

RESPONSE TO STONELEIGH AND AURIOL SUBMISSION NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (REGULATION 16)

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| Head of Service: | Justin Turvey, Head of Place Development |
| Report Author | Susie Legg, Ian Mawer |
| Wards affected: | Auriol Ward; Cuddington Ward; Stoneleigh Ward; |
| Urgent Decision | No |
| Appendices (attached): | Appendix 1 – EEBC Proposed response to the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16) Appendix 2 - Submission Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16) Appendix 3 – EEBC Neighbourhood Planning Guide |

Summary

This report considers the Council's proposed response to the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan that was published for consultation between 20 June 2025 and 1 August 2025 under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum following consultation on a draft Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 14) that was undertaken between 9 September 2024 and 27 October 2024.

The Council is a statutory consultee on neighbourhood plans and it is important that the council provides detailed responses on neighbourhood plans at the formal consultation stages.

Once adopted the neighbourhood plan becomes part of the boroughs statutory development plan and will therefore be used in the determination planning applications in the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum Area.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Approve the Councils response to the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16) set out in Appendix 1 that is currently subject to public**

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| consultation under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. |
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1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Council is a Statutory Consultee on Neighbourhood Plans and this stage is our final opportunity to make formal comments on the plan. It is important that we identify potential issues with conformity with the Councils Development Plan and ensure that the policies will be effective when determining planning applications.

2 Background

- 2.1 Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum has been working to prepare a neighbourhood plan for several years. The Neighbourhood Forum and Neighbourhood Area were designated by the Council in November 2020.
- 2.2 Neighbourhood plans are required to be in general conformity with strategic policies in the Borough's adopted Local Plan. Once formally 'made', they become part of the statutory land use development plan with equivalent weight and legal status as the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan.
- 2.3 The Council has a statutory duty to provide advice and assistance to Neighbourhood Forums that are preparing a neighbourhood plan. Planning officers have had regular contact with Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum and have provided comments and planning advice throughout the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, via meetings and email correspondence. In addition, the council provided a detailed response to the Draft Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 14) consultation which was approved by this committee in October 2024.
- 2.4 There are nine key stages to producing a neighbourhood plan which are detailed below:
- Stage 1 - Designating a neighbourhood area
 - Stage 2 - Designating a neighbourhood forum
 - Stage 3 - Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan - evidence gathering and public engagement.
 - Stage 4 - Pre-Submission publicity and consultation
 - Stage 5 - Submission of a neighbourhood plan to the Council as the local planning authority
 - Stage 6 - Independent Examination
 - Stage 7 – Referendum

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- Stage 8 - Bringing the neighbourhood plan into force
 - Stage 9 – Monitoring and review
- 2.5 Further information on each of the nine stages is contained within our Neighbourhood Planning Guide (Appendix 3).
- 2.6 The Neighbourhood Plan is currently at Stage 5 following the submission of the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix 2) to EEBC on 18 May 2025 by the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum.
- 2.7 The submitted documents comprise the following:
- Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan (2025-2039)
 - Basic Conditions Statement (May 2025)
 - Consultation Statement (May 2025)
 - SEA / HRA Screening Assessment (February 2025)
- 2.8 Regulation sets out what must be submitted and other legal requirements. It has been concluded that the submission of the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan meets these requirements.
- 2.9 As such, under Regulation 16 of the Regulations, we are required to publicise the Neighbourhood Plan proposal for a minimum period of 6 weeks. The consultation opened on 20 June 2025 and will run for 6 weeks, until 1 August 2025.

Submission of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.10 The neighbourhood forum is congratulated for reaching this milestone stage in the neighbourhood plan making process. The Council is aware of and appreciate the time and effort which has been put in to producing this plan.
- 2.11 The Regulation 16 consultation provides our opportunity to formally comment on the proposed Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan (2025-2039).
- 2.12 The Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies for the development and use of land within the Neighbourhood Forum Area (which reflects the Ward boundaries that were in effect when the Neighbourhood Area was designated) and is set around five core themes:
- Housing
 - Retail, Commercial, Hospitality & Community / Cultural Facilities
 - Green Spaces and Biodiversity

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- Environmental Sustainability
- Transport

- 2.13 The Neighbourhood Plan is required to be in general conformity with our current adopted Local Plan, comprising the Core Strategy (2007) and Development Management Policies (2015). Plan E (2011) does not apply to the Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- 2.14 The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any land for development and is supported by the Stoneleigh and Auriol Design Guidance and Codes (February 2023).

Summary of response comments

- 2.15 Officers have reviewed the Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan and provided detailed comments and recommendations (Appendix 1) that will be considered by an Independent Examiner along with all other responses received (Stage 6).
- 2.16 The response has been produced with the aim to further improve the clarity and usability of the policies to reflect the requirements of National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306) which states that neighbourhood plan policies should be:
- clear and unambiguous and drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications
 - concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence
 - be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared.
- 2.17 Officers have also identified policies where we question whether the policy is necessary, for example in instances where the policy duplicates national policy or legislation or local existing development plan policies.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 None

3.2 Crime & Disorder

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None

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 None

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Council is responsible for the current stage and later stages of the neighbourhood plan process including submitting the draft Plan for independent examination and organising a local referendum.
- 4.2 The Council is entitled to funding from central Government to help support the Examination and Referendum of the neighbourhood plan. This can be claimed once we issue a decision statement detailing our intention to send the plan to referendum. Budget is also set aside for neighbourhood planning.
- 4.3 It may be more cost effective to hold the referendum alongside a future election as this could realise some savings and reduce the impact on the Council's elections' team.
- 4.4 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The financial implications are detailed within the body of the report.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council as local planning authority is under a duty to give such advice or assistance to qualifying bodies preparing neighbourhood plans as, in all the circumstances, they consider appropriate for the purpose of, or in connection with, facilitating the making of proposals for neighbourhood plans within their area.
- 5.2 The Neighbourhood Plan once formally 'made', will become part of the statutory land use development plan with equivalent weight and legal status as the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan policies, once made, will only apply in the [designated area](#).
- 5.3 **Legal Officer's comments:** None other than as outlined in this report.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

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- Encourage high quality design which balances the built environment with new open green spaces.

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None

6.5 **Partnerships:** The response to this consultation will support the independent examination of the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan.

6.6 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications:** None.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- LPPC – 17 October 2024, Response to the Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 14) Consultation:

<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/s33230/Response%20to%20Stoneleigh%20and%20Auriol%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%20Regulation%2014.pdf>

Other papers:

- Stoneleigh and Auriol Design Guidance and Codes ((February 2023). The document can be accessed from the following link:

<https://sanf.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan>