



Stafford Borough  
Local Development  
Framework



# Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough Draft Core Policies

February 2010



Planning and  
Engineering  
Services



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## 1 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

### 1 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

#### **Draft Core Policy on Climate Change**

All development in Stafford Borough must incorporate; sustainable design features to facilitate a reduction in the consumption of natural resources, improve the environmental quality and mitigate against the impact of climate change by addressing its causes and impacts.

#### **Flood Risk**

The Council will support development where it can be demonstrated that such development will not be located where it is at risk from flooding or will increase the risk of flooding in other areas. Development in areas that are susceptible to flood risk, particularly areas of high flood risk, such as the river valleys of the Penk and Sow and other watercourses, will be determined by the sequential approach outlined in the Stafford Borough Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), PPS25: Development and Flood Risk or successor documents using the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Allocations will not be made in flood zones 2 and 3, unless no reasonable site is available in flood risk zone 1. Land in flood zone 1 that is surrounded by areas of flood zones 2 and 3 will be considered to be in a higher risk zone, and a flood risk assessment will be required to prove that safe entry/egress from the land by car and on foot can be provided for the duration of the flood, without increasing the flood risk to other areas.

#### **Sustainable Drainage**

New Development will be expected to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in non-residential developments over 1,000 square metres (sqm) (net) and new residential development of greater than 10 houses in accordance with Environment Agency (EA) standards, unless it can be demonstrated that it is technically impractical or makes the development unviable. Each system should:

- Ensures a 20% infiltration rate improvement over current greenfield run-off performance;
- Control the levels of runoff from developments;
- Improve the water quality of run-off by ensuring that foul and surface water run-off are separated;
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitats, amenity and landscape value of the site as well as being sympathetically designed to meet the needs of the local community.

## Sustainable Development and Climate Change 1

### Draft Core Policy on Climate Change

#### Sustainable Construction

New residential development will be expected to incorporate sustainable design and construction technology to achieve the goal of at least four star rating under the Code for Sustainable Homes. This requirement will increase over the plan period and by 2016 all new dwellings will be carbon neutral (six star rating). These standards require initiatives such as:

1. Use of low water volume fittings and grey water systems;
2. Orientation to maximise solar gain;
3. High levels of insulation adequate provision for separation and storage of waste for recycling; and
4. Use of materials from a sustainable source in new development.

All non-residential development developments up to 1,000 sqm (net) will be expected to have a BREEAM very good rating; whilst non residential developments greater than 1,000 sqm (net) will be expected to have a BREEAM Excellent rating, unless it can be demonstrated it is technically impractical or makes the development unviable. A design and access statement will be required to detail how the BREEAM and Code for Sustainable Homes standards will be addressed or conversely why it is not possible to do so.

New residential developments of 10 or more houses and new non-residential development over 1,000sqm (net) will be required to generate 10% of their energy requirement from on site renewable resources, increasing to 15% on site generation by 2020, unless it can be demonstrated it is technically or environmentally impractical or makes the development unviable.

#### Recycling

New development will be expected to reduce the levels of waste and facilitate greater use of recycling. This will be achieved through the provision of recycling facilities and employing best practice technology to optimise the opportunities for recycling and minimise waste during both construction and occupation of developments.

### Climate Change

**1.1** The overwhelming and compelling scientific evidence is that human activity is changing the Earth's climate and that man-made emissions are the primary cause for this change. There is therefore an urgent need to address these issues through policies and priorities both in the UK and internationally.

## 1 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

**1.2** Climate change will have a dramatic effect on the local climate of Stafford Borough with an increasing incidence of extreme weather events, particularly warmer and dryer summers, greater risks of flooding events seen in both 2007 and 2000. These have severe implications for Stafford Borough as much of the Borough is at risk of flooding, from both the Penk and Sow rivers and myriad of other smaller watercourses throughout the Borough.

**1.3** To address the risks posed by climate change, in December 2006 Stafford Borough Council signed the Staffordshire Declaration on climate change which commits the authority to comply with the UK Climate Change Programme, the Kyoto Protocol and the carbon dioxide reduction target by 2010. In 2004 Stafford Borough's total emissions of carbon dioxide was 1,380,000 tonnes, the main contributors being road transport sources at 45%, industrial & commercial sources at 28% and domestic transport at 26%. The M6 motorway bisects Stafford Borough and therefore is a major source of emissions. The annual domestic per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emission in Stafford Borough is estimated at 3 tonnes, which is above the West Midlands average of 2.5 tonnes.

### Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage

**1.4** Within Stafford Borough there are significant areas that are subject to flood risk from the network of rivers such as the Penk and Sow, their tributaries, smaller streams and brooks or localised surface water flooding and the risk of flooding will increase over the plan period due to climate change.

**1.5** The Council will act to prevent development, including redevelopment of existing sites that results in an increased level of flood risk, either on site or elsewhere. In proposing new areas for development, the Core Strategy will avoid areas that have a high probability of flooding and the functional flood plain. Where it is considered that development will impact on or off site flood risk, a detailed flood risk assessment that takes account of the potential impacts of climate change will be required prior to any application being determined. EA advice

**1.6** Government policy on development and flood risk is outlined in [Planning Policy Statement\(PPS\) 25: Development and Flood Risk](#) which sets out the governments overall aim to steer development to areas that have a low risk of flooding (Zone1). Additionally, it sets out a flood risk vulnerability classification and associated 'Compatibility' matrix for the most appropriate land uses (including Zones 3a and 3b) that are allowed in each flood risk zone. Within Stafford Borough there is a substantial volume of land located in flood risk zone 1 and new development will be steered to these locations. Developments that are in areas of higher flood risk will be determined using the sequential approach outlined in PPS:25. In exceptional circumstances the exceptions test allows development to take place in areas of high flood risk, provided no other option exists.

**1.7** [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment \(SFRA\)](#) for Stafford Borough, published in 2006, has been prepared to support the Local Development Framework (LDF). It refines the flood risk areas, and assesses and maps all forms of flood risk from ground water, surface water, sewer and river sources, taking into account future climate change predictions. The associated maps detailing all of the flood risk areas are available on the Council's website. Evidence from the SFRA will be used to assist in the preparation of the Stafford Borough's Development Plan Documents (DPD).

## Sustainable Development and Climate Change 1

**1.8** Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), are designed to reduce the potential impact of new and existing developments with respect to surface water drainage discharges. They mimic natural movement of water from a development, reducing flood risk, improving water quality and in many cases can be used as an attractive feature of developments that enhances the quality of the area and makes the living environment a more pleasant place for the local community.

**1.9** SuDS use cost effective solutions with low environmental impact to drain away dirty and surface water run-off through collection, storage, and cleaning before allowing it to be released slowly back into the environment, such as into water courses. Each system will be easy to manage, requiring little or no energy input, resilient to use, and being environmentally as well as aesthetically attractive. The SuDS approach uses measures to prevent pollution, reduce surface run-off at source through implementing such measures as rainwater butts, green roofs and permeable pavements or using physical structures such as swales, ponds and wetlands.

**1.10** The inclusion of SuDS should be done at the earliest stages of the process to ensure that they are successfully designed, built and maintained. Additionally, it is also important that developers consult planning authorities, highway authorities, sewage undertakers and regulators as appropriate, early in the development process, when SuDS options are being considered.

### **Sustainable Construction**

**1.11** The Council is committed that all new development contributes substantially to achieving the Council's sustainability objectives of reducing carbon emissions and the impacts of new development on climate change. New developments in Stafford Borough are legally required to provide a [Code for Sustainable Homes](#) Certificate which assesses the sustainability of newly completed developments across nine design code categories. The Code examines new dwellings in a more holistic way through the inclusion of parameters such as: Energy and CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions, Pollution, Water, Health and Wellbeing, Materials, Management, Surface Water Run-off, Ecology and Waste. The Code uses a 1 to 6 star rating system to communicate the overall sustainability performance of a new home. A home assessed as 6 stars will have achieved the highest sustainability rating.

**1.12** Newly built homes in Stafford Borough will be required to achieve a minimum of 4 stars which would be 44% more energy efficient and have many more sustainable features than a 1 star home. Additionally, it is anticipated that from 2016, all developments will be 6 star homes to be consistent with the government's 10 year timetable for new homes to be carbon neutral by 2016.

**1.13** In the UK, business accounts for approximately 40% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions nationally and 28% locally in Stafford Borough. The Council is seeking to fulfil its commitment under the Staffordshire Declaration on climate change to address the emissions emanating from commercial developments. In the longer term, commercial developments that decrease their carbon emissions will increase their marketability as well as future proofing developments against compliance with more stringent environmental legislation and standards. It will also decrease running costs and may assist in improving staff satisfaction with their working environment.

