



Stafford Borough
Local Development
Framework



Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough Issues and Options

February 2009



Planning and
Engineering
Services

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1 Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 The Stafford Borough area is facing a period of significant change in terms of what our towns, villages and countryside will look like in the future and how land will be developed and used. It is important to make sure that new services and facilities such as health, education and leisure activities are provided to the local community.

1.2 In 2008 Stafford Borough Council carried out consultation exercises to prepare a vision, establish key issues and objectives, consider strategic options for Stafford Borough and a series of alternative development strategies which could be used to deliver the new Plan through until 2026.

1.3 The purpose of this document is to seek your views regarding options on a range of matters including where new development could be located to provide future housing, employment, office development, retail, tourism, leisure, education, health, transport and green open spaces. **We think that it is important to consider a range of options to make sure the new development can be delivered and to identify the choices available.**

1.4 You are invited to make your comments on the content of any paragraph in the document. If you are doing this using the on-line consultation you can click to the right of each paragraph. If you choose to use e-mail or letter we would ask you to identify the paragraph number, location reference or question to which your comments refer. All comments received will be published and made available to view on-line by clicking on the 'View Comments' tabs above paragraphs.

1.5 This work will guide preparation of the new Development Plan for our area called the Stafford Borough Local Development Framework, which will replace the adopted Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 and guide decisions on planning applications.

Please remember

More spatial options have been identified in this document than will be required. We are seeking your comments on which spatial options and policy matters are most appropriate.

Sustainable Community Strategies 2

2 Sustainable Community Strategies

2.1 During 2008 a group of individuals and organisations from Stafford Borough called the Local Strategic Partnership prepared the Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2020. The Council will continue to work closely with the Local Strategic Partnership, through the Local Area Agreement, to deliver growth and establish links with other initiatives and programmes being implemented by other organisations.

2.2 The following vision is set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2020 and the key purpose of the new Plan for Stafford Borough is to bring this Vision into reality through proposals for future land uses.

“Improving the quality of life for our communities by making the Borough a safer, healthier, cleaner and more sustainable place for all to live, learn, work and invest in.

By 2020 we want Stafford Borough:

To have a vibrant, prosperous, sustainable economy and environment by

- Securing conditions for a thriving economy, where **all** businesses are supported in their development and long term sustainability.
- Promoting innovation and nurturing enterprise so that new businesses are given every opportunity to develop and grow.
- Being a place where the environment is protected and enhanced and a sustainable way of life is promoted, supported and delivered.

To have a Borough where all members of our communities are safe and feel safe by

- Being an area where **all** members of the community are secure and free from fear of crime in their homes, places of work or study, in the street, town centres and the countryside.

To have a protected and enhanced environment by

- Proactively preparing for and adapting to climate change.
- Increasing the understanding and awareness of sustainable development so that everyone is able to contribute to it.

To be a Borough where all our members feel Included in society, live longer, healthier and more contented lives by

- The promotion of healthy lifestyles and general wellbeing.
- Being a place where a strong sense of inclusion within the community, is promoted - one that enhances the quality of life for all and enables everyone to actively participate in society.

(1)

2 Sustainable Community Strategies

2.3 In 2007 partners from across Staffordshire came together to produce the Staffordshire Sustainable Community Strategy - 'Our County, Our Vision' setting out a fifteen year vision for Staffordshire. Stafford Borough is at the heart of Staffordshire and Stafford is the County town.

Our Vision

'It is our fifteen year vision to improve the quality of life for all our people, by increasing economic prosperity, improving local services, and developing partnership working'

We will only achieve our vision by working together to achieve four overarching priorities:

A vibrant, prosperous and sustainable economy

Staffordshire will be known regionally and nationally as a high knowledge, high value added, high skilled inclusive economy.

Our County will be recognised as a place of innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship, where new businesses thrive and survive, are profitable and contribute to the prosperity of our communities.

Staffordshire will contribute significantly more to the West Midlands Gross Value Added and enjoy greater competitiveness, than it currently does. There will be greater amounts of knowledge based employment and levels of research and development.

Our workforce will be better skilled with everyone having the opportunity to develop and improve their skills and achieve their full potential.

Strong, safe and cohesive communities

Staffordshire's communities and citizens will feel safe and be safe, and the fear of crime and actual crime, particularly violent crime will be reduced.

Our communities will benefit from accessible, integrated and responsive services, which meet their needs and which they have had a voice in shaping.

We will be known for our enterprising and thriving third level sector, which is rooted in our communities.

Across the County a social enterprise culture will exist, which plays an important part in raising skills and aspirations and in the delivery of key services such as recycling, caring and domestic services.

Our communities will continue to benefit from a strong cultural provision, which enriches everyone's quality of life.

Improved health and sense of well being

All Staffordshire's people will benefit from equality of opportunity and access to the resources they need to improve their health, well being and quality of life.

Our citizens will be encouraged to lead healthier, more active lives and make healthier choices.

Sustainable Community Strategies 2

The emotional health and well being of the most vulnerable members of our communities, especially our vulnerable children and older people will be improved.

Our county's older people will be empowered to live independently and have greater choice and access to the services they need and want, as well as being provided with opportunities for employment and education.

A protected, enhanced and respected environment

Staffordshire will be known for its rich biodiversity, which is protected, restored and enhanced for both its own right and because of the benefits it contributes to our own well being.

The County will also be known for its diverse and unique built and historic environment. Staffordshire will contribute to be a high quality visitor destination based on a range of tourist attractions, pleasant countryside and natural environment. Tourism in the County will lead the way in 'green tourism', demonstrating good environmental practice to its visitors and the industry.

Every community, whether rural or urban will be able to make use of an effective, accessible and affordable transport network, developed in a sustainable manner, with increased use of public transport, cycling and walking as a proportion of total transport.

Together as individuals, businesses and communities, we will have greatly increased our ability to adapt to and cope with environmental challenges, in particular climate change and extreme weather events.

We will manage our waste effectively and there will be zero waste to landfill.

2.4 We think that the Visions referred to above should form the basis for the new Plan for Stafford Borough. Do you have any views on this?

3 The Plan for Stafford Borough - Spatial Vision & Key Objectives

3 The Plan for Stafford Borough - Spatial Vision & Key Objectives

3.1 Different towns, villages and rural areas within Stafford Borough have a variety of pressures, problems and characteristics worthy of protection and conservation as well as opportunities which could be realised by new development or regeneration.

3.2 Stafford is located on the national road and rail network and has the highest level of services and facilities in the Borough area, which means it will be under the greatest pressure for major new development. As part of Stafford's vision for the future it is vital to maintain and enhance high levels of local sustainability such that the majority of local people can access local jobs and services without having to travel significant distances. This will mean that housing growth will be complemented by local employment, retail and leisure growth together with new transport and social infrastructure to ensure Stafford continues to be a vibrant and active community.

3.3 Stone has a distinctive local character alongside the canal with high quality restaurants and year round community activities supporting a vibrant local economy providing a very attractive place to live and visit.

3.4 Parts of the rural area have exceptionally high landscape and nature conservation designations with attractive villages. However these locations generally have fewer services and facilities. These issues make it more expensive for local residents who have to make a living to find rural affordable housing.

The Plan for Stafford Borough - Spatial Vision & Key Objectives 3

3.5 The following locally specific Vision will be used to guide the Plan for Stafford Borough through until 2026 and beyond by differentiating how the character of particular towns, villages and places in the area might change over time. Please note that other elements of this document have been structured in a locally distinctive manner specific to Stafford, Stone and the rural areas.

“By 2026 Stafford Borough will have retained and enhanced its high quality unique character made up of the County Town of Stafford, the market town of Stone and extensive rural area containing smaller towns and historic villages whilst providing development to meet the local needs of all communities in the area including affordable and quality housing.

The Borough will have a rich natural environment which is resilient to the effects of climate change, is well maintained and enhanced with more people enjoying the area through a greater sense of health and well being. A high quality strategic network of accessible green space will have been developed in and around Stafford, Stone and other areas as well as an enhanced and managed built and natural resources providing a clean, safe and fun place to live.

- *Stafford will have achieved a strengthened economy based on specialist industries, including the Ministry of Defence, by retaining the high quality skills delivered by further education facilities and bolstered by significant inward investment. This will be supported by high quality housing and exceptional levels of community services and facilities*
- *Stone will have high quality residential developments supporting first class business development as well as an increasing number of retirement complexes making provision for an ageing population whilst not undermining the local character of the town with its canal side vistas and vibrant local economy and community activities*
- *The larger villages of Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon, Great Haywood and Little Haywood will have expanded their services and facilities to sustain the surrounding rural areas as well as provided high quality housing for local people, supported by local employment opportunities. Other selected smaller settlements will have provided more additional housing of a more limited scale*
- *The rural areas will have been protected, conserved and enhanced to provide an exceptionally high quality of environmental and landscape character supported through biodiversity enhancement schemes. In particular locations affordable housing will have been delivered to provide for local needs to support a diverse and regenerated rural economy and renewable technologies. The availability of accessible and enhanced high quality services and facilities will have been provided across the rural area*

The Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Green Belt areas within Stafford Borough will not have had any significant development affecting their local character or openness”.

Do you think that the specific Vision is appropriate and do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Key Objectives

3.6 To deliver the Vision for Stafford Borough, the new Plan for Stafford Borough will aim to achieve the following key objectives:

3 The Plan for Stafford Borough - Spatial Vision & Key Objectives

Stafford

- An additional 7,000 new high quality homes will be provided by 2026 to create new communities supported by district centres, three new health centres including GP surgeries and new primary schools in housing developments of more than 1,000 homes.
- An additional 90 hectares of premium employment land will be made available for new research and development facilities as well as growth opportunities to provide new businesses for graduate employment.
- Provision of significant new green infrastructure including green links from the surrounding open countryside and the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty into the heart of Stafford to encourage healthy living for sport, recreation and leisure time activities.
- A new country park south of Stafford provided as a sub-regional open space and recreational facility to meet the needs of an increasing population in the area.
- Deliver new mixed use town centre proposals of 50,000 square metres of retail provision to make Stafford a significant centre for retailing, leisure and cultural attractions with an emphasis on non-car modes of transport provision.
- Provide for 45,000 square metres of new office development at Stafford to encourage greater retention of high quality Further & Higher Education professionals in the area.
- Support and enhance the role of public sector agencies who have their headquarters or a significant presence in Stafford including Staffordshire University, Stafford College, Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service, the Ministry of Defence, the Prison Service, the Primary Care Trust and two Foundation Trusts.

Stone

- Provide additional new high quality homes to support the sustainable community without undermining urban regeneration initiatives in the North Staffordshire conurbation.
- Deliver a new health centre for Stone as part of future community facilities including Staffordshire Police, the Primary Care Trust and other key agencies in the town.
- Provide an additional 20 hectares of new high quality employment land to provide further support and opportunities for expansion to new and existing employers at Stone Business Park.
- Provide infrastructure including an upgraded electricity distribution network, new sewage facilities, green infrastructure links and new education provision through housing developments.
- Deliver new mixed use town centre proposals to enhance Stone as a centre providing for local needs of retail, leisure and community activities.
- Enhance the role of the Trent Valley corridor through the town in terms of biodiversity, accessibility, recreation and community uses together with exploring the opportunities for marina and commercial developments.

Selected rural settlements

- Provide for new housing development in selected settlements supported by new infrastructure provision and
- Deliver additional facilities in settlements selected for growth to provide an improved level of local services appropriate to the settlement.

Areas outside settlements identified for growth

The Plan for Stafford Borough - Spatial Vision & Key Objectives 3

- Provide increased rural employment through renewable energy schemes including biomass, low impact hi-tech industries in agricultural buildings and sensitive new national and regional tourist attractions which enhance the high quality environment of the area.
- Deliver 10 hectares of new employment land based on existing industrial areas by 2016.
- Provide at least an additional 100 new affordable homes, within or adjacent to existing village boundaries, to support sustainable rural communities in the future.
- Support increased habitat creation and the encouragement of a diverse range of species through Biodiversity Enhancement Zones across the Stafford Borough area.

3.7 Do you think that the specific Key Objectives are appropriate and do you have any suggestions for improvement?

4 Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough

4 Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough

Stafford Borough's area

4.1 Stafford Borough covers an area of over 230 square miles and is centrally placed within Staffordshire County. Staffordshire is a large County between the conurbations of Manchester, 50 miles to the north, and Birmingham, 30 miles to the south. The Borough shares boundaries with Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire Moorlands, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, Telford and Wrekin and North Shropshire. Stafford Borough is well located within the West Midlands region and nationally in terms of the transport network.

4.2 The Stafford Borough area is locally distinctive in terms of character, landscape and natural resources. The area is home to over 120,000 people. Over 60% of the population live in Stafford and Stone whilst the remainder live in the rural area where there are a number of larger villages such as Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon, Barlaston, Great Haywood and Little Haywood as well as smaller villages and hamlets. To the north of the Borough are parts of the suburban fringes of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent - at Clayton, Blythe Bridge, Trentham and Meir Heath.

4.3 Within Stafford Borough there are more than 50 villages and hamlets, which vary in size, from a population of over 3,500 at Gnosall to under 200 people at Adbaston. Whilst these settlements do have a limited range of services, they are economically and functionally linked to Stafford.

Demography

4.4 The resident population of Stafford Borough, as measured in the 2001 Census was 120,670 of which:-

- 50% were male and 50% were female
- 8.4% were under 16 years and 22.5% were over 60 years
- 56.7% were married and were 25.2% had never married

4.5 The average household size in Stafford Borough according to the 2001 Census is 2.4 people. The 2001 Census also demonstrates a higher proportion of those in the older age groups and a higher proportion of single households than the national average.

4.6 There are noticeable characteristics for coming years and in particular there is a significant projected increase in people over 85 years of age. The changing population structure will have impacts on services both for younger people, including potential school closures and a need for additional facilities to meet the needs of single person households and older people.

4.7 Stafford Borough currently performs very well in terms of achieving sustainable growth, with 73% of the Borough's economically active population living and working within its boundary.⁽¹⁾

4.8 In comparison with regional statistics Stafford Borough has a relatively small percentage of ethnic minorities as 97.4% of the population are white.

1 West Midlands Regional Observatory Lifestyle Survey published in 2005

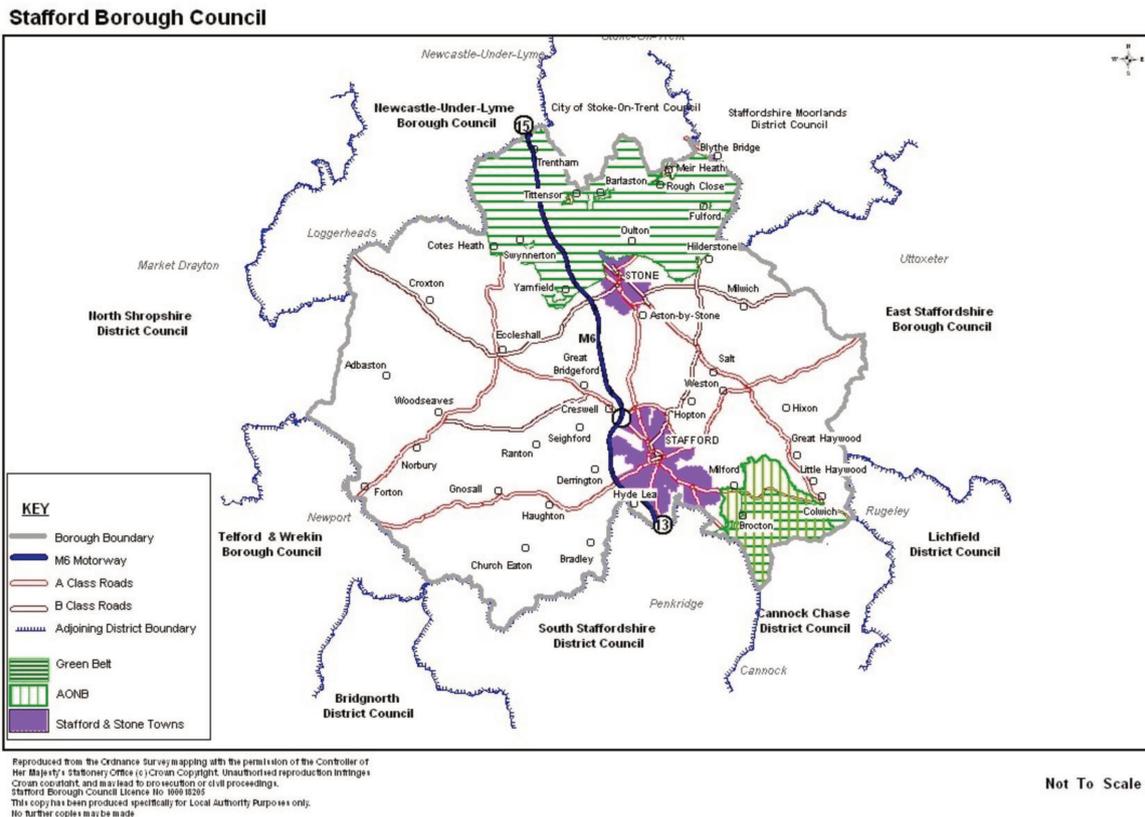
Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough 4

4.9 In the 2001 Census, just over 69% of people within Stafford Borough described their health over the preceding 12 months as 'good'. This figure compares favourably with the West Midlands region, England and Wales.

4.10 The 2001 Census states that approximately 63% of the population is in employment, with a further 15% being retired and 4% being permanently sick or disabled. Stafford Borough is home to an economically active population of 97% in comparison to a Great Britain average of 94.9% ⁽²⁾ Unemployment levels are relatively low in Stafford Borough.

Green Belt

4.11 In Stafford Borough there are two areas of Green Belt; around the North Staffordshire conurbation and in the south eastern area which includes the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as shown below.



Car ownership

4.12 Car ownership rates are high in the Borough with 1.29 cars per household, falling to 1.09 in Stafford town, in rural Parishes exceeds 1.5 and rises to more than 2 in some cases. In the Borough as a whole, over 70% of the people in employment travel to work by car or motor cycle, 5% by public transport or taxi, 10% walk or cycle and 10% work from home ⁽³⁾.

Housing

2 National Statistics Labour Force Survey, May 2002

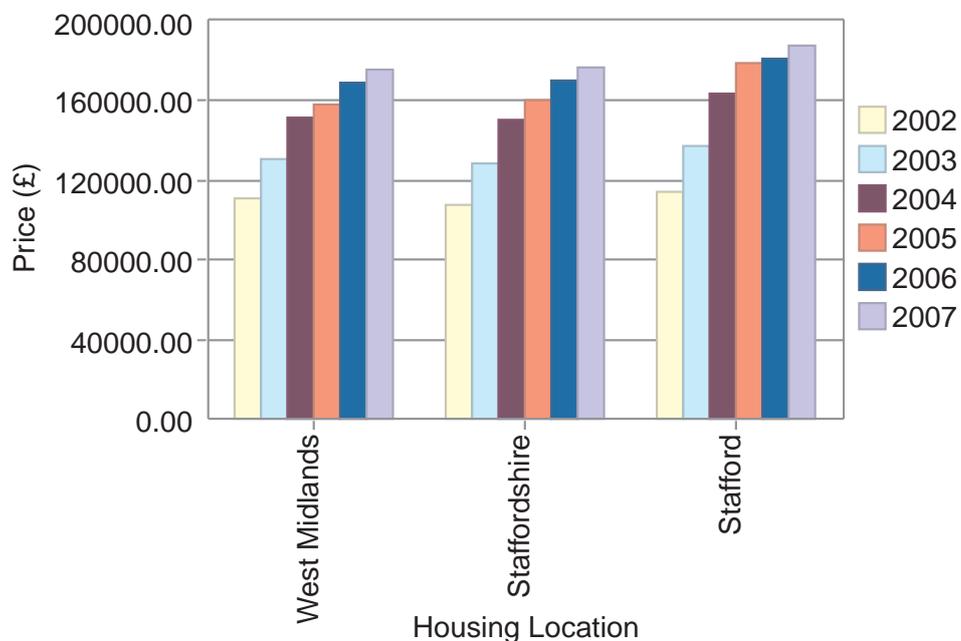
3 Census 2001 data

4 Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough

4.13 In 2001 there were 50,025 households in Stafford Borough of which 26.1% were one person households. 76.1% were owner occupied. In housing terms 38.4% were detached houses, 33.9% were semi-detached, 17% were terraced and 10.1% were flats.

4.14 House price levels within Stafford Borough have been monitored since 2001, as set out in the table below, together with further evidence set out in the North Staffordshire Housing Market Area Assessment which was completed in 2008. The trends generally show a steady rise in house prices across all housing types which will have an impact on the affordability ratio. However the 'credit crunch' and housing market downturn starting in 2007 / 08 is expected to cause prices to stabilise and reduce, possibly to 2005 / 06 levels.

Figure 4.1 House Prices



The housing stock of Stafford Borough is relatively good according to the Census 2001 with fewer than 25 unfit homes per 1,000 dwellings compared to other districts in Staffordshire (a County average of over 40) and an English average of 60 per 1000. Overcrowding is relatively low at 3%. For further information refer to the Housing Stock Condition survey as part of the evidence base.

Deprivation

4.15 Stafford Borough has a relatively low level of deprivation although there are several wards, mainly in Stafford town, where deprivation is an issue of concern.

Employment

Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough 4

4.16 Marginally more people commute into Stafford Borough than those who commute outside the Borough to work. However over 39,000 people both live and work in the Borough ⁽⁴⁾. The population of the Borough is generally skilled and well educated. The unemployment rate in the Borough remains relatively low and levels of prosperity higher than national averages.

4.17 Within Stafford Borough the largest proportion of land is used for agriculture, second is residential, followed by industrial uses. Industrial uses vary from large international manufacturing sites such as the Alstom (Areva) and Evode sites in Stafford to the small - medium size uses to be found on the Borough's industrial estates. Staffordshire University and Technology Park play a significant role in the Borough as a major employer and a location for innovation. The Borough is also home to significant Ministry of Defence sites. There are two prisons in the Borough; Stafford Prison north of Stafford town centre and Drake Hall near Eccleshall.

4.18 Inward investment has always been an important source of job growth to the local area, assisted by good location, site availability, labour skills and costs. For further information refer to the evidence base study entitled 'Employment Land Review' and associated documentation.

Biodiversity

4.19 In biodiversity terms the Borough is rich and varied with designated areas having the highest level of planning policy protection including 17 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 3 internationally designated sites under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) ⁽⁵⁾, 4 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 2 National Nature Reserves (NNRs). In addition there are more than 100 sites identified locally as Sites of Biological importance (SBIs).

4.20 The four Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in Stafford Borough are Cannock Chase, Chartley Moss, Motte Meadows and Pasturefields Salt Marsh, although some parts of Cannock Chase SAC extend into other local authority areas and only a very small part of Motte Meadows falls within the boundary of the Borough. The two National Nature Reserves are Chartley Moss, which is a floating bog and Aqualate Mere, the largest of the natural meres that can be found throughout Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire. Aqualate Mere, Chartley Moss and Cop Mere are also Ramsar sites.

4.21 Habitats that are particularly important for wildlife within the Borough include ancient (veteran) trees, old semi-natural woodlands, various types of wetland such as Doxey and Tillington Marshes, lowland heath on Cannock Chase and Rough Close Common and a few remaining flower-rich meadows on neutral grassland. These habitats often occur in isolated patches in urban locations or between larger areas of intensively farmed land, which makes them very susceptible to degradation or loss.

4.22 Several species have already become extinct from Stafford Borough including the red squirrel, marsh helleborine and *Cryptocephalus decemmaculatus*, a very rare and distinctive leaf beetle of wetlands.

Historic Environment

4 2001 Census Special Workplace Statistics

5 This is an intergovernmental treaty that aims to stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands now and in the future; generally known as the Ramsar Convention after the place where it was signed

4 Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough

4.23 The term 'Historic Environment' is used throughout this document to include scheduled monuments and other archaeological remains; historic buildings, both statutorily listed and those of more local importance; conservation areas; historic landscapes, including registered parks and gardens, cemeteries and registered battlefields; and historic elements of the wider public realm, including publicly-owned and managed spaces and recreational parks.

4.24 The historic environment is a precious and irreplaceable asset which we believe must be conserved for future generations. Stafford Borough is steeped in history, from its Stone Age origins, through Roman and medieval times to modern industrial life. Its network of towns and villages with picturesque churches, castles and stately homes reflects the unique identity of this part of the North Midlands. Buildings such as the Ancient High House, the largest timber framed town house in England, and Shugborough, home to the Earls of Lichfield, attract visitors from across the world.

4.25 Within Stafford Borough there are 819 listed buildings of which 18 are Grade I (2.3%) 57 are Grade II* (7.2%) and 712 are Grade II (90.4%). Whilst the majority of the listed buildings in the Borough are in good or reasonable repair, a number of buildings are in severe disrepair threatening loss of historic detail and fabric. Six of these buildings are Buildings at Risk as registered by English Heritage ⁽⁶⁾. To supplement the national Buildings at Risk register, Stafford Borough maintains a local Grade 2 Buildings at Risk register.

4.26 The Borough has four designated Historic Parks and Gardens these being Trentham Gardens, Sandon Park, Shugborough Park and the German Military Cemetery at Cannock Chase. Other designed landscapes contribute to the character of the local historic environment, such as village greens, public parks, and country estates. Furthermore there is one Historic Battlefield called Hopton Heath.

4.27 There are 43 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Borough including Bury Bank Hillfort, bowl barrows in Swynnerton, and moated sites and fishponds at Hilderstone Hall, Hextall and Norbury Manor. Scheduled Ancient Monuments are of national importance and are subject to an enhanced level of protection. However not all important remains that merit preservation are necessarily scheduled. Archaeological sites of national, regional or local importance are registered on the County's Historic Environment Record (HER) (formerly known as the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)). The HER is continually updated to record new information as it becomes available.

4.28 The Borough has 30 Conservation Areas with a review programme currently taking place by developing two Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans for Stafford and Stone town centres. In the future further Conservation Area Appraisals will take place, prioritised to areas with the greatest development pressure.

Air Quality

4.29 In Stafford Borough there are no areas of such poor air quality that an Air Quality Management Scheme is required. ⁽⁷⁾ While this is the case, one of the most significant contributors of air pollution in Stafford Borough is traffic from the M6 and A34 road corridor, which bisects the Borough north-south.

Water

6 Heritage Counts 2007

7 Source: Air Quality Review and Assessment by Stafford Borough Council

Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough 4

4.30 The Rivers Trent, Sow and Penk are the principal rivers flowing through Stafford Borough with water quality identified as being relatively good. Protection of floodplain and flood risk minimisation is relevant throughout the Borough.

4.31 The quality of water is an important area of concern for domestic, industrial and agricultural uses and general amenity. The Environment Agency has published ground water vulnerability maps for Stafford Borough, which identify areas requiring protection from potentially polluting activities. The Environment Agency has a lead role in providing advice on ground water vulnerability and on the impact of development upon ground and surface water quality.

4.32 River quality testing allows the quality of one river to be compared to another. Testing also helps to set conditions on licences provided to industry and commerce for their discharges of water into rivers, and is used in decisions to protect rivers and canals from the impacts of the use of land for agriculture, leisure and housing. River quality in Stafford is generally assessed as being fair, although there has been an improvement in the biological water quality in recent years to nearer the national average. However the chemical water quality is relatively poor for the Borough area.

4.33 Flooding is affected not only by the changing weather conditions but also by urbanisation. One of the easiest ways to minimise flood risk is for new buildings to be located away from areas likely to flood. Stafford Borough's floodplain areas are identified in the [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#) which will guide where new development can be located taking into account the effects of climate change.

Education

4.34 The Borough as a whole has 47 primary schools and 6 high schools, with one of the highest levels of educational attainment in Staffordshire. To achieve stable and sustainable growth Stafford Borough needs a well educated, well equipped and adaptable labour force. Learning also promotes active citizenship and helps to combat social exclusion. In 2001, 76% of people at age 19 in England had level 2 qualifications.

Sport and recreation

4.35 Stafford Borough Council provides a wide range of sport and recreation facilities and services within the area including the following:

- Parks and Open Spaces - including 3 town parks at Victoria Park, Stafford, Stonefield Park and Westbridge Park, Stone; protected open spaces and areas of nature conservation, recreation grounds and allotments.
- Indoor and outdoor Recreation Centres - including the Stafford Leisure Centre, Westbridge Park (Stone) and Stone Alleyes
- Community Events – including Stafford Half Marathon and the Family Fun Run.

*It should be noted that several of the sports halls in the Borough only have limited facilities such as a single badminton court and therefore can not be used for large court activities such as basketball or netball.

4.36 In MORI Residents Survey in the Borough, children's play areas and parks and open spaces are recognised as major recreational services, behind leisure centres and swimming pools.

4 Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough

4.37 The total identified provision of playing pitch and non-pitch space within the Borough is just less than 132 hectares. Given the 2001 population figure for Stafford Borough is estimated at 120,670, 132 hectares of playing pitch space equates to 1.1ha per 1,000 population.

4.38 The Borough Council published a [PPG17 Assessment and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy](#) in October 2008 as part of the evidence base.

Energy

4.39 The Eccleshall Biomass power plant at Raleigh Hall Industrial Estate is a 2 mega watt power plant for the generation of electricity fuelled by energy crops and provides electricity for up to 2000 households. In addition, there are a number of smaller scale projects in the Borough. The monitoring of renewable energy is problematic, especially with the installation of smaller scale units (such as solar panels) on residential properties that do not always necessarily require planning permission.

Minerals

4.40 Staffordshire County Council are currently in the process of preparing a [Minerals Core Strategy](#) which deals with mineral issues including for the Stafford Borough area. The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy identifies requirements for mineral aggregates provision in the County.

4.41 In terms of aggregate mineral workings there are two existing sites in Stafford Borough identified by Staffordshire County Council for the extraction of sand and gravel, an operational site on the border of Stafford Borough and Cannock Chase District within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at Rugeley Quarry and a non-operational site at Weavers Hill near to the internationally important nature conservation RAMSAR site at the Aqualate Estate. There are no working or permitted sites of clay or silica sand within the Borough.

4.42 In 2006 the British Geological Survey identified Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) for sand and gravel superficial deposits and bedrock sands in Stafford Borough. The MSAs will be subject to consideration through the preparation of the Minerals Core Strategy although it is unlikely that areas of development at Stafford, Stone and the principal settlements in Stafford Borough would be restricted by this designation.

4.43 During 2007 the mineral development industry submitted three strategic site proposals to Staffordshire County Council for consideration as future site allocations. An extension of the existing permitted site at Weavers Hill was submitted amounting to 14 hectares being 700,000 tonnes providing a 14-15 year supply. At Beech a new strategic sand and gravel site was identified by the development industry amounting to 27 hectares being 5 million tonnes providing over a 20 year supply. At Moddershall Grange a further strategic sand and gravel site was submitted amounting to 96 hectares being 17 million tonnes providing a 23-24 year supply.

4.44 A key issue for the Minerals Core Strategy is a shortfall of sand and gravel in Staffordshire over the next 20 year period. Strategic sites will need to be identified by the Minerals Core Strategy to provide sand and gravel for the production of concrete and mortar. Sustainable construction techniques and types of developments such as apartments may require less use of aggregates in the future but, due to the scale of new development required in Stafford Borough in terms of new housing development by the Regional Spatial Strategy, the local availability of sand and gravel will also be important.

Waste

Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough 4

4.45 In terms of waste facilities there are a number of waste transfer sites / material recycling facilities across the Borough, a large landfill site at Meece close to Swynnerton with a maximum capacity to receive 300,000 tonnes of waste per year, three smaller landfill sites, a household waste recycling centre at Stafford, a composting facility close to Eccleshall and a thermal treatment site at Gnosall. Waste to energy incinerator plants are located outside of Stafford Borough in Stoke-on-Trent and Wolverhampton which provide facilities to deal with waste generated in the area.

4.46 The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy identifies requirements for the tonnages of waste requiring management in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent for the municipal and commercial & industrial waste streams. A [Waste Core Strategy](#) is being prepared by the County Council.

4.47 In terms of issues for Stafford Borough it is anticipated that the scale of development in the Regional Spatial Strategy required for the area may need a waste management facility at Stafford as a strategic site as well as further waste transfer sites / material recycling facilities to be identified. These types of waste management facilities are required to meet the challenge of reducing waste disposal at landfill sites.

The County Town of Stafford

Population

4.48 Stafford is the main population centre of the Borough, with the urban population exceeding 60,000 people.

Transport

4.49 The town of Stafford is the main hub for public transport in the Borough and has a range of services serving the town, its surrounding area and a variety of other destinations including Lichfield, Cannock, Wolverhampton, Newport, Uttoxeter, Stone and the Potteries. Stafford is a principal rail station on the West Coast Main Line with services to the South-west via Birmingham, to London, the North-west and Scotland. Two M6 motorway junctions are located adjacent to the town which enjoys good accessibility to the North West, the rest of the West Midlands region and beyond via the M6 and M6 Toll. There is also good accessibility to the East Midlands via the improved A50 link and the Welsh borders via the M54.

4.50 Investment in the West Coast mainline will mean that Stafford will be 1 hour & 20 minutes from London, 35 minutes from Birmingham and 1 hour from Manchester by train.

Employment

4.51 Stafford is the principal administrative centre for the County and Borough Councils, acting as a sub-regional centre of governance for a number of County-wide services including Police and Ambulance services, the local Health Authority, and a range of Government bodies and other agencies.

4.52 Stafford Town is a net importer of labour (1,824 people) with a total number of people employed in the town of 31,002 and only 1,281 people (net) travelling to the West Midlands conurbation to work⁽⁸⁾ despite the town being seen as being on the edge of the commuter belt.

4 Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough

4.53 The town is the Borough's major employment centre with a range of 'stand alone' employers and a number of industrial estates / business parks. Further details are set out in the [Employment Land Review](#).

4.54 There have been significant job losses in recent years at the former GEC / Alstom / Areva site on Lichfield Road, Stafford. This was previously the town's major employer. Structural employment problems resulting from the down-sizing of Alstom were recognised through the Single Regeneration Budget 6 programme which secured a total of £5 million of finding. Further job losses have continued at a number of other manufacturing companies in Stafford over recent years. Despite these setbacks there has been a considerable fight back in recent years to provide a strong and prosperous local economy for the future.

Defence

4.55 The 22 Signals Regiment and the retained Tactical Support Wing are currently based at the former RAF Stafford site, now known as Ministry of Defence (MoD) land at Stafford. This is a major landholding on the north eastern edge of the town, adjacent to Beaconside along with a number of freestanding sites in the rural area beyond the main site. The West Midlands Super Garrison Working Group, a multi agency task force, is currently considering the future of the site and the potential for expansion of military activities. For the future our ambition is to make Stafford part of a new West Midlands super-garrison. A significant increase of Army presence in the Town would reinforce Stafford as a significant area for new growth. Given the location of MOD Stafford within the Town it would also complement the Army's ambition for their personnel to be more integrated into local communities.

Shopping

4.56 Retailing within the Borough is primarily concentrated at Stafford. Stafford's role as a retail centre is gradually improving with new developments of significant scale within and adjacent to the town centre. Currently Stafford has three modern, predominantly food, superstores, each located adjacent to the town centre. Stafford town is the major comparison goods retail centre in the Borough and the only centre with warehouse / retail parks.



Health

4.57 The major health care facility, Stafford District General Hospital, is located in the town.

Education

Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough 4

4.58 The Stafford Campus of Staffordshire University is located on the eastern edge of the town. The Stafford College of Further Education is located in the Town Centre. Six of the seven State Secondary Schools in the Borough are situated in Stafford together with a large number of Primary Schools. Currently some of this education infrastructure is under-utilised with spare capacity in some schools.

Culture and leisure

4.59 Stafford town centre is the principal cultural centre of the Borough, offering facilities which include a theatre, cinema and art gallery. Stafford is the principal location for sporting, leisure and indoor recreational uses in the Borough. Tourism and hotel facilities are focused, but are not exclusively located, at Stafford. Victoria Park in Stafford consists of 3.7 hectares of accessible open space and is managed to Green Flag Standard. In addition there are currently 20 allotments sites in Stafford that are owned by the Borough Council and managed by the Trustees of the Stafford Horticultural Committee. There are other allotments within the Borough that are not owned by the Council.

Recent and future town centre development

4.60 A new leisure centre adjacent to the town centre opened in March 2008 releasing capacity on the previous leisure centre site for a major new retail and leisure scheme comprising some 240,000 sq ft of retail, an 8 screen cinema, a hotel and retirement village together with car parking and residential apartments. In addition the Borough Council is working closely with Staffordshire County Council to bring forward proposals for land at Tipping Street for a mixed use scheme comprising retail and offices. The Council is also working jointly with Staffordshire County Council on proposals for further car parking and a mixed use development at Kingsmead.



The Market Town of Stone

4.61 Stone has a population of around 14,500 people⁽⁹⁾ and has a significant town centre providing both comparison and convenience retailing together with a range of local office based services including banking. It also has an 'edge of centre' superstore. A choice of medical, dental and other health services are found at Stone. Further information is available in the [Settlement Assessment: Services and Facilities in Stone](#)

4 Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough

4.62 Stone is a significant location of employment with a total of 7,846 people employed of whom 3,037 also live in the town.⁽¹⁰⁾ A number of employers are situated in Stone, both on 'stand alone' sites and the town's industrial estates / business park. Primary and middle schools as well as the Borough's only State secondary school outside of Stafford are located at Stone. Local social, cultural, leisure and indoor recreational facilities are provided at Stone. The Regional Development Agency (Advantage West Midlands) has provided funding for regeneration through its Market Towns Initiative which includes Stone.



Areas outside Stafford and Stone

4.63 44,600 people (37% of the Borough's population) reside in areas outside of Stafford and Stone which comprise most of the Borough's area of around 230 square miles. A range of services and facilities are found through the smaller towns and villages in Stafford Borough. For more information refer to the evidence base study entitled [Revised Settlement Assessment of Services and Facilities](#).

4.64 Identified settlements in the existing Development Plan, the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001, with Residential Development Boundaries are set out below with the respective populations from the 2001 Census (for example boundaries around settlements within which housing development will generally be permitted).

Settlement	2001 census	Settlement	2001 Census
Adbaston	154	Hixon	1713
Aston by Stone	137	Hopton	280
Barlaston	2434	Hyde Lea	355
Barlaston Park		Little Haywood and Colwich	2431
Blythe Bridge	1462	Meir Heath and Rough Close	2278
Bradley	395	Milford	296
Brocton	1052	Milwich	140
Brocton A34		Norbury	170
Church Eaton	628	Oulton	537
Clayton	468	Ranton	385
Cotes Heath	208	Salt	186
Creswell	359	Seighford	409
Croxton	159	Swynnerton	517
Derrington	660	Tittensor	657

Spatial Portrait for Stafford Borough 4

Settlement	2001 census	Settlement	2001 Census
Eccleshall	2541	Trentham/Dairyfields	667
Fulford	690	Weston	849
Gnosall	3783	Woodseaves	634
Great Bridgeford	681	Yarnfield	1218
Great Haywood	1854		
Haughton	852	TOTAL	32149
Hilderstone	515		

Source: 2001 Census Key Statistics, Census output is Crown Copyright and is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and the Queen's Printer for Scotland, 2001 Census Profiles Produced by Research Unit, Development Services Department, Staffordshire County Council

5 National and Regional Policy

5 National and Regional Policy

5.1 The Plan for Stafford Borough is to be prepared in line with national and regional planning policies provided by central Government to deliver sustainable development. 'Sustainable development' is the integration of economic, social and environment factors. To ensure that the Plan for Stafford Borough achieves sustainable development a process to assess the options, proposals and policies is being used called [Sustainability Appraisal](#).

5.2 National planning policy is contained in documents called [Planning Policy Statements \(PPSs\) or Planning Policy Guidance \(PPGs\)](#) available through the Government's Communities and Local Government Department [website](#). Regional policy is contained in a West Midlands regional plan called the [West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy \(RSS\)](#)

5.3 In January 2008 the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy was published setting out the scale of new development required in Stafford Borough through until 2026. Further details are provided in the box below.

The Scale of New Development

For the period 2006 – 2026 the following new development needs to be built in the area although these figures, particularly for housing, could increase:

- 10,300 (10,100 net) new houses in Stafford Borough (an annual rate of 515) of which 7,000 new houses to be the County Town of Stafford (an annual rate of 350)
- 120 hectares of new employment land as a long-term requirement with a continuous five year supply being available of 40 hectares (annual rate = 8 hectares)
- 30,000 square metres of new retail space by 2021 with a further 20,000 square metres beyond 2021, the majority being in the County Town of Stafford
- 45,000 square metres of new offices in Stafford

5.4 Stafford is identified as a strategic centre, a local regeneration centre outside of Regeneration Zones and as an 'Other Large Settlement'. With at least 7,000 new homes in Stafford this would represent a growth of more than a 25% above the existing housing stock in the town. The Regional Plan proposes that the remaining 3,000 new homes will need to be provided in other parts of the Borough area.

5.5 However, a following Ministerial intervention earlier in 2008 with regard to housing numbers, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners were commissioned by the Government Office for the West Midlands to consider further options to provide for greater numbers of houses. The consultant's final report was published in October 2008 with a series of scenarios. Scenario 1 suggested no change to Stafford Borough's housing requirement but in Scenario 2 the consultants suggested increasing housing numbers in Stafford Borough by 1,500 and in Scenario 3 by 3,000 (above the RSS submission of 10,300 new homes).

National and Regional Policy 5

5.6 Household projection figures show that there will need to be a significant increase in the level of housing across the West Midlands region and whilst the Regional Plan recognises the continuing need to channel new investments into the Major Urban Areas of the Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent conurbations, the role of Stafford has been identified as a location where “significant development” could take place.

5.7 Whatever requirement is included in the finalised RSS the scale of housing development proposed will be substantially in excess of the requirement for new housing based on local need for Stafford Borough, which amounts to 6,313 households over the Plan period ⁽¹⁾

5.8 The housing requirement will not be finalised until the Secretary of State has issued a decision on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy later in 2010 following an independent Examination by the Secretary of State's appointed Panel of the RSS in mid 2009.

5.9 In July 2008 Stafford was announced as a [Growth Point](#) by the Government. In supporting Stafford Borough as a new Growth Point, the Government is committing to a long-term partnership with Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council by recognising their ambitions for growth, subject to the statutory regional and local planning processes. Individual proposals to deliver the growth agenda must be sustainable, acceptable environmentally and realistic in terms of infrastructure.

5.10 Achieving these ambitions will depend on a range of public and private funding programmes, including developer contributions. Government is committed to work with local partners to achieve sustainable growth to secure the best outcomes from this investment and overcome obstacles to delivery.

1 2006-2026 West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy - Phase Two Revision Housing Background Paper Table 2: Estimates of Housing Demand.

6 Preparing the Development Strategy

6 Preparing the Development Strategy

In preparing the new Plan for Stafford Borough, various consultation documents and evidence base documents have been published.

Borough-wide Development Strategy

6.1 In January and February 2008 Stafford Borough Council published a document entitled [The Plan for Stafford Borough - Borough Wide Development Strategy](#) (for brevity subsequently known as the 'discussion paper') for consultation in order to consider strategic options for the new development strategy.

6.2 As part of the discussion paper consideration was given to the fact that, in theory, development could take place anywhere within Stafford Borough:

1. New development could be focused in one place as a new settlement
2. New development could be built as extensions to the Borough's existing settlements including land within the Green Belt area
3. A proportion of the new development could be built as a new settlement and the rest could be built as extensions to existing areas, including land within the Green Belt.

6.3 Based on the current national and regional policy context the following alternative development strategies were presented in the discussion paper providing a range of strategic options for guiding where new development may be provided in Stafford Borough's area as set out below:-

- A** New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford only
- B** New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford and the market town of Stone only
- C** New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford, the market town of Stone and either one or more of the principal settlements of over 1,600 people
- D** New Development at Stafford and one or more of the principal settlements of over 1,600 people but not at the market town of Stone
- E** New Development distributed to a selected number of settlements within the Stafford Borough area
- F** New Development distributed widely across the Borough to each of the principal settlements, cross border settlements and other identified settlements across the Borough area as well as at Stafford and the market town of Stone

Preparing the Development Strategy 6

Responses to consultation on the Borough-wide Development Strategy

6.4 Whilst each strategic option was favoured by some respondents the responses showed no clear consensus on any individual option. Not all respondents expressed an option preference. In some cases variations were suggested such as limited development in a number of smaller villages. All the responses to the consultation can be read on-line.

