village to the A52 at Bottesford, would be ideal for light industrial development to provide additional local employment without adding to the traffic and parking issues within the village centre.

8.1.2 Leisure Bench Ltd and former Turkey Farm

To the north-east of Moor Lane, there is a thriving garden furniture manufacturing unit providing employment for 20-25 people. The business is housed in large agricultural sheds and has a yard area for staff parking to cater for heavy goods delivery vehicles. It is feasible that the site could be further developed as a light industrial area to provide additional local employment opportunities, although Moor Lane itself is a narrow single-track road with only 1 passing place, and further development of the site would be likely to increase traffic pressures along Blacksmith End and into the village centre.

8.1.3 Brooker Flynn Architects

To the southern boundary of the former village envelope, located on Mill Hill, is an architects' practice. This has a nationwide clientèle, and employs 20-25 people. However, given the specialised nature of the business, the employees are mainly drawn from towns and villages around the Vale of Belvoir, rather than from Stathern itself. The site includes a staff car park which, alongside its location to the southern perimeter, means that the business has minimal impact on the traffic and parking issues that are a feature of Stathern.

8.1.4 Small Businesses and Self-Employment

Other than these 3 business/industrial areas on the village perimeter, the village core now provides only limited employment opportunities. Apart from the self-employed, the economically active labour force has to commute to other employment centres. The 2011 Census characterised Stathern residents as being economically active until retirement age, with a markedly lower proportion of its residents being unemployed when compared to the district, the region, and to England as a whole.

Stathern is now classed within the Local Plan as a Service Centre. Many of the local small businesses fulfil important community roles in addition to their primary function as economic units. Offering limited opportunities, providing a mix of mainly part-time employment requiring a mix of skills, they include: the Plough Inn (which is home to the visiting Post Office, and which allows use of its function room for local organisations to hold meetings, generally with no room-hire charge); Stathern Garage and MOT centre; the Coffee Shot café and village store; a light engineering business; a family-run grounds working and contracting business; a gardening and forestry business; a riding school specialising in equestrianism; several building trade related businesses; and 3 main bed & breakfast/holiday cottage businesses. There are numerous self-employed professional businesses, run from home covering such fields of expertise as IT consultancy, marketing and design of promotional materials, recruitment, and human resource professionals, amongst many others.

POLICY BE1: SUPPORT FOR EXISTING BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT

There will be a presumption against the loss of commercial premises or land that provides employment opportunities. Applications for a change of use to an activity that does not provide employment opportunities will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that:

- a) the commercial premises or land in question has not been in active use for at least 12 months
- b) the commercial premises or land in question has no potential for either reoccupation or redevelopment for employment generating uses and as demonstrated through the results both of a full valuation report and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least six months.

8.2 Support for New Businesses and Employment

New employment initiatives can help to boost and diversify the local economy, thus providing more local employment opportunities. However, residents have been clear that any new employment initiatives should be small scale and sensitive to the character of the parish. Employment proposals should only be approved if they avoid harmful impacts on other matters agreed to be locally important such as increased traffic flows, parking, residential amenity, the preservation of historic/heritage assets and the local environment.

3 miles north of the parish, beyond the parish boundary, there is a well-developed industrial area around the long-established Langar airfield. The proximity to Stathern parish of this area presents a potential inhibitor to significant growth of an industrial area within the parish. However, for any community to flourish, good employment opportunities are essential. The parish, as demonstrated above, does have a range of local employers within its bounds, but it is recognised that the proximity to various towns and cities, including Melton, Grantham, Bingham, Nottingham, Leicester, and Loughborough, will limit the ability of the parish to be home to large-scale employers. In the last few years, the village has lost its dedicated Post Office, one public house, the Methodist Chapel and a general store. In March 2020, the village butcher closed, and, as the shop and preparation and storage rooms were part of the owners' home, the premises has reverted to being a purely domestic house. It is important that our Neighbourhood Plan protects and strengthens the economic base within the parish. Existing employment should be proactively encouraged and supported to develop where appropriate, reflecting the growth of Stathern and its residents.