## 1 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

**1.14** The Building Research Establishment (BRE) has developed an environmental assessment method (BREEAM) for commercial buildings that addresses a wide range of environmental and sustainability issues. BREEAM assesses the performance of buildings under the following categories:

- Energy
- Health and Wellbeing
- Water
- Waste
- Pollution
- Management
- Transport
- Materials
- Land Use
- Ecology

**1.15** In each of the aforementioned categories BREEAM is awarded credits. The total amount of credits are then multiplied by an environmental weighting to derive a single overall score. This score is then translated into a scale and associated star rating from one to five. The rating is as follows:

Scale	Star rating
Pass	One Star (*)
Good	Two Star (**)
Very Good	Three Star (***)
Excellent	Four Star (****)
Outstanding	Five Star (*****)

### Renewable Energy Generation

#### Draft Core Policy on Renewable Energy

Development for the generation of renewable energy resources will be supported in the context of the Borough's renewable energy study, sustainable development and climate change provided that:

- The technology is suitable for the proposed location, does not cause harm to the residential amenity, is sympathetic to the surrounding character; townscape, historical features and areas
- Levels of noise, overshadow, flicker (associated with wind turbines), or other harmful emissions are minimised;
- The technology does not affect the integrity of locally, nationally and internationally designated sites;
- Every proposal is accompanied by decommissioning requirements and the ability to ensure restoration of the site following cessation of energy production.

In areas where other renewable energy schemes are in operation, the cumulative effect of additional developments will be an important factor that will be taken into consideration. Large scale renewable energy proposals should deliver economic, social and environmental benefits that are directly related to the proposed development.

## Sustainable Development and Climate Change 1

**1.16** Government policy on renewable energy is outlined in [PPS22: Renewable Energy](#) and Planning and the [Climate Change Supplement](#) to Planning Policy Statement 1. It states that local planning policies should promote and encourage, rather than restrict, the development of renewable energy resources. The Council will aim to encourage the use of renewable energy through its Core Strategy as well as through its commitment to adapting to, and reducing the effects of global climate change.

**1.17** The principal sources of renewable energy within Staffordshire County are biomass, wind and solar. Within Stafford Borough the principal source of renewable energy is the Eccleshall Biomass project, owned by the local fuel supply company BiEcc and the Talbot's. Its power output of 2 mega watts supplies electricity to 2,000 households by utilising locally grown biomass crops.

**1.18** The Council will actively encourage and support proposals for renewable energy technology where it can be demonstrated that renewable technology and its associated infrastructure, either individually or cumulatively has no significantly adverse effects on the residential amenity of the locality; designated sites of biodiversity and nature conservation; National and Internationally designated areas and the surrounding landscape, townscape and historical areas.

**1.19** Furthermore, it is anticipated that substantial investment in equipment and energy infrastructure in certain locations may be required to provide for renewable energy in the future. We are awaiting the outcome of an evidence based piece of work to investigate the renewable energy potential across the Borough and therefore we are undecided on whether broad areas should be identified to accommodate renewable energy projects in Stafford Borough.

**1.20** A large proportion of land in the north west area of Stafford Borough, including the Stone area, has been identified by the Government for hydrocarbon resources as an 'area with Good Coal Bed Methane (CBM) Potential' based on deep coal seams between 50 and 1200 metres in depth. Licences have been provided to energy companies to drill exploratory boreholes to investigate the potential for extracting natural gas reserves including gas trapped within deep coal seams for electricity generation. This source of energy could be used alongside future renewable energy generation in the Borough.

**1.21** The Council will consider, where appropriate, the granting of planning permission for exploratory licences to energy companies for the extraction of Coal Bed Methane. The environmental impacts on local aquifers, groundwater flows and the concentration of dissolved substances such as sodium chloride and sodium bicarbonate will need to be monitored in line with environmental legislation and undergo purification where appropriate. Additionally, structures associated with the extraction of CBM will not be allowed to compromise the scenic quality of the landscape, fragment wildlife habitat or displace local wildlife populations in Stafford Borough.

**1.22** The Council will require that all new developments should incorporate that minimum element of 10% of the sites energy needs be provided through on site energy derived from renewable sources. On site renewable energy generation should be sympathetic to the local character of the area and where necessary meet both national and local policy objectives.

## 2 Environmental Protection and Management

### 2 Environmental Protection and Management

#### Draft Core Policy on Environmental Quality

The Council will enhance and improve the Borough's natural environment by requiring:

- Implementation of the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan to increase and enhance biodiversity, in terms of habitats and species, through a network of:
  - Designated Sites (international, national, regional and local);
  - Biodiversity Action Plans;
  - Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Networks;
- Development to make a provision to deliver a connected and multi-functional green infrastructure (GI) which will be resilient to the effects of climate change. This will be achieved through development proposals which:
  - Protects and enhances current GI assets;
  - Improves the accessibility and use of green spaces;
  - Seeks opportunities to create new GI through networks of open spaces, natural corridors, access routes and watercourses;
  - Mitigates against development on existing GI;
  - Designs and delivers GI in an integrated way;
  - Delivers GI principles and action plans outlined in the Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- Conservation and enhancement of water courses and their settings for their landscape character, biodiversity and recreational value, particularly for the Borough's extensive canal system;
- That no new development takes place in areas where environmental risks, particularly flooding, cannot be managed properly.

#### Biodiversity

**2.1** Biodiversity is defined as the variety of lifeforms and the role that they play. This includes the whole range of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, plants, invertebrates, fungi and micro-organisms. It also includes both common and rare species as well as genetic diversity within species.

**2.2** Stafford Borough contains an abundance of biodiversity and a natural habitats that support a variety of wildlife habitats and associated species. The Borough is committed to maintaining, protecting and enhancing areas such as SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), SBIs (Sites of Biological Importance) and Ramsar sites in addition to sites that are not afforded statutory protection. Biodiversity is not only intrinsically valuable to the Borough's residents but also because it contributes to human well being.

**2.3** The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, Section 4 (October 2006) introduced a new Biodiversity Duty, which applies to all public authorities including local authorities. Its implications are summarised in 'Guidance for Local Authorities on implementing the Biodiversity Duty', published by the Government's Department of Farming & Rural Affairs in May 2007. The strategy to protect and enhance biodiversity across the Stafford Borough

## Environmental Protection and Management 2

area is being identified through liaising with partner organisations such as Natural England and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to direct habitat protection, enhancement and mitigation as well as controls on new development.

**2.4** The Borough supports a variety of wildlife habitats and associated species, remnants of a much richer and more abundant resource which has been fragmented and diminished. Whilst some habitats are being improved through conservation measures there remain significant threats to particular species and habitats. Although it is a contributing element, the planning system alone cannot fully protect and enhance the biodiversity resource of the Borough. Pollution control, environmentally sensitive land management and nature conservation initiatives, which are beyond control of the planning system, also need to change to achieve an ecologically healthy environment.

**2.5** Over the last few years there has been a significant decline in the amount and quality of the wildlife asset in the Borough. For example between 1979 and 1999 over 50% of the Borough's marshy grassland has been lost, which is important for wading birds and other wetland species. The table below shows the percentage loss of habitat areas in Stafford Borough between 1979 and 1997.

Habitat	Percentage loss of area in Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) between 1979-1997
Lowland Wet Grassland	51%
Neutral Grassland	15%
Standing Water and Swamp	8%
Broadleaved Woodland	2%
Heathland	None lost, but loss of habitat quality continues

**2.6** In the last 60 years almost all of the flower rich meadows have been destroyed and since 1950 many areas of woodland have become degenerated, suffering from a lack of management and cessation of traditional practices such as coppicing.

**2.7** The UK biodiversity Action Plan was published in 1994. Its overall goal is to 'conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK and to contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity through all appropriate mechanisms'

**2.8** To ensure that the damage done to natural habitats and landscaped is repaired the Staffordshire Wildlife trust has prepared the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP) since 1998. The SBAP covers species and habitats that are of regional, national and local importance. The plan sets targets for conservation of species and habitats as well as outlining the mechanisms for achieving these targets by implementing a series of species and habitat targets. Within the current SBAP there are 15 Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and 28 Species Action Plans (SAPs). It is used by a wide variety of partners throughout the County in developing policy, targeting priorities and accessing funding for biodiversity action.

### Green Infrastructure

**2.9** Green infrastructure is defined as:

## 2 Environmental Protection and Management

*'the network of green spaces and natural elements that intersperse and connect our cities, towns and villages. It is the open spaces, waterways, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, wildlife habitats, street trees, natural heritage and open countryside.'* <sup>(1)</sup>

Green infrastructure has the following components:



**2.10** Green Infrastructure should be multi-functional resources capable of providing the landscape, ecological services and quality of life benefits that are required by the communities they serve.

**2.11** Natural England have outlined the following 'Green Test' against which all new developments should be measured in order to achieve networks of parks, open spaces and wild areas in all areas of significant growth and regeneration.

All new developments should feature green infrastructure which:

1. Provides greenspace within 300m of every home;
2. Supports an increase in priority species and habitats in and around new developments;
3. Provides a wide variety of parks, wild areas and open spaces to meet the needs of both nature and people;
4. Equips new development to cope with the effects of climate change and extreme weather events;
5. Is designed to ensure it fits into any surrounding countryside and into its landscape setting.

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**2.12** The Plan for Stafford Borough will be a crucial mechanism in delivering green infrastructure. A Green Infrastructure study for Stafford is currently taking place, with the results feeding into subsequent Plan stages. It is anticipated that a Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document will be produced in due course, which will build on principles set out in the Plan for Stafford Borough.

### **Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

#### **Draft Core Policy on the Cannock Chase AONB**

The conservation and enhancement of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is of primary importance. The principles to be followed in the area are to:

- conserve and enhance the special landscape character, heritage and distinctiveness of the locality;
- conserve and enhance important viewpoints, protect the context and safeguard views out of and into the AONB;
- require appropriate new developments to be suitably located and have regard for existing landscape features and tree screening;
- support suitably located small, well designed sustainable developments where it is required to meet the needs of the local community;
- have regard to the principles set out in the Cannock Chase AONB management plan;
- promote access to the AONB through sustainable forms of transportation, particularly by means other than the car.