6.5 Although there was a wide variety of views, there were some recurring issues. Improvements to the infrastructure prior to any development was raised, including the requirement for green infrastructure. The need for affordable housing, particularly in rural areas, was raised by a number of respondents. Ideas for a new village (Norton Bridge was mentioned by some respondents as a potential location) and the increasing need for housing for older people. There were references to the importance of rail services on the West Coast Main line upgrading and Stafford station as well as support for a bus station. Comments were made about poor rural transport, support expressed for a park and ride scheme, as well as concerns expressed about traffic congestion and traffic on rural roads.

6.6 Biodiversity, natural greenspace, landscape and woodlands were mentioned by a number of respondents. Support was expressed for the Green Belt, the protection of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the attractive countryside of the Borough. Brownfield was preferred to greenfield development by those respondents who expressed a view on the subject.

6.7 The retention of character of the towns and villages of the Borough was commonly referred to, as was the importance of the retention of existing facilities and services in addition to improvements to meet the needs of growing numbers of households. The importance of quality in the design of new development was raised by some respondents. Improved infrastructure to provide for development growth was mentioned in a number of replies as was the desire to see continued employment in the Borough. There was a general acceptance of Stafford being the main focus for development and the Eastern Distributor Road for the town.

6.8 A number of sites and locations were identified by respondents seeking their inclusion as allocations in the Local Development Framework. In the main these were greenfield sites widely spread across the Borough. Significant developed sites were identified at Yarnfield and Tittensor with a request that they be considered as housing allocations. In the Yarnfield case, the former BT site has previously been identified as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt whilst at Tittensor the Bassetts site lies partly within the existing Residential Development Boundary and partly outside, in the Green Belt.

Sustainability Appraisal

6.9 To ensure that the options listed above have been assessed in terms of sustainable development the Borough Council published the Sustainability Appraisal Commentary - Volume 1 alongside the discussion paper earlier this year. The following broad assessment of each of the options is set out below:

Option A - New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford only

6.10 Stafford, as the largest town, has the greatest opportunity for providing employment, economic growth, housing and public transport. It is therefore the most sustainable location for development. However by providing all development in Stafford, the rural areas may suffer in terms of lack of housing and employment, resulting in a greater need to travel or move elsewhere. Locating all development in one location may require greater use of greenfield land.

6 Preparing the Development Strategy

Option B - New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford and the market town of Stone only

6.11 Taking into account the previous commentary regarding Stafford, Stone is the second largest settlement in the Borough and could provide opportunities for employment, economic growth, housing and public transport. Stone also acts as a rural hinterland for smaller rural settlements and development could meet the needs of some of the smaller rural settlements. Development in these locations may offer greater scope for using previously developed land, which will reduce the need to develop on greenfield land.

Option C - New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford, the market town of Stone and either one or more of the principal settlements

6.12 The Principal Settlements are identified as Barlaston, Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon, Little Haywood and Colwich and Great Haywood. All of these settlements have good services and facilities in terms of schools, post office and other convenience stores, public transport and village / community hall. Some of these settlements, in particular Eccleshall and Hixon have good access to employment areas. This option may be the most sustainable by providing appropriate development to meet the needs of the urban and rural population. However, the principal settlements may have less scope for previously developed land, leading to greenfield development. It should be noted that Barlaston is within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and therefore would not be capable of delivering significant new development.

Option D - New Development at Stafford and one or more of the principal settlements but not at the market town of Stone

6.13 This option would restrict any development in Stone. As stated above, Stafford and the Principal settlements do represent sustainable settlements. Due to the geographic spread of these settlements, they could act as service centres for rural settlements across the Borough. However not all Principal Settlements provide the range of services and facilities as in Stone, for example not all have a medical facility.

Option E - New Development distributed to a selected number of settlements within the Stafford Borough area

6.14 This option would involve development at selected settlement growth points. No decision has been made on which settlements would be selected as growth points although it may be envisaged that settlements with existing good access to employment, facilities and public transport or where such services could be provided would be the most sustainable settlements as growth points. This option may involve greater need for greenfield land and as a result may have greater landscape and biodiversity impacts.

Option F - New Development distributed widely across the Borough to each of the principal settlements, cross border settlements and other identified settlements across the Borough area (listed below) as well as at Stafford and the market town of Stone

6.15 Whilst this option would allow more settlements to experience growth, not all settlements would be suitable for development, due to lack of facilities, including a regular bus services. Many settlements are also washed over by Green Belt designation or are within or close to other designations such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, restricting potential future development.

Preparing the Development Strategy 6

'Business as usual' option

6.16 By continuing with policies and allocations in the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 rather than producing a new development strategy may have some environmental benefits as further large greenfield development would not come forward. However the remaining allocations in the Stafford Borough Local Plan would provide land for approximately 959 dwellings, with some additional housing coming from windfall rates. Nevertheless this level of development falls considerably short of the housing requirements emerging from the Regional Spatial Strategy. Continuing with the Local Plan would undermine the delivery of affordable housing for the Borough. All of the retail and employment sites identified in the Stafford Borough Local Plan have been part or completed. By not identifying any new employment allocations or employment policies may lead to an increased need to travel outside of the Borough for employment.

Conclusion

6.17 The [Sustainability Appraisal Commentary - Volume 1](#) identifies Options C and D as the most sustainable choices for the development strategy and notes that other settlements not previously identified as being principal settlements of more than 1,600 population may still be appropriate for development due to transport links or levels of services and facilities.

Principles for Settlement Development

6.18 In June and July 2008 Stafford Borough Council published a document entitled [The Plan for Stafford Borough - Principles for Settlement Development](#) for consultation in order to identify settlements with future development potential based on a variety of factors including the level of services and facilities provision. This consultation was informed by a document called [Revised Settlement Assessment of Services and Facilities](#) which is part of the Local Development Framework's evidence base.

6.19 A number of key issues were raised by responses received to the consultation process:

- Services and facilities should not be the only factors considered when establishing the scale of future development at particular settlements. Other factors to be considered should include employment provision, environmental impact, infrastructure requirements, continued separation between settlements and landscape factors
- Responses in relation to particular settlements generally indicated that future development should be directed to other locations within Stafford Borough. Some responses have supported certain settlement expansions
- Settlements surrounded or washed over by the two areas of Green Belt within Stafford Borough should be considered differently to settlements which are only partly surrounded by the Green Belt (i.e. Yarnfield, Cotes Heath, Hilderstone and Brocton)
- A number of issues were raised regarding existing Residential Development Boundaries. In particular issues of amending, or in some cases removing or adding Residential Development Boundaries.
- The impact of changes in service provision. Some representees challenged the basis of assessment, the factors and weighting used together with the scores achieved. In some cases facilities had changed e.g. closure of post offices.

Outcome of consultation

6 Preparing the Development Strategy

Based on the consultation process and the scoring system of services and facilities the settlements have been attributed to one of three groups described below:

First Group

6.20 Settlements where boundaries may be adjusted to accommodate significant Greenfield development and new housing allocations provided they are not in the Green Belt. In addition Stafford and Stone are considered to be principal and secondary settlements within Stafford Borough.

Second Group

6.21 Settlements where boundaries may be adjusted to accommodate a less significant amount of Greenfield development but nevertheless may comprise some Greenfield releases on the edge of the settlement if not in the Green Belt.

Third Group

6.22 Settlements where boundaries will be retained to provide for development in the future but it is not envisaged that expansion would be appropriate other than for Rural Exception Sites to deliver affordable housing.

Group 1			
Barlaston**	Blythe Bridge***	Eccleshall	Gnosall
Great Haywood	Hixon	Little Haywood and Colwich	Meir Heath and Rough Close***
Weston			

Group 2			
Brocton & Brocton A34*	Cotes Heath*	Haughton	Oulton****
Swynnerton**	Tittensor**	Trentham/Dairyfields***	Woodseaves
Yarnfield**			

Group 3			
Adbaston	Aston by Stone	Barlaston Park**	Bradley
Church Eaton	Clayton***	Creswell	Croxton
Derrington	Fulford**	Great Bridgeford	Hopton
Hilderstone*	Hyde Lea	Milford*	Milwich

Preparing the Development Strategy 6

Group 3			
Norbury	Ranton	Salt	Seighford
Stowe by Chartley			

* Partially surrounded by Green Belt

** Surrounded by Green Belt

*** Surrounded by Green Belt and bordering North Staffordshire Conurbation

**** In Green Belt

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

6.23 In September the Council published an evidence base document titled '**Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) - Initial Findings**'.

Issues raised from the SHLAA Initial findings

- Loss of character and identity of the individual towns and villages of the Borough if large scale development takes place.
- Much of the infrastructure and services in towns and villages is incapable of supporting new development without major upgrades.
- There was a concern that many of the rural villages and towns would turn into dormer towns for Stafford town due to little employment in the locality, thereby creating considerable traffic and other transport problems.
- The responses also indicate that major development in the rural villages and towns on greenfield land would have a dramatic impact on the wildlife and biodiversity of the area.

6.24 The SHLAA is a key component of the Stafford Borough evidence base for the new Plan. National Policy, set out in *PPS 3: Housing*, requires Stafford Borough to identify land with potential for housing over 15 years from the beginning of the plan period to ensure that land availability is not a constraint on the delivery of more homes. These sites have to be assessed for both deliverability (years 0-5 of the plan) and developability (years 6-10 and ideally years 11-15) as well as their potential housing yield.

6.25 The SHLAA Initial Findings Document included a detailed account of all the assessed sites that have been submitted for consideration.

6.26 Following comments received to the SHLAA Initial Findings document, a Final Report has been published. This final document has identified 382 sites that are both within and outside Residential Development Boundaries. Of these 234 are considered to be deliverable, 42 are considered developable with theoretical housing yields of 13,440 and 13,161 respectively. The 689 sites already identified within

6 Preparing the Development Strategy

the planning process are all considered to be deliverable, with a potential yield of 3,141 houses. Furthermore, of the six of the remaining Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 housing allocations 4 are considered deliverable and 2 developable with yields of 625 and 389 respectively.

6.27 It is important to emphasise that the sites included in the [SHLAA - Final Report](#) does not imply that they will be made available for housing or granted planning permission for development. The SHLAA is a technical study and not a policy document. It identifies a database of possible housing sites and assesses the overall housing potential of these sites. However, ultimately decisions on which sites will come forward for development will be determined through the Development Plan process. The SHLAA will be updated in due course, to provide an up-to-date piece of evidence for the new Plan for Stafford Borough.

Outcome of Consultations

6.28 Following consultation, the options below have not been progressed:

- Building a new settlement
- Significant development in the Green Belt

6.29 This is due to National Government policy and regional planning policies for the West Midlands, which do not provide for a new settlement to be built in Stafford Borough and do not currently allow for significant new development in the Green Belt, except in very exceptional circumstances. **We think that if national and regional policy changed concerning the Green Belt or building a new settlement in Stafford Borough consideration might be given to revising the development strategy but in current circumstances this would be inappropriate.**

Having considered the consultation responses, the Sustainability Appraisal Commentary - Volume 1 and the planning context of the Regional Spatial Strategy we think that a development strategy for the Borough generally based on **Option C** might be preferable.

This would involve a concentration of development at Stafford, to a lesser extent at Stone and selected settlements with a reasonable range of services but without encroachment into the Green Belt.

6.30 Larger towns and villages are suggested in a range of spatial options, later in this document, as potentially providing for broad locations in terms of housing and employment development within and beyond their existing boundaries. The smaller settlements may be considered to accommodate limited development whilst settlements constrained by National Planning Policy have not been considered for any significant development.

