

# PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004

The Town and Country Planning (Local  
Development) (England) Regulations 2004

Submission Core Strategy  
Development Plan Document

Topic Paper 2 of Stafford Borough Council  
Settlement Strategy (TP002)

Date : 10/03/2006

# Topic Paper 2 of Stafford Borough Council Settlement Strategy (TP002)

## Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Purpose	2
3.0	Conclusion	9

# Topic Paper 2 of Stafford Borough Council Settlement Strategy (TP002)

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 *The key objective for planning policies in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document is to deliver the strategic approach for spatial planning across the Borough Council area. The Core Strategy Development Plan Document will be the principal planning document in the Stafford Borough Local Development Framework and will form part of the new Development Plan for Stafford Borough alongside the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands (RSS). The Core Strategy will aim to cover the same time period as the Regional Spatial Strategy.<sup>1</sup>*
- 1.2 *The purpose of this Topic Paper on Settlement Strategy is to prepare for the independent Examination into the Submission Core Strategy Development Plan Document in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and requirements set out in the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.*

---

<sup>1</sup> 2001-2021

## 2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 *The Settlement Strategy Topic Paper sets out background information and context regarding the development of the Borough, particularly as referred to in Core Policies 1, 2, 3, and 4.*

### **Regional Spatial Strategy**

- 2.3 *In June 2004 Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG11) was adopted, now revised to be the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) following commencement of Part 1 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The RSS has been prepared, based upon the principles of sustainable development, to address the decentralisation of population and investment from the Major Urban Areas and the need to create balanced communities across the Region. The RSS in full is included as a Core Document (CD001). Pertinent extracts are included below. **Emboldening is used to identify particularly relevant elements.***

### **In Chapter 3, which sets out the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands the following are particularly relevant to Stafford Borough**

“3.9 In other areas new development will be focused on the Region’s other large settlements and in particular the five sub-regional foci of Hereford, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Telford and Worcester, with:

- a) **new development primarily meeting locally generated needs; at a level to support balanced, sustainable communities;**
- b) the proportion of housing development to meet demand arising from the Major Urban Areas (MUAs) significantly reduced;
- c) **housing needs being satisfied in the sub-regional foci rather than by the peripheral expansion of the other large settlements;**
- d) rural renaissance initiatives concentrated in the rural regeneration zone in the west of the Region;
- e) **a balanced network of vital and vibrant town and city centres as the strategic focus for major retail, leisure and office developments, acting as service centres for their rural hinterlands;** and
- f) transport networks improved to reduce social exclusion and improve access to services and opportunities by serving movements between and within towns and cities, towns and their rural hinterlands, and within the rural areas.”

### 2.4 Comment

*Stafford and Stone are not amongst the sub-regional foci identified in accordance with paragraph 3.9c of the RSS. Therefore Stafford and Stone should primarily be meeting local needs and not providing for housing by peripheral expansion.*

### **“A Role for Each Place in the Region**

**3.11** The key to the Spatial Strategy is achieving an urban renaissance in the four MUAs of Birmingham/Solihull, the Black Country, Coventry and the North Staffordshire conurbation. Nonetheless, **the ultimate aim of the Spatial Strategy is a Region made up of a dynamic network of places, all important in their own right and with distinct characteristics, but with reinforcing economic, cultural and social functions. An important part of this is the development of a balanced network of town and city centres (PA11) that will act as the focus for major investment in retail, leisure and office developments.** Broadly speaking this will mean:

**b) the major shire towns and cities beyond the MUAs continuing to act as a focus for new investment to support wider regeneration and help meet the economic, social and cultural needs of surrounding rural areas:**

– building upon their traditional strengths of historic heritage and high quality environment, particularly in the cathedral cities of Worcester, Hereford and Lichfield and important county towns such as Shrewsbury, **Stafford** and Warwick/Leamington; and

– supporting the continued development of towns such as Telford and Rugby with the potential and infrastructure to attract new investment; and