**2.13** The Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of 49 designated AONBs in the UK. It was designated as an AONB in 1958 and is considered to be one of the most vulnerable due to its proximity to large adjoining conurbations as well as rich array of mineral resources located under it. It is composed of 68 square kilometres of high sandstone heathlands and pine plantations that are fringed by historic parklands and enclosed by farmlands. A substantial part of the heathlands in the AONB have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as a measure of their importance in providing important nesting and feeding grounds for a rich array of interesting and rare species of plants and animals.

**2.14** The Cannock Chase AONB is predominantly used for recreational activities by approximately 1.27 million visitors annually through partaking in activities such as walking, cycling and horse riding due to the excellent accessibility via its network of public footpaths, bridleways and permissive trails which stretch for over 500km. Both the Trent and Mersey canal and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal run through the Cannock Chase AONB with a junction between the two at Great Haywood.

**2.15** Government policy stated in PPS 7 affords nationally designated areas such as the Cannock Chase AONB the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The Cannock Chase AONB provides a valuable asset to the residents of Stafford

## 2 Environmental Protection and Management

Borough and the adjoining districts of Lichfield, South Staffordshire and Cannock Chase. The Cannock Chase AONB also acts as a resource for the development of sustainable tourism as well as contributing to the quality of life locally.

**2.16** The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside is managed through the AONB management plan, produced by the Cannock Chase AONB Unit, which provides guidance for the management, preservation and enhancement of the unique qualities of the areas landscape and environment. The management plan is updated at regular intervals and should be taken into consideration in all development proposals that could affect the area.

**2.17** National policy states that major development should not take place within nationally designated areas, such as AONBs, except in exceptional circumstances. Smaller scale development whether individually or cumulatively that would be harmful or have an adverse effect on the AONB by virtue of their scale, design or location will not be permitted. Certain small scale development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it is necessary to meet local need, such as affordable housing or other uses that are essential to sustain local employment or community services maybe acceptable where they are integrated with existing developments.

### Landscape Character

#### Draft Core Policy on Landscape Character

Development proposals must be informed by and be sympathetic to landscape character and quality, and should be informed by the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Landscape Character Assessment.

Development should demonstrate that proposals with landscape and visual implications, should protect, conserve and where appropriate enhance:

- The elements of the landscape that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the area (including cultural character and biodiversity);
- The historic elements that contribute significantly to the landscape character, quality and the setting of and views from conservation areas and historic parks and gardens;
- The locally distinctive pattern of landscape elements such as woodland, streams, trees and field boundaries.

New development should reinforce and respect the character of the settlement and their landscape setting through the use of sustainable building materials and techniques that are sympathetic to the landscape.

**2.18** The Stafford Borough area has a rich and diverse landscape including the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Natural England has identified Natural Areas and Character Areas which place Stafford Borough within the following categories:

- Mosses and Meres / Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain
- Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands
- Midland Plateau / Cannock Chase and Cank Wood

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**2.19** Additional details assessing and mapping the general sensitivity of landscape units across Stafford Borough are set out in Staffordshire County Council's '[Planning for Landscape Change: Supplementary Planning Guidance](#) to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011'.

**2.20** Staffordshire County Council has also carried out a detailed [Historic Landscape Characterisation Assessment](#) for the County area, including Stafford Borough, which is available as part of the evidence base for the new Plan.

### Draft Core Policy on Safeguarding the Integrity of European Sites

The Council will give highest level of protection to European Sites. Planning permission will only be permitted where:

- There will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, or
- If adverse effects are identified it can be demonstrated that the proposed mitigation measures of impacts show that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site

In relation to air quality issues identified, planning permission will only be granted where:

- It can be demonstrated that development will not significantly contribute to adverse effects caused by local and/or diffuse air pollution at European sites, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, or
- Where development would result in an increase in local and/or diffuse air pollution at European Sites, it would be expected to include measures to secure an equivalent improvement in air quality or reduction in emissions from other sources; and
- Require a pollution-neutral strategy for major development near to European sites

In relation to water quality, supply and run-off issues, planning permission will only be granted where:

- The development takes account of the Water Cycle Study and Surface Water Management Plan and any subsequent reviews

**2.21** 'European sites' are those that have the highest level of protection in the UK through legislation. These include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), candidate (cSAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), proposed (pSPA), European Offshore Marine Sites and Ramsar sites.

**2.22** Within Stafford Borough there are the following European sites:

- Cannock Chase SAC
- Chartley Moss SAC (under the West Midlands Meres and Mosses SAC)
- Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC

**2.23** Within Stafford Borough there are the following Ramsar sites:

- Cop Mere (under Midland Meres and Mosses Phase II Ramsar designation)
- Aqualate Mere (under Midland Meres and Mosses Phase II Ramsar designation)

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**2.24** The following site is on the edge of the Borough:

- Motte Meadows SAC

**2.25** The Habitats Regulations Assessment (also known as Appropriate Assessment) is a European Directive requirement - Local Authorities should consider and assess whether development proposals and policies set out in Local Development Documents (LDDs) would affect European Sites.

**2.26** Appropriate Assessment aims to ensure that the plan will not have adverse effects on the integrity of European Sites, or affect the features that make it a European site.

**2.27** The Council are currently preparing a Screening Opinion looking at possible impacts on European Sites. Where possible affects are identified, mitigation measures will be explored to overcome any negative impacts.

### **Draft Core Policy on the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation**

Development will not be permitted where it would be likely to lead to an adverse effect upon the integrity, directly or indirectly, of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

To ensure this site is not harmed:

i. No development involving a net increase in dwellings will be permitted within a suitable buffer area around the SAC (normally 400 metres) unless, as an exception, the form of residential development would not have an adverse effect upon the sites' integrity;

ii. Between 400 metres and 12 miles development will be expected to take all necessary steps on-site, to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects upon the site's integrity or, where this cannot be achieved within the development, make provision for mitigation measures designed to avoid such adverse effects taking place as set out in the Cannock Chase Visitor Impact Management Strategy. Measures will include:

- Habitat management
- Access Management and Visitor Infrastructure
- Publicity, Education and Awareness Raising; and
- Provision of alternative sites

Developments of 50 dwellings or more within 400 metres and 12 miles of the SAC will also be required to provide targeted alternative green space within or close to the development site.

The effective avoidance and/or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of the development.

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**2.28** Stafford Borough Council has worked jointly with Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase District Council, Lichfield District Council and South Staffordshire District Council on the Appropriate Assessment in relation to Cannock Chase SAC. The Appropriate Assessment identified possible negative impacts on Cannock Chase SAC from the following sources:

- Water abstraction
- Air Quality
- Recreation

**2.29** It is envisaged that through the implementation of relevant policies in the Core Strategy and the Cannock Chase Visitor Impact Management Strategy, suitable mitigation measures will be in place to overcome possible negative impacts affecting the integrity of the SAC.

### Green Belt

#### Draft Core Policy on Green Belt

The existing Green Belt boundaries in Stafford Borough will be maintained. The Green Belt will be protected from inappropriate development as defined by Government policy. The following sites will continue to be identified as Major Developed Sites within the Green Belt;

- Creda Limited, Blythe Bridge;
- Former BT Training School, Yarnfield;
- Moorfields Industrial Estate, Swynnerton;
- Meaford Power Station, Meaford, Stone.

**2.30** The majority of the Borough's area, including the urban areas of Stone and Stafford, is not within the Green Belt. Less than a quarter of the Borough area is identified as Green Belt designation, located to the south east of Stafford as part of the West Midlands Green Belt Area (1,810 ha) and to the north of Stone forming part of the North Staffordshire Green Belt Area (9,266 ha). The existing [Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001](#) identifies the precise boundaries of these Green Belt areas.

**2.31** The Green Belt area to the north of Stafford Borough acts as a buffer to prevent unrestricted growth of the North Staffordshire conurbation and to assist in focusing urban regeneration within the conurbation through encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. The Green Belt area to the south east of Stafford Borough supports national objectives by assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. In terms of the national objectives the Green Belt area to the south and east of Stafford Borough also provides opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population, retains and enhances attractive landscapes near to where people live and secures nature conservation interests.

**2.32** The villages of Oulton, Hanchurch and Trentham are 'washed over' by Green Belt. The settlements of Fulford, Swynnerton, Tittensor, Barlaston, Barlaston Park, Meir Heath & Rough Close, Cotes Heath, Yarnfield, Brocton and Hilderstone are within or abut areas of Green Belt in Stafford Borough.

## 2 Environmental Protection and Management

**2.33** Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts sets out the general presumption against all new development within the Green Belt apart from agriculture, forestry, some recreational and outdoor uses or minerals operations.

**2.34** Stafford Borough Council will not be identifying safeguarded land through the Local Development Framework as there is sufficient land to serve the development needs of Stafford Borough for the duration of the planned period 2006-2026.

**2.35** Stafford Borough Council has identified 4 major locations that are listed as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt defined with a boundary. [Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts](#) allows for limited infill development or redevelopment of existing major developed sites within the Green Belt. The criteria set out in PPG2 Annex C will be applied to these Major Developed Sites.