6.31 Such a policy approach would not preclude development elsewhere in the rural area but this would take place within identified settlement boundaries and Recognised Industrial Estates. **We think that existing Residential Development Boundaries should be reviewed.**

Development Strategy Scenarios & Spatial Options 7

7 Development Strategy Scenarios & Spatial Options

7.1 The range of spatial options identified in this document are based on the following key principles:

Key Principles

- The scale of housing and employment development set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy is to be used as a basis for considering a range of spatial options for Stafford Borough of which at least 7,000 are to be located at Stafford town
- Phased development will take place to ensure the urban renewal initiatives in the North Staffordshire conurbation are not prejudiced
- Greenfield sites will be needed as sufficient brownfield sites cannot be demonstrated to meet the Regional Spatial Strategy requirements
- If required as part of future development the use of land south of Stafford (in South Staffordshire District) is supported, as referred to in the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision – Preferred Option (January 2008)
- Existing completions since 1st April 2006 to be included in the total figures proposed through the scenarios and range of spatial options set out below
- No significant development in the areas designated as Green Belt. However please refer to specific notes referring to brownfield sites at Yarnfield, Tittensor and the former Meaford Power Station

7.2 We need to consider a range spatial options in order to establish how, when and where new development will take place and to ensure that the most appropriate decision about future development is made. The settlements listed in this section have a Residential Development Boundary as defined in the [Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001](#).

7.3 Based on previous consultations during 2008 and associated responses together with evidence gathering studies, a range of spatial options are being presented for comment. The range of spatial options are considered in relation to **two development scenarios**:

1. A Minimum Growth Scenario to deliver 10,100 new homes (net) and 120 hectares of new employment land
2. A Higher Growth Scenario to deliver 12,100 new homes (net) and 120 hectares of new employment land.

Why do we need to consider 2 development scenarios?

It is important we consider two development scenarios as the housing figures provided in the Regional Spatial Strategy may increase above 10,300 homes between 2006 - 2026. We need to ensure we have considered enough options to plan for changes in housing figures.

Settlements outside Stafford and Stone considered for development

7 Development Strategy Scenarios & Spatial Options

7.4 The following settlements are suggested in both scenarios and all spatial options as potentially providing broad locations in terms of housing and employment development within and beyond the existing boundaries. **Please note that Barlaston, Blythe Bridge and Meir Heath & Rough Close have been excluded because of the Green Belt designation.**

Eccleshall	Gnosall	Great Haywood	Hixon
Little Haywood & Colwich	Stafford	Stone	

7.5 The following settlements are suggested in both scenarios and all spatial options where more limited adjustments to boundaries may be considered to accommodate limited Greenfield development on the edge of the settlement.

Haughton	Weston	Woodseaves
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7.6 It should be noted that brownfield land at Yarnfield, Tittensor and Meaford Power Station are affected by the North Staffordshire Green Belt designation but nevertheless contain or abut a significant potential location for large scale development on brownfield land and have therefore been included in the range of spatial options set out below.

7.7 The following settlements are suggested within both scenarios and all spatial options where:-

- minor adjustments to boundaries may be considered to accommodate limited Greenfield releases for new housing or employment;
- boundaries be defined to allow for limited infill development in the future together with affordable housing on Rural Exception sites; or
- development boundaries should no longer be defined.

Adbaston	Aston by Stone	Bradley	Church Eaton
Creswell	Croxton	Derrington	Great Bridgeford
Hopton	Hyde Lea	Milwich	Norbury
Ranton	Salt	Seighford	

Settlements affected by the Green Belt

Development Strategy Scenarios & Spatial Options 7

7.8 The remaining settlements, either located within or adjacent to the Green Belt, are limited in terms of peripheral development expansion by national planning policies on Green Belt designations. In addition certain settlements are next to the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). These settlements have been excluded from spatial options as being considered for any significant development, as listed below:

Barlaston**	Barlaston Park**	Blythe Bridge***	Brocton & Brocton A34*
Clayton***	Cotes Heath*	Fulford**	Hilderstone*
Meir Heath & Rough Close***		Milford*	Oulton**
Swynnerton**	Trentham / Dairyfields***		

*Partially surrounded by Green Belt

** Surrounded by Green Belt

*** Surrounded by Green Belt and Major Urban Area outside Stafford Borough's area

7.9 With regards to settlements affected by the Green Belt listed above:

1. Boundaries are to be retained to allow for limited infill development or
2. Development boundaries should no longer be defined

Scenario Options

7.10 As stated above the Minimum Growth and Higher Growth Scenarios have been used to suggest a range of spatial options for new development across the Borough.

7.11 The range of spatial options are suggested as a basis for this consultation although other options could be considered.

7.12 Options relating to retail and office provision are discussed in Chapter 9: 9 'Delivering a Sustainable Future'

7.13 We think that if higher housing numbers are required through the Regional Spatial Strategy the proportionate split between settlements established for the Higher Growth Scenario should be applied.

7 Development Strategy Scenarios & Spatial Options

Settlement / Locality		Minimum Growth Scenario 10,100 new homes (net) & 120 hectares of new employment land	Higher Growth Scenario 12,100 new homes (net) & 120 hectares of new employment land
Housing Numbers	Stafford	7,000 - set in RSS document	8,000 - 9,000
	Stone	1,000 - 2,000	1,000 - 2,750
	Eccleshall, Hixon Gnosall, Great & Little Haywood	700 - 1,600	700 - 1,750
	Haughton, Weston & Woodseaves	100 - 300	100 - 350
	Yarnfield & Tittensor Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt	250 - 300	250 - 300
	Remaining Villages	100 - 300	100 - 350
Employment Numbers	Stafford	50 - 70 hectares	50 - 70 hectares
	Stone	10 - 20 hectares	10 - 20 hectares
	Recognised Industrial Estates at Hixon, Raleigh Hall & Ladfordfields	10 - 20 hectares	10 - 20 hectares
TOTAL REQUIRED		10,100 new homes & 120 hectares of employment land	12,100 new homes & 120 hectares of employment land

Scenario Options 1

Do you think the options above are appropriate? If you think there should be a different distribution of housing and employment please specify. If you wish to be specific about a certain settlement please include this information as part of your response.

Development Strategy Scenarios & Spatial Options 7

7.14 We are also seeking comments on the broad locations that could be used to support either scenario. **Please note, more spatial options have been identified than will be required to deliver the scenarios above.**

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

8.1 Based on the two scenarios and the range of spatial options for each scenario, all reasonable locations on the edge of the settlements considered most appropriate have been included on the associated diagrams.

8.2 However locations which are restricted by national and regional planning policies, and locally specific constraints including areas of flood risk, the Green Belt, nature conservation sites and Conservation Areas have not been identified.

8.3 Therefore settlements which are either located within the Green Belt or the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty have not been considered for peripheral development expansion due to restrictions set out by national planning policies.

8.4 We suggest that the final numbers for each settlement and the phasing of new development should take into account allowances for existing completions, planning permissions already granted and an element of sites identified within the [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment](#). The release of housing sites will be determined through the 'Plan, Monitor, Manage' approach.

Housing completions and commitments

	Completed 2006-2008	Commitments as at April 2008
Stafford	438	1643
Stone	267	482
Other areas	325	1016

8.5 Diagrams are available below highlighting the spatial options for each of the settlements to be considered for future development.

8.6 For a number of settlements some locations have been grouped together, referred to as 'directions of growth', to identify and explain how new major infrastructure might be delivered to facilitate development. These matters will have implications for delivery and the phasing of development.

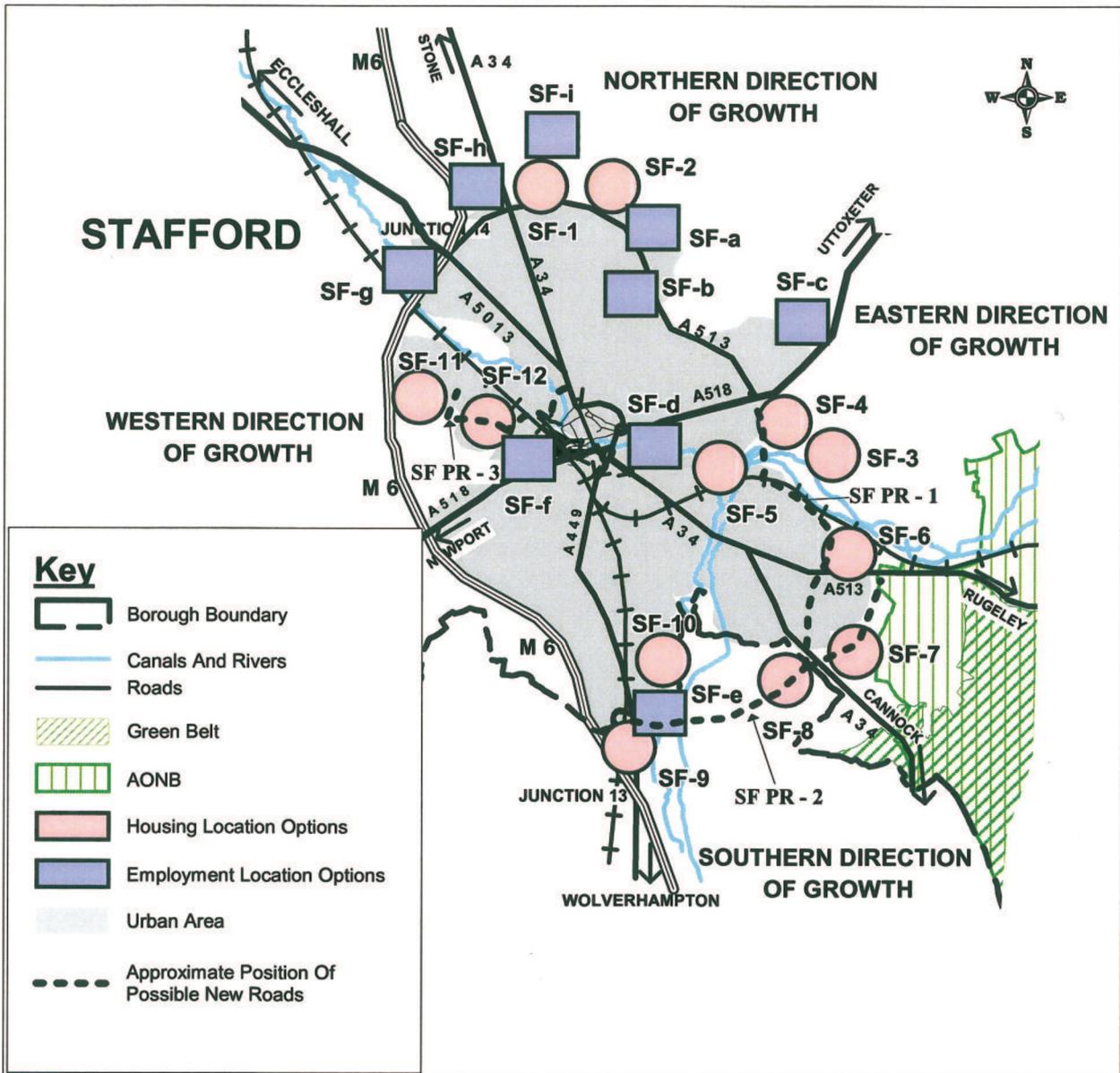
8.7 Please note that the diagrams below illustrate more spatial options than will be required under the scenarios above. This is in order to allow for flexibility and for sites to be phased through the Plan period. **We need your comments to assist in selecting the preferred locations for future development**

8.8 In terms of the locations which we have identified for new development in the tables and diagrams below, we would welcome your views on these locations being used for new development. In particular it would be useful if you can provide further information to prove how development can be delivered at an identified location.