POLICY BE2: SUPPORT FOR NEW BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT

In supporting additional employment opportunities, new development will be required to:

- a) fall within the boundary of Limits to Development, unless it relates to small scale leisure or tourism activities, or other forms of commercial/employment related development appropriate to a countryside location or there are exceptional circumstances
- b) where possible, be sited in existing buildings or on areas of previously developed land
- c) be of a size and scale not adversely affecting the character, infrastructure and environment of the village itself and the Neighbourhood Plan area, including the countryside
- d) not involve the loss of dwellings
- e) not increase noise levels or light pollution or introduce any pollution to an extent that they would unacceptably disturb occupants of nearby residential property
- f) not generate unacceptable levels of traffic movement and on-road parking,
- g) provide off-road parking
- h) contribute to the character, the design of the local built environment and the vitality of the local area
- i) be well integrated into and complement existing businesses.

8.3 Home Working

There is an increasing national trend to home working and therefore, as the parish develops and grows, it will need increasingly to accommodate and support the needs of residents working from home. This will include improved internet and mobile phone infrastructure and also opportunities within the parish to allow businesses to develop and grow. The provision of meeting spaces and workshops would create opportunities for residents, and potentially enhance their business and employment opportunities. Stathern “home workers” already include a wide range of activities, including professional counselling services, investment advisors, a mobile hairdresser, a videographer/drone operator, and many more.

Covid-19 has changed the way many people work, with increased home working. Many schools and universities are moving tuition modules online. The situation is likely to prevail, and even go further with the need for improved internet access speeds and better broadband likely to be a requirement of residents for the foreseeable future.

Residents who wish to move to working within their homes or within the village may need to make adaptations to their homes and gardens. Therefore, the construction of extensions, the conversion of outbuildings, and the development of new freestanding buildings in gardens from which businesses can operate will be supported, subject to the design standards and development policies within this Neighbourhood Plan being complied with. This is intended to optimise the opportunities for entrepreneurial activity and employment within Stathern parish. It will be important that any future housing and developments within the village should strongly consider accommodation that can promote home working and local employment.

POLICY BE3: HOME WORKING

Proposals for the use of part of a dwelling for office and/or light industrial uses, and for small-scale free-standing buildings within its curtilage, extensions to the dwelling or conversion of outbuildings for those uses, will be supported where:

- a) such development will not result in unacceptable traffic movements and that appropriate parking provision is made
- b) no significant and adverse impact arises to nearby residents or other sensitive land uses from noise, fumes, light pollution, or other nuisance associated with the work activity
- c) any extension or free-standing building shall be designed having regard to policies in this Plan and should not detract from the quality and character of the building to which they are subservient by reason of height, scale, massing, location or the facing materials used in their construction.

8.4 Farming and the Rural Setting

A feature of Stathern is that it is situated among open fields and woodland, with the village characterised by green space within the Limits to Development; a good selection of Public Rights Of Way; and footpaths and bridleways crisscrossing the surrounding fields, linking it with neighbouring villages. The parish has a number of land-owning and tenant farmers, and these

agri-businesses offer local employment. The farms are mainly arable but there is also a large dairy farm providing milk to the local dairies, where the world-famous Stilton cheese is produced.

POLICY BE4: FARM DIVERSIFICATION

Development proposals will be supported that:

- a) promote a viable and sustainable farming and rural economy within the parish
- b) promote the diversification of rural businesses
- c) encourage new businesses to provide a wider range of local produce, services and leisure facilities, to provide local employment and attract visitors to the parish
- d) maintain and enhance the local environment of rural and agricultural land
- e) are appropriate to the rural location
- f) will not have an adverse impact on any archaeological, architectural, historic or environmental features
- g) generate traffic that can be accommodated by the local road system
- h) provide adequate on-site parking
- i) produce no significant adverse impact on neighbours through noise, light or other pollution, increased traffic levels, or increased flood risk.

8.5 Tourism

Stathern is a picturesque, beautiful, rural parish with many attractions, including the well-defined footpaths, its pub and café, the annual Party-in-the-Park, Duathlon and 10k race. It has an historically and architecturally interesting Conservation Area. The parish attracts many walkers, horse-riders, cyclists and other visitors. There are several holiday-lets, and bed & breakfast accommodation available within the parish. The parish is keen to extend a welcome to visitors whilst ensuring that their visit does not have a negative impact on residents, e.g. in the context of traffic. The facilities for visitors should be enhanced over the lifetime of this Neighbourhood Plan through the introduction of pictorial signs giving historical information, further leaflets about what to see in the village and, particularly, the provision of parking.

POLICY BE5: TOURISM

Support will be given to facilities to enhance and manage tourism as follows:

- a) within or adjoining Stathern village, on a scale appropriate to the settlement
- b) which do not have a detrimental effect on the distinctive rural character of the parish
- c) which do not adversely affect the surrounding infrastructure; particularly local road networks, water supply and sewerage
- d) provide adequate parking facilities
- e) which benefit the local community through, for instance, provision of local employment opportunities and improvements to local service provision, and is proportionate to the size of settlement in which it is located
- f) where feasible, the development involves the re-use of existing buildings or is part of farm diversification.