## 3 Housing

### Residential Density, Size and Type

#### Draft Core Policy on range of Dwelling Types, Density and Sizes

The Council will expect new housing development to provide a mix of dwelling types, tenures and sizes including a proportion of affordable housing (outlined in the preferred policy - affordable housing) to respond to the identified needs of the community. To secure the appropriate range of dwelling types, the Council will seek that:

- All new housing development must be compatible with the site density and character of the area. In Stafford and Stone Town centres high density development of not more than 40 dwellings per hectare will be expected;
- In villages and areas outside Stafford and Stone town centres, new residential development will generally be no more than 30 dwellings per hectare, unless such a density would conflict with the local character and distinctiveness of an area;
- Housing developments that have 10 dwellings or more will be required to provide a mix of dwelling types on site. However, the final mix will be determined in line with Government policy set out in PPS3: Housing.

**3.1** The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) prepared for the West Midlands North Housing Market Area identifies a preponderance of larger detached dwellings in the current stock and a high rate of owner occupation in the Borough. This trend has been exacerbated by the completion of a significant number of four or more bedroom houses. However, projected changes in the population structure shows that this type of housing may be less appropriate for the area in the future.

**3.2** The Council recognises that it is important to provide the appropriate mix of housing to meet the needs of the local community. The SHMA indicates that, along with the rest of England, the demographic profile of Stafford Borough is shifting towards increased levels of one person households, with commensurate decreases in the levels of married couple households, a trend which is expected to continue over the Plan period.

**3.3** This reduction in household sizes will increase the need for more dwellings that are smaller in size. However, in order to facilitate the development of sustainable mixed communities the council will seek that new developments provide a range of dwelling types and sizes for a mixture of different households but with a higher proportion of one and two bedroom houses / apartments. Where a development includes a proportion of affordable housing the Council will normally specify the required mix of dwelling sizes and types. New developments should provide a range of dwellings types and sizes for a mixture of different households, but with the proportion based on:

- Existing household and dwelling size in the development locality
- Indicative waiting list data for the locality
- Sustainability of occupancy in terms of turnover, future management and market forces.

## 3 Housing

**3.4** National policy in PPS 3: Housing requires that in planning at site level, Local Planning Authorities should ensure that the proposed mix of housing on large strategic sites reflects the proportions of households that require market or affordable housing and achieves a mix of households as well as a mix of tenure and price. For smaller sites, the mix of housing should contribute to the creation of mixed communities having regard to the proportions of households that require market or affordable housing and the existing mix of housing in the locality.

**3.5** In addressing the changing household profile towards smaller and more sustainable communities the council will ensure that, in line with national policy, new development makes the most efficient use of the land and buildings available. Developments in Stafford and Stone town centres will cater for higher density development, as such locations are more sustainable, and have greater access to public transport and town centre amenities. Additionally, such locations could allow for the development of car free developments in the Stafford and Stone town centres.

**3.6** Outside Stafford and Stone town centres the Council will adopt the national minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare and, where justified, a more flexible approach to density will be adopted that allows new development to be more responsive to the existing character of the area or settlement and to community views set out in such documents as village design statements.

## Affordable Housing

### Draft Core Policy on Affordable Housing

The Council will require that a proportion of new dwellings built in the Borough will be affordable, to be available to people on lower incomes, unable to afford housing at the prevailing market price or who need to live within the area. The Council has set a minimum target of 30%, rising to a 40% where economic viability permits. Developers will be expected to provide an independent economic viability assessment if a lower figure is being advocated. The provision of affordable homes based on the following thresholds:

- a) In larger settlements with populations of over 3,000 all sites of over 0.4 hectares or capable of accommodating 15 dwellings or more;
- b) In settlements of under 3,000 in population, all sites of greater than 0.2 hectares or capable of accommodating 8 or more dwellings;
- c) In settlements of under 3,000 in population and in the rural area outside settlements, all sites of greater than 0.1 hectares, capable of accommodating 3 dwellings or more will be expected to provide a commuted sum payment.

There will be a presumption that affordable housing will be provided on the development site. However in exceptional circumstances the Council may accept an off site contribution on another site provided by the developer. Where the developer provides evidence, which demonstrates that neither on-site nor off-site provision of affordable housing is appropriate, a commuted sum, based on a calculation of the supportable deficit, may be considered. The Council will expect on-site affordable housing to be clustered in small groups, distributed across a development, rather than in a single area, and their design and appearance must be indistinguishable from that of open market homes.

In deciding whether a particular site qualifies as being above the requisite site size thresholds set out above, the Council will assess not merely the proposal submitted but the potential capacity of the site.

Where the splitting up of a site would result in two or more sites which physically abut each other, any of which fall below the site size thresholds, the site will be treated as one site for the purposes of this policy.

**3.7** The Government in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing states that affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing but not low-cost market housing.

**3.8** Social rented housing is defined in PPS 3 as:

- Rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also include rented housing owned or managed by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Housing Corporation as a condition of grant.

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**3.9** Intermediate housing refers to range of sub-market housing products, but within this policy is mainly concerned with Shared Ownership. Shared Ownership housing is housing which is partly sold to the occupiers and partly rented to them by an RSL. It is tailored towards a specific income group that is correctly targeted to address specific local housing needs. It is defined as:

- Housing at prices and rents above those of social rent, but below market price or rents, and which meet the criteria set out above. These can include shared equity products (e.g. HomeBuy), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent.

**3.10** The Council has a longstanding commitment to providing everyone with the opportunity of a decent home and to the provision of affordable housing to meet demonstrated local needs. Many people who move into the Borough can afford to pay higher prices for their housing than many existing residents. Wage increases are not keeping pace with increases in house prices. These factors have had the effect of pricing some local people out of their own communities and being replaced by better off commuters and people retiring to the countryside. Intermediate housing provides the opportunity for local people and key workers, who are unable to afford open market prices, to access the housing market affordably.

**3.11** Evidence of local need in the [Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) jointly commissioned for the West Midlands North Housing Market Area by East Staffordshire Borough, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough, Stafford Borough, Staffordshire Moorlands District and Stoke-on-Trent City, shows a continuing shortfall of affordable housing, including in Stafford Borough. A variety of demographic and social factors, coupled with pressures generated by economic growth and in-migration, means that a substantial number of low income households are unable to find suitable housing to rent or buy in the private market.

**3.12** The provision by Government to provide 'right to buy' and 'right to acquire' schemes has reduced the stock of social rented housing. Consequently, Local Authorities are almost entirely reliant on affordable homes provided in association with market housing where Housing Associations purchase new homes from the developers of individual sites. However, this source will continue to be insufficient to meet the affordable homes target.

**3.13** Recent evidence from the [Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) highlights that there is a significant need for affordable housing in Stafford Borough will continue for some time. The 2007 [Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) identified the need for 293 new affordable homes per year of over the period from 2006-2026. More than 200 households in the Borough are accepted as statutory homeless and in need of permanent housing each year. During 2007/08, nationally there were 0.8 homeless acceptances per 1,000 head of population, whereas Stafford Borough has 1.8 acceptances per 1,000, well above the national average.

**3.14** Given the quantum of the affordable housing needed in Stafford Borough as outlined in the [Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#), the Council will increase the affordable housing target to 40% to meet its affordable housing commitment over the duration of the current plan period. However, as a result of a recent case heard by the [Court of Appeal](#), involving the affordable housing policies of Blyth Valley Borough Council in Northumberland, the Council has commissioned an economic viability assessment for the strategic locations identified.

**3.15** These measures could increase the overall supply of affordable housing, compared to the yield resulting from the 30% target that is current Council policy and might generate an average of 120 - 160 new affordable homes a year but will inevitably fail to meet the target of 293 new affordable homes per year unless there is major new public sector investment. Detailed policy guidance will be provided by Stafford Borough's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

### Rural Exception Sites

#### Draft Core Policy on Rural Exception Housing

The Council will grant permission for development of affordable housing on 'rural exception sites' provided that it meets the following set of criteria:

- The site delivers 100% affordable housing;
- The housing would be justified by a Parish based Local Housing Needs Assessment;
- The development is small in scale, whilst respecting the setting, form and character of the settlement and the surrounding landscape.
- A financial appraisal of the scheme, providing that it will meet the defined needs, shall accompany any planning application.

The Local Planning Authority will not grant planning permission for housing justified on the grounds of local needs, unless the initial and subsequent occupancy of such developments is controlled through planning agreements or conditions or Registered Social Landlords, to ensure that the accommodation remains available in perpetuity, to meet the need for which it was permitted.

The occupants of Rural Exceptions housing must meet the following need criteria:

1. Existing residents needing separate accommodation in the parish;
2. People whose work provides important services (key workers and carers) and who need to live closer to their work or local community;
3. People who have long standing links with the parish and who need to move nearer to close relatives in order to provide, or receive, necessary social support.

Each occupant of rural exception housing must demonstrate that they are unable to secure or maintain a dwelling in the open market, due to lack of available capital or income.

**3.16** The Government has made it clear that Local Authorities should consider allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable housing, including using a Rural Exception Site Policy. The Borough is dominated by agricultural land which is subject to strict development restraint policies, and as such, is not considered to be an appropriate location for new housing development.