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Stafford (SF) - Housing and Employment Location Options

8.9 The diagram below shows a range of options for new homes and new employment. More locations are shown in than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).



8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Spatial Options 1

Possible development locations around Stafford town can be grouped into four separate directions of growth:

- North
- South
- East
- West

The northern direction of growth includes housing locations SF-1 to SF-2 and employment locations SF-a, SF-b, SF-g, SF-h and SF-i. The southern direction of growth includes housing locations SF-6 to SF10 and employment location SF-e. The eastern direction of growth includes housing locations SF-3 to SF-5 and employment locations SF-c to SF-d. The western direction of growth includes housing locations SF-11 to SF-12 and employment location SF-f.

8.10 In preparing the proposed development locations around Stafford town we have considered land west of the M6 motorway for significant urban expansion north and south of Derrington. In distance terms these locations are closer to the town centre of Stafford than some other locations north and east of Stafford. However initial discussions with Severn Trent Water have highlighted that development west of the M6 motorway would require significant new water sewerage infrastructure as the area would fall outside of the Stafford drainage area. Therefore a new sewage treatment facility would be necessary, presenting a significant financial barrier making development less deliverable than other locations.

8.11 Furthermore the M6 motorway may be subject to improvement schemes in the future making development of immediately adjacent land uncertain, as well as the motorway providing a significant physical and psychological barrier between the high quality landscape and rural villages of Stafford Borough stretching towards Shropshire and the existing urban area of Stafford.

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
SF-1	Land at corner of Beaconside and A34 Stone Road	800
SF-2	Land north of Beaconside	3000
SF-3	Land north & south of Tixall Road	700
SF-4	Land west of Baswich Lane	800
SF-5	Land east of Fairway	350
SF-6	Land east of Stockton Lane	300
SF-7	Land east of Cannock Road A34	300
SF-8	Land west of Cannock Road A34 and east of River Penk	2000
SF-9	Land west of Wolverhampton Road A449	300

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
SF-10	Land south of School Lane, Rickerscote and west of River Penk	400
SF-11	Land south of Doxey Road	1800
SF-12	Land north-west of Castle Street	300

8.12 The Regional Plan states that 'dependant upon the outcome of further local studies, some of the Stafford town allocation could be made, adjacent to the settlement, in South Staffordshire District'. This refers specifically to SF-8 Land west of Cannock Road A34 listed above.

Location Reference	Name of Location	Employment Land (hectares)
SF-a	Land east of Beaconside	4
SF-b	Land west of Tollgate Drive	9
SF-c	Land north of Weston Road	15
SF-d	Land east of Fairway	7
SF-e	Land east of Wolverhampton Road A449	14
SF-f	Land east of Kingsway	4
SF-g	Land south of Creswell Grove	8
SF-h	Land west of A34 Stone Road	40
SF-i	Land east of A34 Stone Road	30

What we need to consider

8.13 Development in the northern direction of growth may not require any major new transport infrastructure may be required to make a contribution to wider network improvements. Green infrastructure would be required to address flooding issues associated with Sandyford Brook. Development in this direction of growth could have an impact on urban regeneration initiatives in the North Staffordshire conurbation if brought forward early in the Plan period and therefore appropriate phasing may be important. In terms of employment locations significant gas infrastructure would be required to deliver land west of A34 Stone Road (SF-h) whilst land south of Creswell Grove may be affected by M6 improvements.

8.14 Development in the southern direction of growth could require the Stafford southern distributor road, identified on the map as SFPR-2 (Route between Milford Road A513 and Wolverhampton Road A449) to be delivered as well as significant green infrastructure due to the proximity of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty such as a new country park. Two locations in this direction

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

of growth (SF-10 and SF-e) are already identified in the adopted Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 as a housing allocation, reference HP-3 Land south of Rickerscote, but this allocation has not been delivered in the local plan period. In addition the housing location (SF-8) is located in South Staffordshire District and would require agreement with that authority to proceed.

8.15 Development in the eastern direction of growth could be required to deliver the Stafford eastern distributor road SFPR-1 (Route between Weston Road A518 and Milford Road A513) as well as green infrastructure links between the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty through the River Sow valley to Stafford town centre. Two locations in this direction of growth (SF-5 and SF-d) currently make up the St Leonard's road employment site. A significant part of this eastern area contains the Ministry of Defence (MOD) land at Stafford which contains large areas of previously developed land but is not available for non-military development. The MOD have expressed an aspiration to potentially use land between Weston Road and Hopton for training purposes in the future.

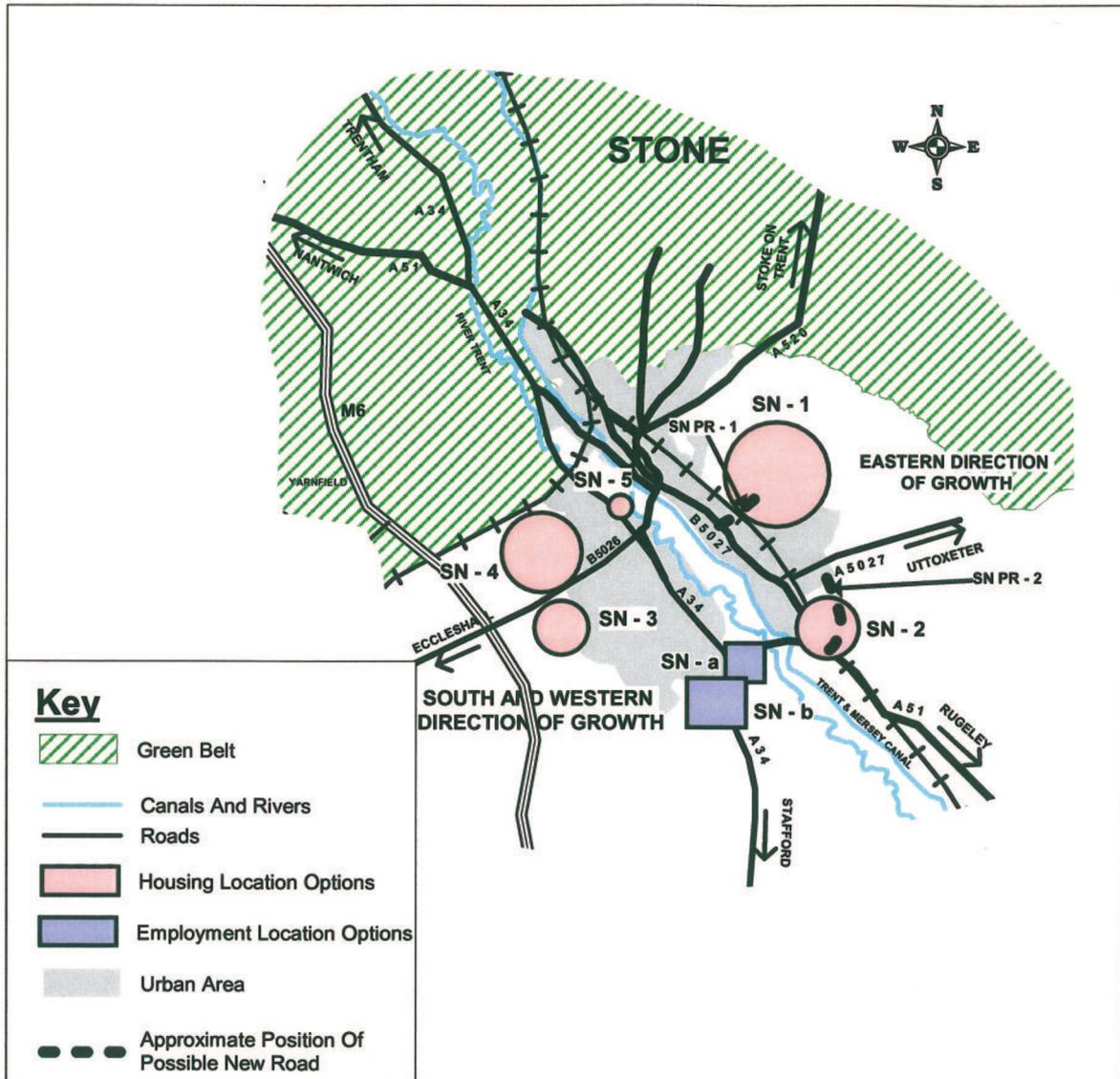
8.16 Development in the western direction of growth has been identified through the LDF evidence base, including the Traffic Model for Stafford, as being the most sustainable location for new development. However, development in this direction of growth would be required to deliver the Stafford western access road SFPR-3 (Route between Foregate Street A34 and Doxey Road).

Please could you provide your views on the most suitable direction of growth for Stafford Town and include any other implications of your choice not mentioned above.

Stone (SN) - Housing and Employment Location Options

8.17 The diagram below shows a range of options for new homes and employment. More locations are shown in the settlement diagrams than will be needed. No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes are to be provided at Stone. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8



8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Spatial Options 2

Stone is second only to Stafford in terms of size and population. The town offers a wide range of services and employment opportunities. Possible development locations around Stone town can be grouped into two separate direction of growth:

- East
- South / west

The eastern direction of growth includes housing locations SN-1 to SN-2. The southern and western direction of growth includes housing locations SN-3 to SN-5 and employment locations SN-a to SN-b. It should be noted that development at Stone may need to take place later in the Plan period to reduce the impact on North Staffordshire's urban regeneration initiatives. Furthermore the water and electricity providers have stated that increased development at Stone could require increased water storage and electricity capacity.

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
SN-1	Land north of Pingle Lane	1400
SN-2	Land north of Lichfield Road	600
SN-3	Land south of Eccleshall Road	600
SN-4	Land north of Eccleshall Road	1000
SN-5	Land north of A34 at The Fillybrooks	90

Stone (SN) – Possible Employment Locations

Location Reference	Name of Location	Employment Land (hectares)
SN-a	Land between A51 Stone bypass and A34 Stafford Road	2.8
SN-b	Land west of A34 Stafford Road	20

What we need to consider

8.19 Development in the eastern direction of growth could require the Pingle Lane access road identified on the map as SNPR-1 (Route between Lichfield Road and land north of Pingle Lane) to be delivered for proposed new housing north of the Aston Lodge Park estate (SN-1). Proposed new housing north of Lichfield Road (SN-2) could be required to deliver the route between Uttoxeter Road (B5027) and the A51 road including a railway bridge identified as SNPR-2. It should be noted that development

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

in the eastern direction of growth would be on elevated land of high landscape value. Furthermore development could increase traffic movement pressures across the Aston-by-Stone railway crossing on the B5027 Uttoxeter Road and movements down Lichfield Road into Stone town centre.