**c) other parts of the Region, particularly other main towns and villages, all building on their locational strengths, environmental qualities, regeneration opportunities and the linkages between them and with their local hinterlands to deliver improved local services and develop their own distinctive roles and character.”**

#### 2.5 Comment

*Stafford is the County Town of Staffordshire, identified as the primary focus for new investment in the Borough to support wider regeneration and help meet the economic, social and cultural needs of the surrounding rural area under Paragraph 3.11b of the RSS. Stone is the other main town in the Borough which it is envisaged has the capacity to deliver improved local services and further develop its own distinctive roles and character as a market town serving its rural hinterland as envisaged in Paragraph 3.11c of the RSS.*

### **Chapter 4, sets out the approach to Urban Renaissance for the West Midlands. The following extracts are particularly relevant to Stafford Borough**

#### **“POLICY UR2:**

A. Local authorities and other agencies should seek to improve prospects in the following local regeneration areas by bringing forward local regeneration policies and programmes. Where possible access should be improved between concentrations of local deprivation and need within these towns and areas of economic opportunity, in line with policy T1. Any support for local

regeneration programmes should not prejudice the need to focus resources within the MUAs.

Biddulph Kidderminster Rugby Tamworth Burton upon Trent Leek Rugeley Telford Cannock Redditch **Stafford** Worcester”

2.6 Comment

*This policy in the RSS would only apply to the County Town of Stafford.*

**Chapter 7 of the RSS sets out the approach for the Region’s economy, The following extracts are particularly relevant to Stafford Borough**

**“7.60 It is not intended to impose a formal hierarchy of distinctive roles for the strategic centres – other than to recognise the unique character of Birmingham as the Regional capital and an international city (PA12).**

**POLICY PA11:**

**A. A network of strategic town and city centres will be developed across the Region** as set out below: Birmingham Kidderminster Shrewsbury Walsall Burton-upon-Trent Leamington Spa Solihull West Bromwich Cannock Lichfield **Stafford** Wolverhampton Coventry Newcastle-under-Lyme Stratford-upon-Avon Worcester Dudley Nuneaton Sutton Coldfield Hanley (Stoke-on-Trent) Redditch Tamworth Hereford Rugby Telford

**B. This network of 25 town and city centres** will be the focus for:

**i) major retail developments (i.e. those of more than 10,000m<sup>2</sup> gross floorspace, excluding floorspace dedicated to the retailing of convenience goods);**

**ii) uses which attract large numbers of people including major cultural, tourist, social and community venues (see also PA10 and UR3); and**

**iii) large scale leisure and office (Class B1a) developments (i.e. those of 5,000m<sup>2</sup> or more gross floorspace).**

**C. There are many other centres within the Region that meet local needs and development plans should identify and develop policies for such centres within their respective areas which best meet local needs. Local authorities should be proactive in encouraging appropriate development to maintain and enhance their function as town centres (UR3, RR3).”**

2.7 Comment

*Stafford is identified as one of the Region’s strategic town centres.*

2.8 *On the Spatial Strategy Diagram in the RSS the County Town of Stafford is identified as:-*

*A ‘Strategic Centre’*

*A ‘Local Regeneration Centre outside of Regeneration Zones’*

*An ‘Other Large Settlement’*

2.9 *Stafford is the main population centre of the Borough, the urban population exceeds 60,000.*