**3.17** This restrictive stance has limited the supply of dwellings in these communities and accordingly the prices of properties have increased to a level which is often significantly greater than a comparable property in a more urban setting. Entry-level house prices are

## 3 Housing

particularly high in rural areas where few sites meet the threshold beyond which it is expected that an element of affordable housing is to be provided. The result of this has been that certain groups of local people, namely the young and those working in rural areas for relatively lower wages, can no longer afford to rent or buy properties. The effects of this can include:

- A greater degree of reverse commuting by workers employed in rural enterprises who are forced to live elsewhere as a result of their inability to buy or rent at local market rates
- An erosion of family and community ties as younger family members are forced to move away
- A shift in the demographic balance which has impacted upon the ability of local services, particularly schools, to maintain their patronage, and subsequently, their overall viability.

**3.18** However, to ensure that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities, housing will be permitted in selected rural settlements, subject to local support (particularly from Parish Councils), a landowner willing to provide a site at an appropriate value and a Housing Association willing to develop rural exception sites. Detailed policy guidance on Rural Exception Housing will be provided by Stafford Borough's Rural Exception Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

### Lifetime Homes and Specialist Housing

#### Draft Core Policy on Lifetime Homes

The Council will expect all new housing development to adopt lifetimes homes standards, unless it can be demonstrated that it is not technically feasible or will render the development unviable.

**3.19** The Lifetime Home Standards were developed in the 1990s by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The principle is that new homes should be designed to meet the varied and often changing needs of occupiers over time. The standard comprises 16 design features, which are the result of careful study and research. The features apply to both the interior and exterior of the home. Each development must contain each of the 16 standards to qualify as a lifetime home. These standards will enable housing to become more functional for everybody including families, disabled people and older people as well as future proofing developments by enabling simpler and cheaper adaptations to be made when necessary.

**3.20** Research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicates that the additional costs of building to Lifetime Homes standards are small, ranging from £165 to £547 per dwelling. In addition, because of the benefits of internal space, thoughtful design and flexibility, dwellings built to these standards are likely to attract a higher market value and so any additional cost ought to be recouped. Due to Stafford Borough's demographic profile and forecasts of a growing elderly population, the addition of lifetime homes will play an important part in meeting the Borough's needs, without being too onerous on developers. For these reasons, the Local Planning Authority will require all new development to be completed to Lifetime Homes Standards.

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**3.21** Key features of lifetime homes include level or gentle sloping approach to properties, doors wide enough to allow wheelchair access, living room at entrance level, entrance level toilet, and bath, low window sills, and electrical sockets and controls at convenient heights. The following table shows these simple features.

Lifetime Homes Standards		
1	Car Parking	Where car parking is adjacent to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to attain 3.3m width.
2	Access from Car Parking	The distance from the car parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum and should be level or gently sloping.
3	Approach	The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping.
4	External Entrances	All entrances should be illuminated, have level access over the threshold and have a covered main entrance.
5	Communal Stairs	Communal stairs should provide easy access and, where homes are reached by a lift, it should be fully accessible.
6	Doorways and Hallways	The width of internal doorways and hallways should conform to Part M, except that when the approach is not head on and the hallway width is 900mm, the clear opening width should be 900mm rather than 800mm. There should be 300mm nib or wall space to the side of the leading edge of the doors on entrance level.
7	Wheelchair accessibility	There should be space for turning a wheelchair in dining areas and living rooms and adequate circulation space for wheelchairs elsewhere.
8	Living Room	The living room should be at entrance level.
9	Two or More Storey Requirements	In houses of two or more storeys, there should be space on the entrance level that could be used as a convenient bed space.
10	WC	In houses with three bedrooms or more there should be a wheelchair accessible toilet at entrance level with drainage provision enabling a shower to be fitted in the future. In houses with two bedrooms the downstairs toilet should conform at least to Part M.
11	Bathroom and WC Walls	Walls in the bathroom and WC should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails.
12	Lift Capacity	The design should incorporate provision for a future stair lift and a suitably identified space for a through the floor lift from the ground floor to the first floor, for example to a bedroom next to the bathroom.

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Lifetime Homes Standards		
13	Main Bedroom	The design and specification should provide a reasonable route for a potential hoist from a main bedroom to the bathroom.
14	Bathroom Layout	The bathroom should be designed for ease of access to the bath, WC & wash basin.
15	Window Specification	Living room window glazing should begin no higher than 800mm from the floor level and windows should be easy to open/operate.
16	Fixtures and Fittings	Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls should be at a height usable by all (i.e. between 450 and 1200mm from the floor).

### Draft Core Policy on Specialist Housing

The Council will, through the allocation of sites and / or granting planning permission, meet the anticipated need to provide 703 net additional extra care bed units in Stafford Borough by 2025 over and above the current provision as at 2008 by:

- Resisting development that would lead to a reduction in the number of extra care premises unless it can be demonstrated that a replacement facility was being built or that such a use was unviable.
- Ensuring that any new developments are situated in a sustainable location, are self contained, and are accessible by both public and private transport. New development should make adequate provision for off-street car parking within any development scheme.
- Allowing for the extension of existing nursing homes and conversion of existing buildings providing that:
  - The development is compatible with the character of the local area
  - There is adequate and well located car parking and the site is accessible by both public and private transport.
  - The development does not have an adverse impact on the amenity of adjoining properties through excessive noise, light pollution, loss of privacy and excessive traffic increases.
- Seeking to secure the provision of new Extra Care facilities through liaising with its partners, Staffordshire County Council and the South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) on new major development schemes.

**3.22** Extra Care Housing is a type of specialised housing that provides independence and choice to adults with varying care needs and enables them to remain in their own home. The Department of Health's strategy is outlined in the 2008 document "Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society".

**3.23** The current level of Extra Care Units in Stafford Borough is 1.3 units per 1,000 population aged 65+. Within Stafford Borough there are no Local Authority run Extra Care Units. This compares poorly to other Staffordshire districts. The Staffordshire average rate of provision is 2.9, with the highest rates of provision being in Lichfield District at 9.4 units per 1,000 population aged 65+.

**3.24** In Stafford Borough, in line with regional demographic trends, it is anticipated that during the next few years there will be a substantial increase in the number of people post retirement age. In 2006 people over the age of 65 comprised 16.8% of the population, by 2025 this is projected to increase by 49.4%. The largest increases will be seen in the 80-84 and 85+ age group, which will experience increases of 75% and 96.7% respectively in the same period.

**3.25** There is currently an identified need for 703 Extra Care Units in Stafford Borough up until 2025. To meet this level of service provision there would need to be an increase in the levels of provision of 20.2 units per 1,000 aged 65+ from the current level of 1.3. The majority of the need will need to be addressed by owner occupied units with a smaller number from the social and private rented sectors. However, there is concern that this type of housing will not be delivered within the first few years of the Plan period as the majority of new development taking place over that period will be residential development made up of existing consents, windfall sites (based upon historic completions) and identified Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) sites. None of the existing consents are for Extra Care Housing and few sites suitable for such development are likely to come forward.

**3.26** In addressing this large requirement for Extra Care Units there is a concern that such large concentrations of such developments may have an adverse effect on the local community and service provision, particularly health services. Therefore the Council will consider the location of such schemes and will consult with its partners (such as Staffordshire County Council and Southern Staffordshire PCT) and other relevant service providers to ascertain the best locality for such developments in accordance with the acknowledged need.

**3.27** The provision of lifetime homes standards and Extra Care Units will enable the Borough to fulfil one of the central tenets of the Government's strategy by enabling elderly people to live independently in their own homes for longer. However, even with the provision of lifetime homes and more Extra Care Units, increasing numbers of older people will need to seek more specialist care in nursing homes, which have good access to local services and facilities.

## 3 Housing

### Gypsies and Travellers

#### Draft Core Policy on Gypsies and Travellers

The Council will consider the delivery of sufficient good quality, appropriately located residential pitches to satisfy the unmet need specified in the Stafford Borough Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA); 22 pitches between 2007 and 2012, 12 pitches between 2012 and 2016, 17 pitches between 2016 and 2021 and 19 pitches between 2021 and 2026. The number of pitches to be delivered and the timespan for delivery may be subject to updating in the ongoing review of Gypsy and Traveller policies in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Draft Phase 3 Revision, following subsequent reviews of the GTAA or relevant government policy.

Proposals for development to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers will be permitted only where they comply with the following criteria:

- The intended occupants of the site comply with the definition of Gypsies and Travellers or Travelling Showpeople outlined by national policy;
- The development of the site has a minimal impact on the surrounding landscape, environment and biodiversity;
- Pitch sizes that facilitate good quality living accommodation without over-crowding or unnecessary sprawl;
- Good design and layout including, the adequacy of facilities, services and amenities, the utility of outside space for leisure, recreation and for any essential employment related activities;
- The site does not have any impact on the Green Belt or the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- The site has good access to the public highway system; adequate space for parking, turning and servicing on site;
- The development is on the periphery of, or within reasonable distance of, a settlement which offers suitable access to both community and local facilities.

**3.28** Gypsies and Travellers are protected under Section 19A of the 1976 Race Relations Act and Local Planning Authorities are required to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations in all that we do. Currently within Stafford Borough, accommodation provision for travelling families' is provided by both a Council owned site at Stafford and by private sites; predominantly in the Hopton area. At present, the number of currently authorised pitches is 70.

