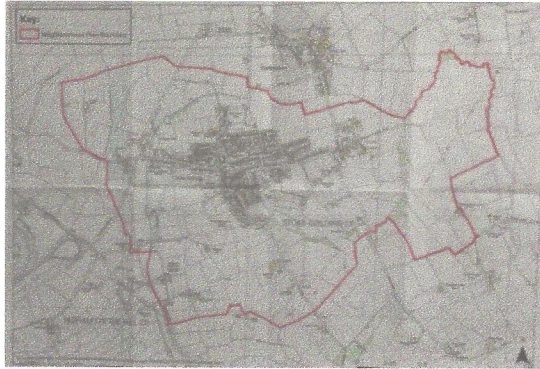


Analysis Report for Stoke Golding Neighbourhood  
Development Plan Advisory Committee (SGNDPAC) on  
Local Business and Community Organisations Survey  
Responses Arising from the Consultation Process.



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# Introduction

The Neighbourhood Planning process seeks to empower communities, enabling them to help shape development within their area, protect public space and heritage and plan for the upgrading of public facilities.

Following the consultation surveys conducted by Stoke Golding Neighbourhood Development Plan Advisory Committee (SGNDPAC) this report has been produced by collating and analysing responses from local businesses and other organisations that operate within the proposed Neighbourhood Plan boundary. The main body of the report is comprised of sections addressing the key issues that arose from the responses received.

**Survey Respondents (to date):** Stoke Golding WI, 1st Stoke Golding (St Margaret's) Scout Group, 1st Stoke Golding (St Margaret's) Cubs Group, Stoke Golding Under 5's, Robin Hood Playschool, Mango Tree Restaurant, Lee Academy, St. Margaret's Church PCC, Stoke Golding Methodist Church, Stoke Golding Village Hall, Chester Hill (BMX), St Martin's Catholic Academy, Stoke Golding Heritage Group. A response was also received from a small collective of landowners.

## 1. Housing development

Stoke Golding which has seen a high rate of housing development over the past few years. Concern that this will continue has been expressed by business respondents, mirroring those by residents who gave their views at the open consultation evenings. Some wish to see no further housing developments whilst others recognise that preventing all future development is unrealistic. Indeed, an increase in the number of village residents would provide valuable support to local businesses. Housing that is affordable to young professionals and families is desirable to address the age demographic imbalance within Stoke Golding and build a more broad-based, sustainable community.

However, this should not be at the expense of public space or the surrounding green belt, a view that will be repeated throughout this report. Respondents suggest brown field sites should be developed to prevent negative impacts on the existing community, heritage, environment and wildlife. Care should also be taken in stipulating conditions that any new housing is visually compatible with existing residences, a requirement that is supported within the National Planning Policy Framework. It is felt that this hasn't been the case previously with inappropriate housing design and street layout.

### Housing numbers

Many of the long-standing residents of the village believe that the village character has been irrevocably destroyed and are strongly against any further development. This position cannot be supported. It is widely acknowledged that there will be a need for additional housing into the future and that Stoke Golding must provide its share. The key factor is what constitutes an acceptable amount.

For the last planning period of 2002 to 2026, the Borough Council assessed that Stoke Golding's contribution to the overall need was 60 houses. Approximately 3/annum. On this basis up to 2036, for a 10 year planning period 30 would appear to be the relevant figure. However, in the current planning period up to 2026 approximately 155 houses are either planned or are being built meaning a surplus of 95 houses over the requirement. It should follow that no more houses are required as the original target of 3/annum, if replicated in the new planning period has been met.

However, housing targets are reassessed annually and there is a requirement set out in the National Planning Policy Framework to "follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development" no matter how much development has already been permitted or completed. It is therefore unrealistic that the Borough Council would be able to support no further development but there could be an argument for limited small scale development through infill, barn conversions and so forth.

In addition to any land that might become available for development by national house-building companies, there is a plot of land to the south of Station Road that is jointly owned by a small number of landowners with strong ties to the village. During the consultation period they expressed a wish to make known future plans to make the land available for development of accommodation for the elderly. There is currently no suitable housing provision for people who have lived in Stoke Golding for most or all of their lives but find they need extra support or to downsize. Such a development has the potential to free up existing properties in order to meet demand from families seeking larger property within the village as well provide social benefit in enabling some elderly residents to remain within their community.

## 2. Stoke Golding Community Facilities

Stoke Golding Village Hall is positively viewed as a versatile communal hub that is generally fit for purpose and caters to the needs of community groups across a diverse demographic. However, responses received during the consultation express the need for improvements to ensure that in the future it fully meets the sporting, social and educational needs of all age groups including disadvantaged people young and old.

Issues identified by community groups and organisations include:

- Inadequate car parking facilities
- Anti-social behaviour outside the hall in the evenings causing disruptions to meetings and events inside.
- Internet and Wi-Fi network provision
- Refreshment provisions, such as cafe/bar facilities
- Improved facilities geared towards disadvantaged young people and people with disabilities.