- *Stafford is the major comparison goods retail centre in the Borough and the only centre with warehouse/retail parks.*
- *Three of the Borough's food superstores are located on the edge of the town centre. (There are also a number of District centres in Stafford)*
- *Stafford town centre is the principal cultural centre of the Borough, offering facilities including, theatre, cinemas and art gallery.*
- *The town is the major employment centre of the Borough with a range of 'stand alone' employers and a number of industrial estates/business parks.*
- *The Stafford Campus of Staffordshire University is located on the edge of the town*
- *The Stafford College of Further Education is located in the Town Centre*
- *Six of the seven State Secondary Schools in the Borough are situated at Stafford.*
- *Stafford is the principal location for sporting, leisure and indoor recreational uses in the Borough.*
- *Tourism and hotel facilities are focussed, but are not exclusively located, at Stafford.*
- *Stafford is the principal administrative centre for the County and Borough Councils for a number of County-wide services including Police and Ambulance services, the local Health Authority, and a range of Government bodies and other agencies.*
- *The major health care facility, Stafford District General Hospital, is located in the town.*
- *The most deprived Wards in the Borough are found at Stafford.*
- *Stafford is the main hub for public transport in the Borough and has a range of services serving the town, its surrounding area and a variety of other destinations including Lichfield, Cannock, Wolverhampton, Newport, Uttoxeter, Stone and the Potteries,.*
- *Stafford is a principal rail station on the West Coast Main Line with services to the South-west via Birmingham, to London, the North-west and Scotland.*
- *Two M6 motorway junctions are located adjacent to the town*

**Chapter 5 of the RSS sets out the approach to Rural Renaissance, the following extracts are particularly relevant to Stafford Borough**

**“Market Towns**

**5.13** Market towns have long been a focus for commercial and social activity in the rural West Midlands, but in recent years their functions have been affected by social, economic and agricultural change. **The Region has many different types of market town, ranging from county towns, such as Shrewsbury, Hereford and Stafford, which have a degree of urban autonomy to small towns such as Kington and Craven Arms, which are firmly grounded in their rural hinterlands.** Towns have reacted in different ways to changes in rural areas, and some have struggled to maintain and develop their roles.”

**“5.14 Market towns should be the focus of rural renaissance in most parts of the Region,** including the RRZ (RR2). In a county or market town, people should be able to buy most things they need, obtain a range of essential services, find a variety of housing, have a choice of jobs, obtain training and education and enjoy entertainment. So that these benefits are widely available to people in the rural hinterland of the town, transport (particularly public transport) improvements will often be needed. The distinctive character and environmental quality of a town is important in its own right but may also help it to develop as a centre of tourism (PA10) or as a focus for rural renaissance.”

**“POLICY RR3:**

A. Market towns have a key role in helping to regenerate rural areas (RR1), as a focus for sustainable economic and housing development and by providing services and other facilities to their rural hinterlands. In fulfilling these roles, it is important that the distinctiveness and character of each individual town is maintained and where possible enhanced. **Market towns which are to have a role in rural regeneration should be identified in development plans;** having regard to the following characteristics:

- i) a close and interdependent relationship with the population and economy of a rural hinterland, whether or not the settlement has ever had a traditional agricultural market;
- ii) an existing focus for and reasonable balance between employment opportunities, housing provision, community facilities and services, or potential to provide this;
- iii) existing or potential for a planned and co-ordinated local transport network;
- iv) generally, although not exclusively, a population of less than 20,000 and above 2,000; and
- v) the capacity to accommodate new growth in terms of its character and setting, and the potential to develop as a sustainable community.

B. The mixture of action required will vary from town to town. Development plans and other plans and programmes should normally prioritise, for each town, policies to:

- i) provide sites and premises to support the expansion of existing businesses and, where necessary, the generation of new ones;
- ii) improve the natural, built and historic environment (QE3-6);
- iii) provide additional housing to maintain viable communities and meet local needs, including the provision of affordable housing (CF2,CF5).”

2.10 *Comment*

*Stone has a population of around 14,500 and is considered to be a ‘Market town’ meeting the characteristics of the policy outlined above.*

- *The Regional Development Agency (Advantage West Midlands) is providing funding for regeneration through its Market Towns Initiative which includes Stone.*
- *Stone has a significant town centre providing both comparison and convenience retailing and a range of local office based services including banking. It also has an ‘edge of centre’ superstore.*

- A number of employers are situated in Stone, both on 'stand alone' sites and the town's industrial estates/business park.
- Primary and Middle Schools and the Borough's only state Secondary School outside of Stafford are located at Stone.
- Local social, cultural, leisure and indoor recreational facilities are provided at Stone.
- A range of destinations are accessible by bus including Hanley, Longton, Stafford, Newport and Uttoxeter.
- A choice of medical, dental and other health services are found at Stone.