**3.29** Government policy setting out the requirements for the provision of Gypsies and Traveller accommodation is detailed in Circular 01/2006. The Circular requires Local Authorities to carry out a [Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment](#) (GTAA) to ascertain the required level of accommodation to be provided and allocate land accordingly. Additionally, in order to respect the traditional travelling lifestyle and their living and working conditions, it may be necessary to allocate land.

**3.30** The identification and allocation of specific plots of land is a more difficult process than using a solely criteria based approach. However it ensures some certainty for local people and gypsies and travellers when planning applications are determined by local planning authorities, or appeals are considered by the Secretary of State. This matter will be considered as part of a subsequent Sites and Allocations DPD.

**3.31** The GTAA assessment was commissioned by the five local authorities which make up the North Housing Market area of the West Midlands these being East Staffordshire Borough, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough, Stafford Borough, Staffordshire Moorlands District and Stoke-on-Trent City. The study was undertaken by the Housing and Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford assisted by staff at the University of Birmingham.

**3.32** The needs assessment identified a requirement for 72 residential pitches between 2007 and 2026 in Stafford Borough as well as 2 transit pitches. This represents around 0.7% of the total housing requirement to be met in the Borough. The study breaks down the need to 22 pitches between 2007 and 2012, 12 pitches between 2012 and 2016, 17 pitches between 2016 and 2021 and 19 pitches between 2021 and 2026. Clearly the process of developing accommodation to meet the identified need will require significant funding, much of which will be expected to be provided through the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) by the Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant.

**3.33** The Council will ensure that the preferences and aspirations of Gypsies and Travellers are commensurate with the recommendations stated in the GTAA and are taken into consideration when deciding the planning, design and development of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The primary considerations for such accommodation are: Location to local services and transport networks, Pitch size, Amenities, Sheds, Management, Mixture of accommodation (chalet, trailer, etc.), Utility of outside space (driveways, gardens), Homes for life principles, Health and related support issues such as tenure Mix and space for short-term visitors.

**3.34** Travelling Showpeople are not included in the definition of Gypsies and Travellers. Although their needs are similar, their culture, traditions and accommodation requirements differ so a separate planning policy document, Circular 04/07, details the particular planning needs of Travelling Showpeople. Both the GTAA and the local branch of the Showmens Guild of Britain have confirmed that there is currently no requirement for Travelling Showpitches / Plots in Stafford Borough.

## 4 Economy

### 4 Economy

#### Draft Core Policy on the Local Economy

The location, diversity and intensity of new employment development will be delivered by:

- Providing and safeguarding an adequate supply and variety of land and buildings for current and future employment uses;
- Promoting Stafford Borough as a location for new business start-ups, new enterprise and incubator units for technology and Information Technology sectors in urban and rural areas that are in accordance with other elements of the development strategy;
- Improving access to urban and rural employment areas through the provision of improved public transport services;
- Increasing the levels of skills and educational attainment of the Borough's workforce, to promote the area as a place to invest;

Planning permission will not be granted for development or conversions that will result in the loss of employment land to non employment generating uses unless:

1. The loss of jobs would not result in a reduction in the range and diversity of jobs available in the locality;
2. There is overriding evidence to demonstrate that the current use is presently causing and have consistently caused significant nuisance or environmental problems that could not have been mitigated;
3. No new occupiers can be found despite substantial evidence to show the premises or site has been marketed both for its present use and for potential modernisation or regeneration for alternative employment-generating uses.

**4.1** Within Stafford Borough the majority of new employment development has taken place on greenfield sites with only 20% on previously developed land in recent years. A reasonable stock of employment land remains in the Borough area with planning consent for a range of uses. However there has been a reducing amount of employment land available since 2001 by almost 50% from 87.98 hectares to 53.36 hectares. For further information refer to the Staffordshire County Council - Employment Land Availability Surveys.

**4.2** Despite the level of employment land commitments in Stafford Borough, as indicated in the evidence base, the rate of development of employment land remains below the target set in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 (Refer to the Employment Land Availability Study 2007 – Staffordshire County Council). The Council has recently completed an [Employment Land Review](#) which assessed existing employment areas and established that the majority of these locations should be retained in order to sustain a balanced future community in Stafford town and the Borough.

**4.3** In recent years, in line Government policy, there has been a shift in the balance of housing development away from greenfield sites to the development of Previously Developed Land (PDL). Much of this housing development has been on land previously occupied by formerly major employers such as British Reinforced Concrete, Lotus Shoes and Venables Timber in Stafford. Further consents have been given for the development of land released by closures of employers, ABB and Doulton Industrial Products, both at Stone, together with downsizing involving land release such as at Universal Grinding Wheels and Alstom at Stafford as well as Barloworld and Bibby Sterilin at Stone.

## Retail

### Draft Core Policy on Retail

The Council will seek to protect and enhance the role of the Borough's market towns and service villages by working with its partners (including Staffordshire County Council and InStaffs) to support appropriate new retail, commercial and service development in order to maintain the vitality and viability of its town and village centres, provide services as locally as possible and minimise the need to shop by car. The Council proposes the following retail hierarchy:

- **Stafford Town Centre** is the primary comparison and convenience shopping destination for Stafford Borough with a vibrant night time economy including arts and cultural activities, attracting significant numbers of trips from adjoining parts of the borough as well as developing a key role as a tourist destination within Staffordshire.
- **Stone Town Centre** will continue to act as a key local service centre, market town and visitor destination with a vibrant culinary evening economy.
- **Eccleshall, Gnosall, Great and Little Haywood, Stafford District Centres and Stone District Centre at Walton** will further develop as local service centres providing key services to local communities and their hinterlands.

Retail development should be provided at an appropriate scale to serve local needs without having a detrimental impact on the retail hierarchy. Support will be given to proposals and activities that protect, provide for, retain or enhance existing town and village centre assets.

**4.4** Town, district and local centres are at the heart of our communities and provide a focus where people shop, work, live and visit. We want them to be vibrant places which are easily accessible, particularly by public transport, making them sustainable locations for development, particularly those forms of development that attract a lot of people.

**4.5** This policy will be implemented, in conjunction with the other policies in the plan, through the determination of planning applications for retail developments that are consistent with the existing retail hierarchy in the Borough. This will enable the creation new retail floorspace to enhance both job creation and the economic vitality of the Borough. Master Plans will be expected to be prepared by developers for the comprehensive redevelopment of shopping centres.

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**4.6** The main effect of the implementation of this policy will be to reinforce the dominant role of Stafford and Stone town centre as the key retail centres in the Borough, although the other centres will continue to serve their more local catchments.

### Tourism

#### Draft Core Policy on Tourism

The Council will seek to promote and enhance tourism and new visitor accommodation in appropriate locations throughout Stafford Borough by;

- Creating a high quality historic environment in Stafford and Stone town centres as well as the Borough's villages;
- Continuing the regeneration and restoration of the extensive canal system across Stafford Borough;
- Promoting and enhancing visitor attractions such as Shugborough Park estate, Trentham Gardens, the Monkey Forest, the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Stafford Castle, the Staffordshire County Showground and the Ancient High House as well as local market events;
- Promoting new walking, cycling routes and linkages to national networks through the Borough's countryside;
- Promoting sensitively designed, small scale, visitor attractions in the Borough's villages that enhance their tourism potential and generate local employment.

**4.7** Tourism in Stafford Borough has helped create and maintain employment locally and generate substantial revenue for the local economy. The towns and villages of the Borough act as the principal focus for visitors and accommodation, particularly the larger towns of Stafford and Stone. These thriving market towns, villages and hamlets are some of England's prettiest countryside that are peppered with picturesque streets, traditional pubs and a diverse range of facilities to cater for every taste.

**4.8** The tourism sector in Stafford Borough is intimately linked with the quality of the natural and built environment, and many visitors come to enjoy the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Shugborough Park estate, Trentham Gardens, the Monkey Forest, Stafford Castle, the Staffordshire County Showground and the Ancient High House. To support the development of tourism and provide facilities that will benefit the local economy and community, provision will be made for new tourist facilities in areas that can accommodate additions, without adversely affecting the environment.

**4.9** In the smaller villages and hamlets tourism development will be used to strengthen the local economy and reduce the impact of the declining agricultural sector. However, this must be compatible with its rural location as poorly controlled tourist development in rural areas can damage the character of the environment that attracts tourists initially.

**4.10** The Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a key tourist attraction in Stafford Borough and the surrounding districts of Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire and Lichfield Districts. As such the Council will seek to protect and enhance the distinctive and natural landscape of the AONB and the nationally and internationally important biodiversity it supports. Within the AONB, visitor pressures and the volume of vehicular traffic, particularly Heavy Good Vehicles, have the potential to damage the

environmental quality. To minimise the degradation of the AONB, the Council will liaise with the relevant statutory agencies to bring forward measures that are most appropriate to the AONB.

**4.11** A network of waterways links towns and villages taking cyclists, walkers and boaters through stunning countryside. The market town of Stone has the Trent and Mersey canal at its heart bringing visitors from far and wide to this busy market town. In Great Haywood the newly completed 200 boat Marina, on the edge of Cannock Chase, as well as a new marina near Aston-by-Stone offers cruising to some of the most beautiful stretches of the canal network. Meanwhile the Shropshire Union canal, the M1 of canals, passes through the west of the Borough attracting significant interest at Gnosall and Norbury Junction.