8.6 Broadband and Telecommunications

It is vital that there are appropriate communication channels, both physical, in the terms of road connectivity, and electronic/digital, in terms of broadband and mobile telephone communications. Stathern is supported by two broadband infrastructure providers: Openreach (via Fibre to the Cabinet); and Boundless Networks (via a Wi-Fi signal from the church tower). Both of these allow households and businesses to access high speed broadband connections; however, residents and businesses have stressed the need for significantly improved 4G mobile phone signals. More people are choosing to use mobile phones to make calls and to access the internet and social media by smartphone. It is crucial that improvements to the current infrastructure, including the increasing availability of the 5G signal, be in place to support future housing, employment and services in the village, and to support current residents and businesses.

It is particularly important that, as the village of Stathern grows and develops, an efficient and effective communications infrastructure is in place to maximise connectivity for businesses, services and residents. Such provision will reduce social isolation, ensure that not only residents, employers and services are well supported, but visitors to the village can also access good communications. All future developments in communication technology must be supported by the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that all those in the parish can take full advantage of these developments.

POLICY BE6: BROADBAND AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Proposals to provide access to super-fast broadband and improve the local mobile communications network will be supported subject to:

- a) every individual dwelling in new housing developments of one or more houses having a connection installed capable of supplying broadband operation at speeds of 30 megabytes per second (as at the date of publication) or better to reflect higher minimum speeds that may be recommended through the lifetime of the Plan
- b) including improvements to the mobile telecommunication network to serve all businesses and households within the parish
- c) including new masts to be installed where individual masts are shared, where possible, by more than a single mobile phone signal provider
- d) any infrastructure improvements possibly requiring above-ground network installations, being sympathetically located, and designed to integrate into the landscape and not be in or near to open landscapes.

9 Community Actions

During the development of the Plan, a number of Community Actions were identified that would help to improve our community and help satisfy wider community aspirations. They reflect future work activities that it is proposed be undertaken within the parish, which will involve a wide range of parties including residents and the public and private sector alongside the Parish Council to help improve the parish in line with the outcome of community consultation. They will be considered over the lifetime of the Plan and progressed in line with the degree of community support for each activity.

Community Actions are not planning policies and are not subject to Examination.

The Community Actions that have emerged through the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan are as follows:

COMMUNITY ACTION POINT TR AP1: SPEED MANAGEMENT

The Parish Council to undertake a review of the necessity for, and potential methods of, introducing further speed management techniques within the village.

COMMUNITY ACTION POINT TR AP2: RESIDENT PARKING ZONES

The Parish Council to undertake a feasibility study regarding the introduction of solutions to the problems ensuing from over-use of on-street parking in key areas of the village, including the possibility of introducing resident only parking areas.

COMMUNITY ACTION POINT TR AP3: PEDESTRIAN PAVEMENTS

The Parish Council will seek to complete a thorough inventory of the adequacy of pavements within the parish (width, surface quality, overgrowth and dropped kerbs at junctions), particularly with regard to residents and visitors using pushchairs or mobility aids, as well as those with physical or mental health challenges.

COMMUNITY ACTION POINT TR AP4: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The Parish Council will develop a coherent action plan to address traffic and parking issues that have been identified through the Neighbourhood Plan including:

- a) undertaking an ongoing awareness exercise to make explicit the negative impact on residents of inconsiderate parking;
- b) working to achieve improvement of car parking provision within the parish for residents and visitors;
- c) developing appropriate traffic management/calming/parking measures for the parish;
- d) working with the school to resolve parking issues at drop-off and pick-up times.

10 Monitoring and Review

This Stathern Neighbourhood Plan will last up to 2036. During this time, it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

The Plan will be regularly monitored. This will be led by Stathern Parish Council on at least an annual basis. The policies and measures contained in the Plan will form the core of the monitoring activity, but other data collected and reported at the parish level relevant to the delivery of the Plan will also be included. The monitoring will have a particular focus on the delivery of new housing development in the Plan Area and its relationship to the strategic housing delivery targets set out in the Local Plan.

The Parish Council proposes to review the Plan formally on a five-year cycle commencing in 2026 or to coincide with the review of the Melton Local Plan if this cycle is different.