The positives are that the hall is a good sized, bright and clean space that is able to serve a number of functions. It has been suggested that the space could be extended to increase its attractiveness to groups, clubs and societies that attract large numbers. Additional rooms would allow for multiple groups to run at the same time, though this could potentially cause insurance, licensing and safeguarding issues for existing children's groups so further consultation might be required during any planning process to develop the hall. It should be noted that there are a number of other venues offering meeting and club facilities including, the Baxter Hall, Methodist Church Hall, St Martin's Sports Hall and Stoke Golding Club where there is some potential for improvement and/or development.

### 3. Public services

Concern has been expressed that increased population due to a high level of completed and planned housing development may result in pressure on school place provision and access to the Doctor's Surgery in the near future. However, development in the form of affordable housing whilst increasing pressure on the doctor's surgery would potentially bring in more local children to fill the school places that are currently being offered to non-local children. Stoke Golding has very good schools and the worry is that an increasingly aging population could put them under pressure to close.

Essential service capacity and local access to them should be monitored by the council throughout the period of the Neighbourhood Plan and be a critical factor in the approval of new development. It might also be necessary to improve public transport within the village, particularly in the event of further greenbelt development. The existing bus service serves residents well, but there could be room for improvement in terms of timetabling and an extended service.

### 4. Roads, traffic congestion and parking

#### 4.1 Roads and footpaths

A number of local pupils and staff walk or cycle to and from schools within the village. There is concern about the "suitability" and "state" of footpaths/cycle ways, and there has been correspondence with LCC Highways on these issues. Improvement is needed in order to make users, including children and the elderly, feel safe and any further development should not cause further disrepair. A resident of the new Convent Drive development has expressed concern that the road into the development remains unfinished. The developer concerned has also left a piece of land in a poor state, failing to complete the promised public space and playground.

#### 4.2 Congestion

Concerns were expressed from respondents about the congestion on main roads in and around the village. It is felt that this has been made worse by recent development,

including the building of 60 houses at the former convent site. Volume and speed of traffic on Hinckley Road has been the subject of concern for many years. Residents find it difficult and unsafe to exit drives as motorists speed down the straight piece of road towards the Stoke Road/Dadlington roundabout. This can also be the case on the bend immediately after the Three Horse Shoes Pub, which in conjunction with the parking on High Street just before the Baxter Hall is a potential hazard. It is suggested that a mirror be installed on this bend.

Traffic congestion and related parking issues are exacerbated by school traffic, the impact of which the schools are aware of. St Martin's Catholic Academy have, in conjunction with Leicestershire City Council, looked into the prospect of constructing a second access off Hinckley Road in order to establish a one-way system on the school grounds but this is not currently financially viable without outside funding.

### 4.3 Parking

There is a widespread feeling from the responses received that parking provision is an issue in the village. Insufficient parking is a problem near all of the village schools, causing dangerous and illegal parking. The top of Hinckley Road and Wykin Lane are highlighted as being of particular concern and the installation of roadside mirrors would be welcomed here also.

Permitted use of the village hall car park for daily school runs was suggested, as happens in other local villages where the village hall is close by. However, the car park is deemed too small to fully meet school parking needs. This situation may worsen over time if the balance between local children and children who commute to Stoke Golding's schools further changes - a real threat due to house prices that are unaffordable to many families.

Therefore there should be provision for improved parking within the Neighbourhood Plan, alongside protection against development that would increase pressure on the causes of congestion.

## 5. Young residents

Young people are a vital consideration when planning the future of our community and have been enthusiastic in sharing their views. Responses were received from the local Cubs, Scouts, Robin Hood Playgroup and the Under 5s play group.

Young people expressed a wish for the village to remain small and are against any further housing development. They want to see the continued existence of the small family farms that sit on the village outskirts and that many have likely visited with family or on school trips. They

appreciate their quiet and attractive rural surroundings and would not like to see this change. Though of varying age groups, many already have an awareness and understanding of the value of the green belt surrounding their village and have a strong desire to see it protected. They enjoy the close-knit community spirit but would like to see safer, more people friendly streets, highlighting the need for cycle paths and routes and a 20mph speed limit where appropriate. Dog waste is also an issue on some walking routes.

Young locals are also aware of their historic heritage and would like to see this celebrated more. A village museum has been suggested that is dedicated to Stoke Golding's unique place in history, including the Battle of Bosworth and beginnings of the Tudor reign and local involvement in the world wars.

As mentioned in sections 1 and 3, there is a danger that young residents may decrease as a demographic in Stoke Golding due to families being priced out of the housing market. Therefore, alongside improved facilities and public space that would increase pride and enjoyment in their village, affordable housing provision should be a priority when housing development is permitted and backing should be sought from the Borough Council to this end.