**4.12** This extensive canal network has significant potential for restoration and expansion; particularly the Newport Canal which joins the Shropshire Union Canal at Norbury Junction. The [Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust](#) has been examining alternatives to the restoration of the extensive flight of locks which link Norbury Junction to Newport. The currently favoured option of the [Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust](#) involves an inclined plane at a location south of Norbury Junction combined with a new length of canal to link to the existing canal route east of Newport. The restoration will provide economic and increase the visitor numbers to Stafford Borough. This connection to the Shropshire Union canal is a vital element of the restoration scheme to provide a seamless link to the national canal network. In addition, a local interest group has been set up to promote the restoration of the historic river and canal link from a spur off the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to Stafford town centre.

## 5 Design and the Historic Environment

### 5 Design and the Historic Environment

#### Draft Core Policy on Design

The Council will require that new development is of a high design standard that must reflect and respect the character, setting and local context, including those features that contribute to local distinctiveness of the area. This will be assessed in terms of scale, massing, vertical / horizontal emphasis, materials, colour and setting.

Development must also have regard to the site topography, important trees or groups of trees and other important features that need to be retained. Designs which fail to have regard to the local context, do not preserve or enhance the character of the area will not be acceptable. To secure enhancements in the design quality development must, at a minimum, meet the following principles:

- Ensure that all major applications are comprehensively master planned or where appropriate are accompanied by a development brief;
- Incorporate sustainable construction techniques into the design as stated in the climate change policy;
- Strengthen the continuity of street frontages and enclosure of space through development that clearly distinguishes between public and private space;
- Retention of significant landscaping features and creation of new biodiversity areas that are consistent with Stafford Borough's Landscape Character Assessment;
- Include high design standards that make efficient use of land and reflect the local character, context, density, landscape as well as complementing the biodiversity of the surrounding area;
- Ensure that places inter-connect; are pedestrian, vehicle and cycle friendly, whilst allowing for ease of movement, legibility and permeability through a clearly defined and well structured public realm;
- Creating a safe environment where streets and public areas are overlooked;
- Ensure that car parking is well integrated and discreetly located so that it supports the street scene;
- Require the design and layout of new development to be safe and secure, by the inclusion of measures to address crime and disorder and where possible meet "Secured by Design" Standards;
- Development should be well-connected to public transport and community facilities and services, and is well laid out so that all the space is used efficiently, is safe, accessible and user-friendly.

A Design and Access Statement (DAS) should demonstrate how the above matters have been addressed or conversely, why it is not practicable or appropriate to do so.

New development of ten dwellings or more will be expected to achieve at least the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment's (CABE) Silver Standard and where possible Gold Standard through a Building for Life (Bfl) assessment, unless it makes the development unviable or it has been sufficiently demonstrated through a DAS that each of the twenty Bfl questions has been optimally addressed or conversely why it not practical or appropriate to do so.

## Design and the Historic Environment 5

**5.1** High quality and inclusive design is a central tenet of the Government's approach to achieving sustainable, well balanced communities that are capable of combating the effects of global climate change. Design is deeply embedded in and is a key driver of, National, Regional and Local Planning Policies, most significantly in [Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development](#) and [Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing](#). Additionally, at both regional and national level this strong commitment to design quality from Government, has produced a suite of design guidance on achieving sustainable communities and high quality design.

**5.2** Excellence in design and local distinctiveness in Stafford Borough are important assets that the Council want to promote, maintain and enhance wherever possible. The significant growth that will take place in Stafford Borough over the period between 2006-2026 offers a unique opportunity to achieve high quality designs for all developments. In addition, by planning high quality developments in Stafford we can have a positive impact on the quality of life for both new and existing communities by drawing together the many strands of place-making to create sustainable developments with distinct identities where people want to live. It will also greatly contribute to reducing Stafford Borough's carbon footprint towards the Council's aim of a zero carbon environment by 2016.

### Design Quality

**5.3** The Council will encourage new, existing and refurbished buildings, streets and public spaces to produce innovative design solutions that enhance the existing character and contribute positively to the local distinctiveness of the area. Of particular importance is a high quality, versatile and well-designed public realm for the creation of more sustainable communities as well as promoting Stafford Borough as an attractive and inclusive place to live.

**5.4** In accordance with the Government's DCLG Circular 01/2006 design proposals should follow the robust design process of assessment-involvement-evaluation-design set out in a Design and Access Statement (DAS) for it to be acceptable. This should demonstrate how the applicant has considered the proposal and what is appropriate, considering the site in its context along with a justification of how the design emerged. Furthermore, the DAS should specify the general movement to and through the site and its buildings as well as providing information on how all members of society will be able to use the site. Any statement should clearly demonstrate what groups and people have been or will be discussing the scheme. Additionally, a clear demonstration should accompany the DAS on how information collected during the process has informed the overall design and what decisions have been taken and why.

**5.5** The criteria set out in 'Building for Life' published by CABI enables good design to be assessed using 20 criteria for considering character, public space, design and construction and the surrounding environment and community. The Government publication 'The Manual for Streets' aims to assist developers in the creation of higher quality and better-designed streets that contribute to the quality of the built environment and should be used predominantly, but not exclusively in proposals that include new or redesigned residential streets. Further information on general urban design principles is available in the CABI publication 'By Design'.

## 5 Design and the Historic Environment

**5.6** Developments should take adopt measures that reduce the opportunity for crime and create a safer and more secure community. Developers should contact Staffordshire Police Authority to ensure that 'Secure by Design' principles are incorporated within all development schemes. This will require particular consideration to the overall layout of developments to increase natural surveillance, design of roads, cycleways and footpaths and landscape design. Further specific consideration should also be given to amenity space and the importance natural surveillance in reducing the opportunities for crime. Further advice can be found at Staffordshire Police Authority.

### **Draft Core Policy on the Historic Environment**

Development proposals, including alterations and extensions, will preserve and where possible enhance the historic environment, other buildings of historic importance, Conservation Areas, historic parks and gardens; archaeological and scheduled ancient monuments; their views and settings through the implementation of high quality sympathetic strategies by:

- Promoting development that has high design quality and is sympathetic to the character, appearance, settlement pattern, integrity, scale and massing, local distinctiveness of the area; through the use of Design and Access Statements (DAS), masterplans and conservation area appraisals. Development that has an adverse impact on the character and architectural heritage of Stafford Borough will not be permitted;
- Preserving listed buildings, architectural features and detailing and other buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the area; unless, in exceptional circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that existing or new viable uses cannot be obtained or there would be substantial planning benefits that outweighs their loss;
- Preserving and where possible enhancing; the character, appearance and special features of conservation areas, historic parks and gardens in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, conservation area appraisals and management plans to facilitate sympathetic high quality building design, townscape creation and landscaping in keeping with the defined areas;
- Conserving, restoring and maintaining the character and appearance of historic parks and gardens, battlefields and landscaped in conjunction with relevant stakeholders to provide a valuable recreational, cultural and environmental resource for the Borough and its residents;
- Promoting canal related development that encourages the re-use and adaption of existing canalside developments; whilst seeking, where appropriate, to promote new development that is sympathetic to the character and setting of the canal and its environment.

The Council will protect and enhance sites of archaeological interest and scheduled ancient monuments against development that would adversely affect their integrity and setting.

## Design and the Historic Environment 5

**5.7** The strategy seeks to preserve, manage and enhance the Borough's heritage; this includes specifically identified features as well as the wider historic environment. The relevant planning guidance is given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15): Planning and Historic Environment. [Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning the Historic Environment](#)

**5.8** The quality of the historic environment and the presence of historical assets contributes to the character, distinctiveness and cultural heritage of Stafford Borough. The attributes owe much to the diverse and rich historic environment and the settlement patterns of the Borough's towns and villages, some of which date back as far back as 1000 AD. Many of these were the centres of local activity supported by local markets and fairs which acted as local service centres for their rural hinterland. Many of these towns and villages continue to perform this function up to the present day.

**5.9** The historic buildings of the Borough are in a traditional vernacular style using predominantly locally sourced materials. The earliest surviving example is St Chad's Church, which dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. As the Borough has grown, buildings from successive periods have become part of the familiar and cherished local environment of the Borough. This unique legacy should be considered a creative force that will inspire good urban design solutions that enables new development to complement its surroundings and contributes to the Council's emphasis on the positive management of change.

**5.10** There are over 800 buildings in the Borough that are listed as being as special architectural or historic interest. These range from great county halls such as Shugborough Hall to more modest items such as Mile Posts. Of particular importance is the Elizabethan Ancient High House, constructed in 1594 by the Dorrington family, which is the largest timber framed building in England.

**5.11** These buildings are protected by law by virtue of their historic or architectural merits. However, the Council has identified certain other buildings that contribute to the character of the Borough; but do not qualify as listed buildings. It is important that such buildings are retained to prevent the dilution of the character of the area and the wider historic environment.

**5.12** There are 30 Conservation Areas within Stafford Borough designated due to their special architectural or historic interest whose character and appearance under the Planning Act 1990 (listed buildings and conservation areas).

**5.13** The Council has undertaken a number of conservation area appraisals and associated management plans to assess the qualities and needs of each one, as well as to inform and encourage best practice to achieve the preservation and enhancement of the special qualities of those areas. In order to fully assess proposals that could affect such areas (including those that may fall outside the designated boundary) full details are required in order to fully assess the impact that such a proposal will have.

