

## STAFFORD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

### MEETING WITH NATURAL ENGLAND, STAFFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST & STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETINGS – 8 FEBRUARY 2008 & 7 MARCH 2008

#### Name of Attendees:

Robert Duff	- Natural England
Graham Walker	- Natural England (8 Feb 2008)
Sue Lawley	- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
David Cadman	- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
Judith Weightman	- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
Paul Windmill	- Stafford Borough Council, Forward Planning Manager
Alex Yendole	- Stafford Borough Council, Principal Planning Officer
Naomi Perry	- Stafford Borough Council, Planning Officer
William Waller	- Stafford Borough Council, Biodiversity Officer
Karen Davies	- Stafford Borough Council, Local Agenda 21 Co-ordinator

- An Appropriate Assessment screening report has been completed for the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation and agreed by Natural England. A further report was provided to Natural England on 7 March 2008 on the remaining Appropriate Assessment sites for Stafford Borough.
- The Government has set out a statutory duty to protect biodiversity and therefore biodiversity enhancement should be promoted through the new Development Plan. Currently a further 10,300 houses are required for the Stafford Borough area through a range of delivery options.
- For Stafford Borough it is important to ensure new development provides accessible natural green space in a strategic and comprehensive programme through the Local Development Framework. The Living Landscapes project by Natural England is a key element of this work. Natural England to giving priority to accessible natural greenspace and biodiversity matters. Furthermore Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has existing species surveys to link with habitat creation and river corridor enhancement.
- Within Stafford Borough key settlements need to consider the identification of new accessible natural greenspace, opportunities for biodiversity and other multi-functional land uses. New green infrastructure opportunities can be provided to enhance and extend the existing Green Network in Stafford Borough. There are particular opportunities to potentially extend the Green Network and enhance biodiversity areas through key settlements and along river corridors.

- Natural England suggested that the new Core Strategy should ensure that all new developments should use Sustainable Drainage Systems. Furthermore new development should be used to inter-relate with existing development in order to provide an overall improvement in surface water run-off rates.
- The Environment Agency focuses on flood areas but also has concerns with biodiversity and the protection of species and impacts on habitats downstream. The River Sow and River Penk put flooding pressures on Stafford during periods of increased rainfall. Therefore development in areas such as Cannock Chase District have a real impact. Further information on drainage patterns is available through the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust wetland project, which could inform land use planning in the lower catchments.
- There is an issue of restoring and enhancing biodiversity at the Borough level. On a landscape scale, the area could be considered as being of a low environmental priority compared with the Heathland Biodiversity Enhancement Area and the Peak District National Park in the north. River corridors could be used as biodiversity links through the Borough and create opportunities for large-scale natural improvements.
- The Biodiversity Enhancement Area is identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy from the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to Sutton Park. A range of organisations are considering delivery mechanisms for biodiversity enhancement in this area. Although a large area of Cannock Chase is covered by the Biodiversity Enhancement Area designation less importance is given to establishing links through Stafford Borough's area. Lichfield District has established proposals to strengthen the links through the area to Sutton Park including new open space provision.
- Lichfield District is working with Natural England and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to deliver a co-ordinated plan for biodiversity including areas of heathlands, grasslands and woodlands. These areas need to be incorporated with other priorities for the environment. This project sits within the Regional Biodiversity Enhancement Area. The strategy can be further developed on a field by field basis. New development should include mitigation measures for particular priority areas. The priority areas for biodiversity enhancement at a high level will be developed through the river courses and a more detailed approach through new development schemes.
- For Stafford Borough it is important to maintain the profile of biodiversity in future decisions with an urgent need to consider which areas could benefit from enhancement initiatives. The Development Plan should consider the opportunities for biodiversity restoration and enhancement in key settlements including the Green Network as well as protecting the river corridors for further biodiversity enhancement. Developer's knowledge should be increased to set out requirements to be achieved with new development.

- What are the constraints and what are the limitations to delivery?
  - Identify protected areas and wildlife sites including Sites of Biological Importance and Biodiversity Alert Sites
  - Establish biodiversity links within the new Development Plan
  - Consider links outside the Borough and cross border issues
- Development should be used to address local needs and improve on the lack of biodiversity in the Borough. Key settlements and villages play a role in creating habitat links. River corridors can be identified using the strategic flood risk assessments whilst Priority habitats can be seen using the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust map. In Stafford Borough wetland heath is a particularly important types of Biological Alert Sites. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust are considering including the River Trent within its survey of the area.
- Mottey Meadow is effected by a watercourse within the Borough which should be protected although the actual site is outside of the Borough. The catchment of Aqualate Mere, Cop Mere, and Pasturefields alongside the River Trent must be protected. Furthermore there is a priority for heathland to be restored in Stafford Borough.
- A woodland quarter has been identified as an opportunity for enhancement marked out by a wide linear arch from Needwood in East Staffordshire Borough through to Bishops Offley in Stafford Borough. Enhancement initiatives could focus on the woodland / heathland areas to improve priority habitats as well as create a corridor of environmental linkages. Neutral grasslands, pastureland and mature trees are important in the Borough although expansion of heathland may be restricted by underlying soil types.
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust agreed to provide mapped information on heathlands, woodlands, parklands and lowland grasslands. In the future it is important to consider the balance of green infrastructure with development. Strategic green infrastructure can be promoted through Staffordshire County Council's Rights of Way improvements plan.
- A desk top assessment to provide further work on areas around Stafford, Stone, Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon, Great Haywood and Little Haywood was initiated at the two meetings held at Stafford Borough Council's offices to consider priority habitats and species. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust will carry out a Phase 1 assessment of these areas, using maps provided by the Forward Planning section, and prepare a report by the end of May 2008.
- Date of Next Meeting – Friday 16 May 2008 @ 10.00

Note prepared by Alex Yendole  
 Date last revised: 08/01/2009  
 Forward Planning Section, Stafford Borough Council