### **Rural Services**

**"5.20** Access to the services people need is one of the most important determinants of quality of life in rural areas. A village shop, school, doctor's surgery and bank are likely to be important to most households, but many other services will be 'essential' to particular people, depending on their circumstances and stage in the life cycle. Where services are not provided locally, public transport to a service centre may be a vital lifeline."

### **POLICY RR4:**

"A. Improving the range and quality of services available to rural communities is a key component of rural renaissance. Some services will be improved by bringing them closer to where people live, **some may need to be concentrated in towns and other centres accessible from the surrounding area**, and some can be provided jointly. Where possible, centres should develop complementary roles in service delivery.

B. Development plan policies for housing and other forms of development should take into account the likely implications for the provision of services and facilities for the particular communities concerned, including the extent to which new development may help support the provision of local services.

C. Development plans should set out how services will be provided for in rural areas, taking full account of the need to retain essential community services and to facilitate and provide for appropriate new and innovative forms of service delivery.

D. Local Transport Plans should identify where improved public transport services are required to support rural services."

### 2.11 Comment

*Most of the Borough's population of 120,600, live in the urban centres of Stafford and Stone (76,000). The remaining 44,600 (37%) reside in the generally more rural areas which comprise most of the Borough's area of around 230 square miles. Within this area there is a large number of settlements of varying sizes, together with parts of the suburban fringes of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent - at Clayton, Blythe Bridge and Meir Heath.*

*The rural settlements referred to in Submission Core Policy 1 (3) are identified as being the most significant. They already provide a range of services and facilities (including as a minimum, a Primary School, retailing including food,*

*Village Hall/community facilities, church(es), public house(s) and a bus service).*

*Barlaston, Eccleshall and Gnosall have library facilities, the remainder have a mobile library service. The Haywoods and the other settlements each have a Post Office. Gnosall, The Haywoods, and Eccleshall have Doctors Practices Dental Surgeries and Pharmacy. Barlaston has a Doctors Surgery and Pharmacy. Eccleshall and Gnosall have Veterinary practices. The only banks in the rural area are at Eccleshall.*

*All are 'stand alone' settlements distinct from the urban areas of Stafford, Stone, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent. Great Haywood, Little Haywood and Colwich are located in close proximity and provide shared and complementary facilities. Barlaston is the only settlement listed in Core Policy 1.3 which lies within the Green Belt.*

*In each case the facilities serve the settlement and surrounding rural area and are considered to be suited to the provision of further services.*

<b><u>Village</u></b>	<b><u>Population</u></b>
Gnosall and Gnosall Heath	3783
Eccleshall	2541
Little Haywood and Colwich	2431
Great Haywood	1854
Barlaston	1805
Hixon	1713

**Source: 2001 Census Key Statistics**

Census output is Crown Copyright and is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and the Queen's Printer for Scotland

2001 **Census Profiles** Produced by Research Unit, Development Services Department, Staffordshire County Council

*No other village in the Borough has a population greater than 1300. Two villages (Brocton and Yarnfield) exceed 1000 and a further two villages (Haughton and Weston) exceed 700.*

## 3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 *It is considered that Stafford is appropriately referred to in Core Policy 1.1 in accordance with the policies of the Regional Spatial Strategy.*
- 3.2 *Core Policy 1.2 for Stone is relevant to its character as a market town in the terms described in the RSS and is appropriately distinguished, in policy terms, both from*
- Stafford town, with its substantially greater population differing character, function and RSS policy context and*
  - the smaller rural villages which are significantly smaller in population, physical and land use character and the range of range of facilities and services provided .*
- 3.3 *The rural settlements identified in Core Policy 1.3 are the largest of the ‘stand alone’ villages in the Borough in terms of population and are the focus for the provision of a range of services both for the individual settlements and their surrounding communities.*