**5.14** The impact of development on a conservation area may also relate to matters affecting its balance of land uses and pattern of daily activity, by threatening vitality and viability through the introduction incongruous layout or form of development, altering the characteristic pattern of spaces between buildings or being out of scale with its surroundings. So too are matters of design, including: height, bulk shape, massing, and proportions, vertical or horizontal emphasis, materials and colour.

## 5 Design and the Historic Environment

**5.15** A register of historic parks and gardens is kept by English Heritage. Currently, three are on the Statutory Register. These parks are Shugborough (Grade I listed), Trentham (Grade II\* Listed) and Sandon Park (Grade II Listed). The parks provide a valuable recreational, cultural and environmental resource for the Borough and its residents.

**5.16** The Borough is traversed by three canals whose total length is more than 53 km. These have been designated as conservation areas and are a significant part of the Borough's industrial heritage. The Trent and Mersey Canal was the first canal to begin in Staffordshire, in 1766. It was the first major inland waterway and formed a principal route in Britain's canal network by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal was completed in 1772 and is part of James Brindley's "Grand Cross" linking the Mersey with the Thames and the Trent with the Severn. The Shropshire Union canal was built between 1827-35 by the engineer Thomas Telford to connect the Midlands to Ellsmere Port on the River Mersey. The full extent of these canal systems and their respective conservation areas in Stafford Borough is detailed in their respective conservation area appraisals.

**5.17** Stafford Borough is rich in archaeological remains of many types and periods. This precious resource is finite and easily damaged or destroyed and are irreplaceable. Only a small number of sites have statutory protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. There are over 1,100 sites of archaeological interest with only 45 afforded protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Not all important remains that merit protection are necessarily scheduled. Such sites of national, regional and local importance are registered on the counties Historic Environment Record (HER) / Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

## Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities 6

### 6 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities

#### Draft Core Policy on Open Space, Sport and Recreation

The Council will, in partnership with other bodies, seek to secure good quality, well maintained leisure, sports and open space facilities to meet the identified needs outlined in the PPG17 Assessment by:

- Improving the opportunities for both formal and informal recreation in parks and open spaces for a diverse range of groups, which are managed to nationally recognised quality standards such as Green Flag awards;
- Addressing both the quantitative and qualitative deficiencies of both indoor and outdoor sports and recreation facilities outlined in the PPG17 Assessment and any subsequent revisions;
- Providing sports and leisure facilities that are commensurate with the settlement size and type;
- Developing a network of play areas for children of all age groups, particularly Teenagers;
- Developing, protecting and enhancing open space, public and amenity spaces as well as allotments.

The Council will resist development that results in the loss of existing sports and leisure facilities unless alternative facilities can be provided or that redevelopment would not result in a deficiency in the local area. New facilities should be located in areas that are accessible by walking, public transport and cycling and such developments will be particularly welcome in areas with identified deficiencies.

**6.1** At present there is approximately 241 hectares of protected open space and 706 hectares of Green Network as defined in the [Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001](#). These two designations protect informal, as well as more formal spaces such as playing pitches used for football and cricket. The main coverage is in the urban areas of Stafford and Stone where the Green Network provides valuable linkages to the open countryside beyond. However other settlements also have protected areas, many of which provide focal points of activity. There are many other smaller scale open spaces that contribute to public amenity. The Council has commissioned a [PPG17 Assessment and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy](#) as part of the evidence base for the new Plan.

**6.2** There is extensive use of current pitches, particularly for football on a Sunday, and there is an anticipated increase in demand for adult and junior pitches, based on current trends and the growing popularity of girls' football.

## 7 Transport

### 7 Transport

#### Draft Core Policy on Transport

The Council will seek to promote the use of sustainable transportation through reducing the reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduce the need to travel generally and help deliver the objectives of the Staffordshire Local Transport Plan and any subsequent revisions. This will be achieved through:

- Reducing the need to travel by locating new developments in close proximity to public transport routes;
- Requiring new developments to facilitate the provision of safe and well integrated off-street parking;
- Improving road safety;
- Ensuring that new developments facilitate walking and cycling by providing links with or extending existing cycle and walking routes;
- Delivering through new developments support for sustainable travel choices by having secure, accessible and sheltered bicycle parking on site;
- Ensuring that all developments that generate significant traffic flows must be located in close proximity to the primary and secondary road network and should have adequate capacity to accommodate the development or can be improved as part of the development;
- In rural areas, proposals that generate significant levels of traffic, that rural roads system cannot accommodate in terms of capacity, road safety and load will not be permitted;
- The implementation of national car parking standards in all new development proposals, subject to the above criteria.

**7.1** This policy reflects national transport policy outlined in [PPG13](#) and the emerging West Midlands Regional Transport Strategy which will seek to promote the use of sustainable transportation measures through the integration of transportation and land use planning to enable a reduction in the need for travel particularly by the car and promote more sustainable transportation patterns.

#### Managing Transport Demand

**7.2** A range of measures are required to facilitate a modal shift away from the private car and to encourage a reduction in the demand for travel. The principal mechanism for achieving this modal shift is to promote more effective integration of land use and transportation which enables local day to day facilities to be located within access by foot or by cycling. Another is to ensure that development which comprises of jobs, shopping, leisure and services offers a range of sustainable travel choices and to ensure that development takes place where travel choice exists.

**7.3** Much of the Borough's population outside Stafford and Stone are living and / or working in remote rural areas where the choices of transportation modes are currently limited and the use of private car is generally a necessity. In such cases, the local authority will seek to

manage the provision of off street parking and reduce the need for long distance commuting by providing adequate employment opportunities in rural areas, so as not to lead to unsustainable increases in car based travel.

## Roads

**7.4** The local transportation network is important for the day to day access requirements for people in Stafford Borough, particularly in the rural areas. With the scale of development that is proposed in the Core Strategy, including the Western Access Improvement scheme and the Eastern Distributor Road at Stafford, highway construction and improvement will be necessary to cope with the proposed growth increases, some of which will also encourage the increased usage of more sustainable forms of transportation.

**7.5** Development that would generate large levels of traffic should have good access links to the main transportation networks in the Borough to avoid long distance trips that would potentially increase the overall levels of congestion on the road network. Furthermore, it is also critical for safety reasons that new developments in rural areas do not generate increased usage of heavy goods vehicles along roads which are unequipped for such traffic.

## Public Transport

**7.6** The key objective is to increase car parking at the Stafford and Stone stations to help further increase patronage levels. The Government has identified a need for additional car parking, particularly at Stafford Rail Station, as part of the West Coast Main Line Strategy, to attract more passengers onto longer distance services. This strategy will help bring about a modal shift from the car to more sustainable transportation.

**7.7** Buses have a major role to play to help reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility to key services. To achieve this, buses need to offer a realistic alternative to the private car and be reliable, frequent and accessible. Improved passenger comfort, integration with other modes, readily available travel information and through ticketing are essential elements of the Staffordshire Bus Strategy.

**7.8** The [Staffordshire County Council Local Transport Plan](#) outlines the main improvements that Staffordshire County Council will be implementing for the conventional bus network over this period. The quality of the infrastructure, accessibility, ticketing and real-time passenger will be improved. These improvements will be accomplished through the introduction of a high quality inter-urban bus network; improving the accessibility to key services; improving punctuality and reliability of services and implementing multi operator ticketing. In rural areas, improvements in links between the outlying rural villages and the larger settlements will also be important in increasing accessibility to local services and facilities to reduce social exclusion.

## Walking and Cycling

**7.9** The Council will work closely with cycling groups and have a very productive relationship with the national Sustainable Transport organisation Sustrans, who are developing the National Cycle network. The have worked closely with them to deliver links in the National Network in Stafford Borough. In total the Stafford cycling network currently stands at 44 kilometres, with new routes being added and many other being extended as part of the Borough's commitment to more sustainable forms of transport.

## 7 Transport

**7.10** The Council will provide a range of cycle infrastructure in Stafford, Stone, the major villages, major public buildings, education facilities, tourism and leisure facilities to facilitate a greater uptake of cycling in the borough.

**7.11** In accordance with the Councils commitment to sustainable transport we will work with Staffordshire County Council Highways Authority to provide a cycle network in accordance with the following principles; cyclists should generally where possible be accommodated on the carriageway in areas with low traffic volumes and speeds, where traffic volumes are high separate cycle lanes will be provided; cyclists will be provided with direct, barrier-free routes with smooth surfaces that minimise the need for cyclists to dismount. Furthermore, a key priority of the council is to consider the needs of cyclists in the provision of new roads, traffic management and environmental schemes.

**7.12** Cyclists are particularly sensitive to traffic conditions. High speeds or high volumes of traffic tend to discourage cycling. If traffic conditions are inappropriate for on-street cycling, the factors contributing to them need to be addressed, if practical, to make on-street cycling satisfactory.

**7.13** The Council is committed to improving pedestrian facilities and will negotiate with developers to make improvements which enables the urban environment to become more pedestrian friendly. These facilities will include improvements to the architecture of pedestrian crossing roads; improvements to pedestrian movement around new developments and the creation of safe pedestrian routes for people of all ages, sizes and abilities particularly children and disabled people.