Below is a wish list collated from the responses received from the children (and parents on behalf of those under the age of 5) surveyed via the local organisations mentioned:

#### **Improved outdoor and park playground facilities**

- New playground equipment to replace current tired equipment
- Larger field at existing park
- Maintenance and upkeep of public spaces with removal of weeds and nettles
- Another park at the other end of the village
- Park toilets
- Play castle
- Skate park
- Improvement to the existing BMX track
- Maze
- Astro-turf pitch and nets
- Zip wire
- Helter Skelter
- Tree house
- Crazy golf
- Petting zoo
- Lake, nature trail and fish pond
- Horse-riding stables and riding school
- Swimming pool
- Monorail

#### **Leisure facilities, retail and public services**

- Cafe
- Mother and baby changing facilities
- More out of school clubs
- Sports centre and tennis courts
- New sports hall at St Martins
- Community art gallery
- A wider range of village shops
- Charity shops
- A Stoke Golding rugby team
- Gym

- Snooker, pool and table games provision
- Guide dog centre
- Improved car parking
- Fish and chip shop
- Village dentist

Although schools are popular and of a high standard there is no provision for further education within the village, meaning that pupils completing their GCSE's would need to travel elsewhere in the county to attend sixth form. The Principal of St Martin's Catholic Academy has stated that provision of sixth form facilities is part of the Academy's long-term strategy. As part of improving the school facilities there is a wish to provide an improved sports hall on the existing tennis court and an all-weather playing surface on the school field. The school would wish these to be established as community facilities as this would directly benefit both the school and the village.

## 6. Heritage

Stoke Golding has a rich history and heritage which its residents and organisations wish to preserve, protecting historic buildings and maintaining the integrity and character of the village. The PCC of St. Margaret's Church state that they "would not wish any development in the village to detract from the visual aspect of the historic church building of St. Margaret of Antioch". This view is repeated throughout the responses received, not only in respect to St Margaret's but to the village as a whole.

As addressed in section 4, young residents also wish to preserve and build on their local heritage. The Stoke Golding Heritage Group also expresses concern that the separate identities of Stoke Golding and Dadlington may be lost if the green belt is eroded by development, culminating in a loss of boundary between the two villages. The group highlight the recreation ground, land off Bennett's Close and the allotments as green space that should not be subject to development.

Stoke Golding existed in the medieval period and the land around the village core was predominately ridge and furrow. Changes in farming practice and a high level of housing development have led to virtually all ridge and furrow being lost. To retain this unique heritage asset, priority should be given to other areas before development should be permitted on the remaining ridge and furrow.

Trees within the conservation area are protected and are an important feature of the rural ambience highlighted by many different groups within the consultation period. Trees outside this area but within the boundaries of the Neighbourhood Plan should be given similar protection and the creation of a Tree Warden post, specifically to monitor and oversee the protection and maintenance of the village trees has been suggested.

The landscape character of the rural area around the village is of irregular fields with hedges and trees forming the field boundaries (Stoke Golding Vales). Hedgerows and trees should be



maintained and no developments should be permitted that had a significant impact on this basic characteristic. In particular, the hedges and trees that line the roads leading to and from the village are a major factor that creates a rural feel. Consideration should be given to protecting this natural asset both for the village and as a wildlife habitat that creates bio diversity. Similarly the wildlife corridor that is adjacent to and includes the canal should be widened to include fields adjacent to the existing strip and this principle should be applied to the Conservation Area in the new cemetery.

## 7. Sense of Community

Stoke Golding is praised for its sense of community, with a good array of amenities and public services within walking distance. There are a good variety of social clubs, churches of different denominations and good quality school options. Business owners, service providers and their customers and users appreciate the village as a safe and attractive environment that retains a rural feel.

There is some feeling that this is under threat from the rate of housing development, but there is a positive attitude from many respondents that if new residents are properly integrated then they will be a positive addition to the community, particularly if they address demographic imbalances that currently exist within Stoke Golding. Profit-making businesses who responded to the survey also state that village population growth means more customers, which will help to make Stoke Golding an attractive and vibrant place to visit as well as live.

## 8. Conclusions

Stoke Golding is a pleasant village in rural surroundings that benefits from a good provision of services and an excellent community spirit. All age groups enjoy living here and wish to see the unique character and heritage of the village retained.

Housing development is as much a concern for local businesses and organisations as it is for residents. It is generally accepted that further development must be provided for in the drawing up of this Neighbourhood Plan and that there are positive aspects to it. However, it is felt that the pace and nature of development needs stricter control if Stoke Golding is to retain its character, identity and rural charm. This is of the utmost importance to all who have taken the time to give their views.

Services can be improved to meet growing demand, particularly in terms of the Doctors surgery. Access to public green space and an improvement to communal facilities such as the village hall and recreation ground is a chief concern and the challenge to all organisations that are responsible for meeting the needs of Stoke Golding's young residents is clear.