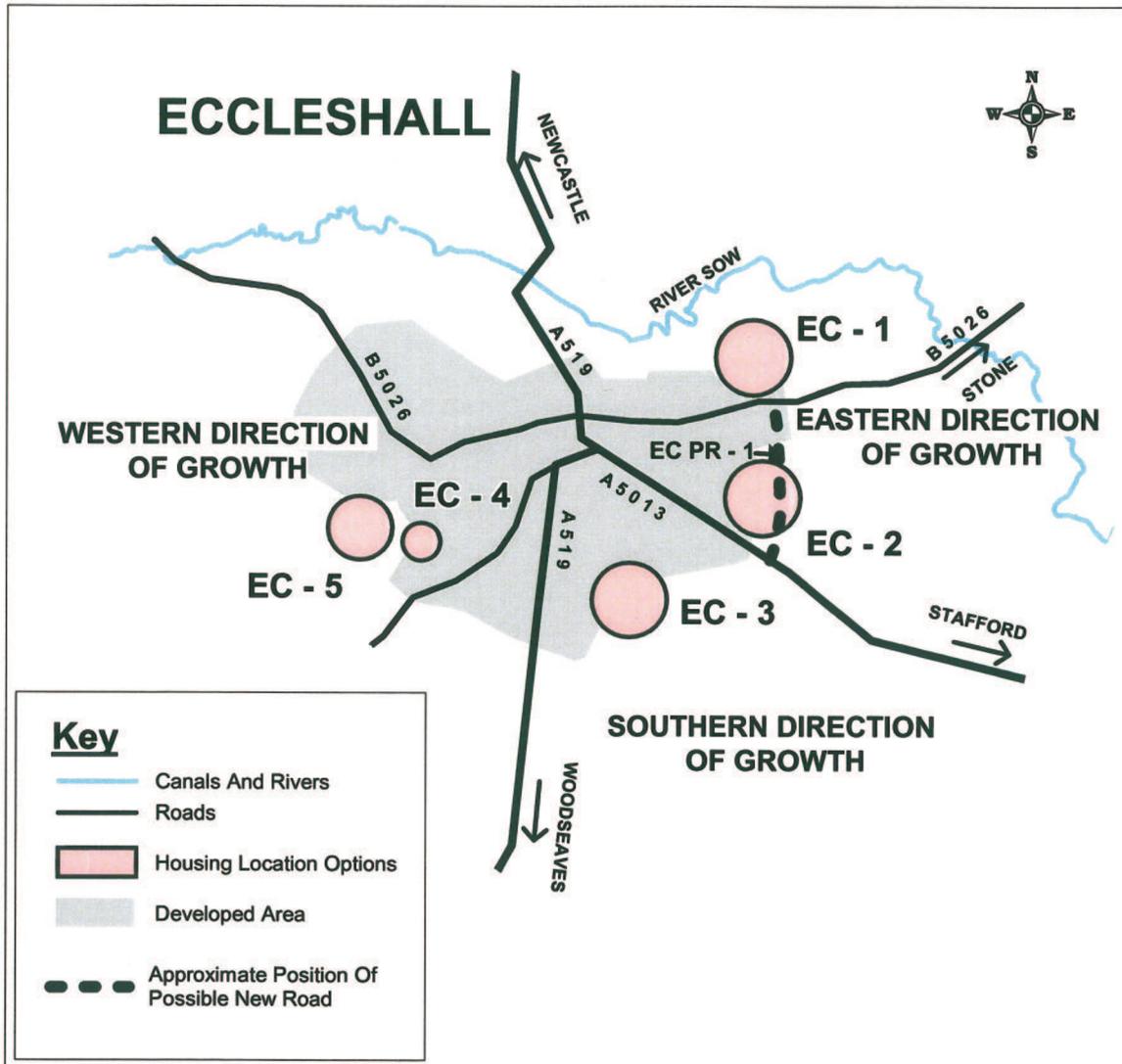
8.20 Development in the southern and western direction of growth could be required to deliver a distributor road, to reduce traffic movement pressures at the Walton roundabout junction.

8.21 Please could you provide your views on the most suitable direction of growth for Stone and include any other implications of your choice not mentioned above.

Eccleshall (EC) - Housing Location Options

8.22 The diagram below shows a range of options for new homes. No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes are to be provided in this or the other individual villages included in the document. More locations are shown in the settlement diagrams than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development



Spatial Options 3

Possible development locations around Eccleshall can be grouped into three separate direction of growth:

- East
- South
- West

The eastern direction of growth includes housing locations EC-1 to EC-2. The southern direction of growth includes housing location EC-3. The western direction of growth includes housing locations EC-4 to EC5.

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
EC-1	Land north of Stone Road	240
EC-2	Land east of Eccleshall between Stafford Road and Stone Road	240
EC-3	Land south of Eccleshall adjacent to Green Lane	240
EC-4	Land north of Community Centre at Trinity Road	90
EC-5	Land west of Eccleshall between Shaws Lane and Church Street	225

What we need to consider

8.24 We think that development at Eccleshall may need to take account of reducing the impact on North Staffordshire's urban regeneration initiatives by the use of phasing. Nevertheless Eccleshall has a significant level of services and facilities for a relatively small population as well as having the Raleigh Hall Recognised Industrial Estate nearby. You may feel that more land should be allocated for employment at Eccleshall as an alternative to the housing development identified and views would be welcome on this.

8.25 Development in the eastern direction of growth could require major new road infrastructure to be provided through a new route identified on the map as ECPR-1 between Stone Road (B5026) and Stafford Road (A5013) to be delivered for proposed new housing east of Eccleshall. Such a route would provide access to the proposed new housing development as well as reducing traffic movement pressures in Eccleshall town centre at the cross-roads of the B5026 and the A519. However there would be landscape implications.

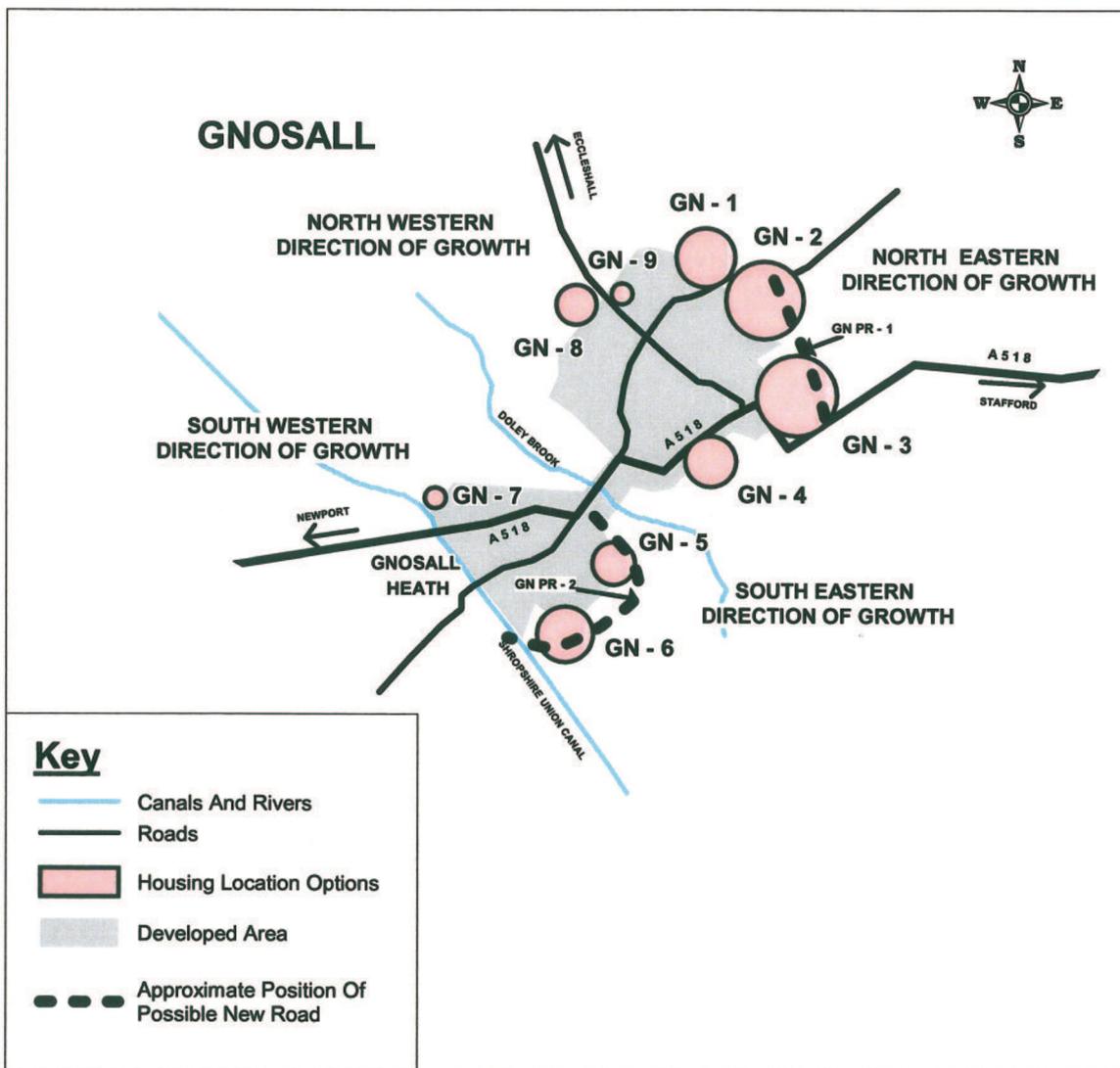
8.26 Development in the southern and western directions of growth may not require significant new infrastructure provision.

8.27 Please could you provide your views on the most suitable direction of growth for Eccleshall and include any other implications of your choice not mentioned above.

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Gnosall (GN) - Housing Location Options

The diagram below shows a range of options for new homes. No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes are to be provided in this or the other individual villages included in the document. More locations are shown in the settlement diagrams than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).



Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Spatial Options 4

Possible development locations around Gnosall and Gnosall Heath can be grouped into four separate direction of growth:

- North east
- North west
- South east
- South west

The north eastern direction of growth includes housing locations GN-1 to GN-4. The north western direction of growth includes housing locations GN-8 to GN-9. The south eastern direction of growth includes housing locations GN-5 to GN-6. The south western direction of growth includes housing location GN-7.

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
GN-1	Land north of Gnosall	225
GN-2	Land east of Gnosall within the Audmore Loop	270
GN-3	Land east of Gnosall, north of Stafford Road	411
GN-4	Land south of Stafford Road and east of Lowfield Lane	165
GN-5	Land at Gnosall Heath, east of Cowley Lane	120
GN-6	Land at Gnosall Heath, west of Cowley Lane	210
GN-7	Land at Gnosall Heath, south of dis-used railway and east of Plardiwick Road	48
GN-8	Land west of Gnosall, north west of Brookhouse Road	120
GN-9	Land north of Gnosall, north east of Knightley Road	36

What we need to consider

8.28 The settlement has the largest population outside of Stafford and Stone, a significant health facility and good transport links east to Stafford and west to Newport. Gnosall may benefit from improvement of the village centre on land between Brookhouse Road and the High Street if major housing development occurs. Consideration could also be given to new employment provision at Gnosall as an alternative to certain housing locations identified to provide a sustainable community in the future and reduce commuting to Stafford, Newport and beyond.

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

8.29 Development in the north eastern direction of growth could require major new road infrastructure through a new route, identified on the map as GNPR-1 between Audmore Ring and Stafford Road (A518) to be delivered for proposed new housing east of Gnosall. Furthermore development in the south eastern direction of growth may require a new route, identified as GNPR-2, between Station Road (A518) and Monks Walk to delivered for proposed new housing south and east of Gnosall Heath.

8.30 Development in the north western and south western direction of growth may not require significant new infrastructure provision.

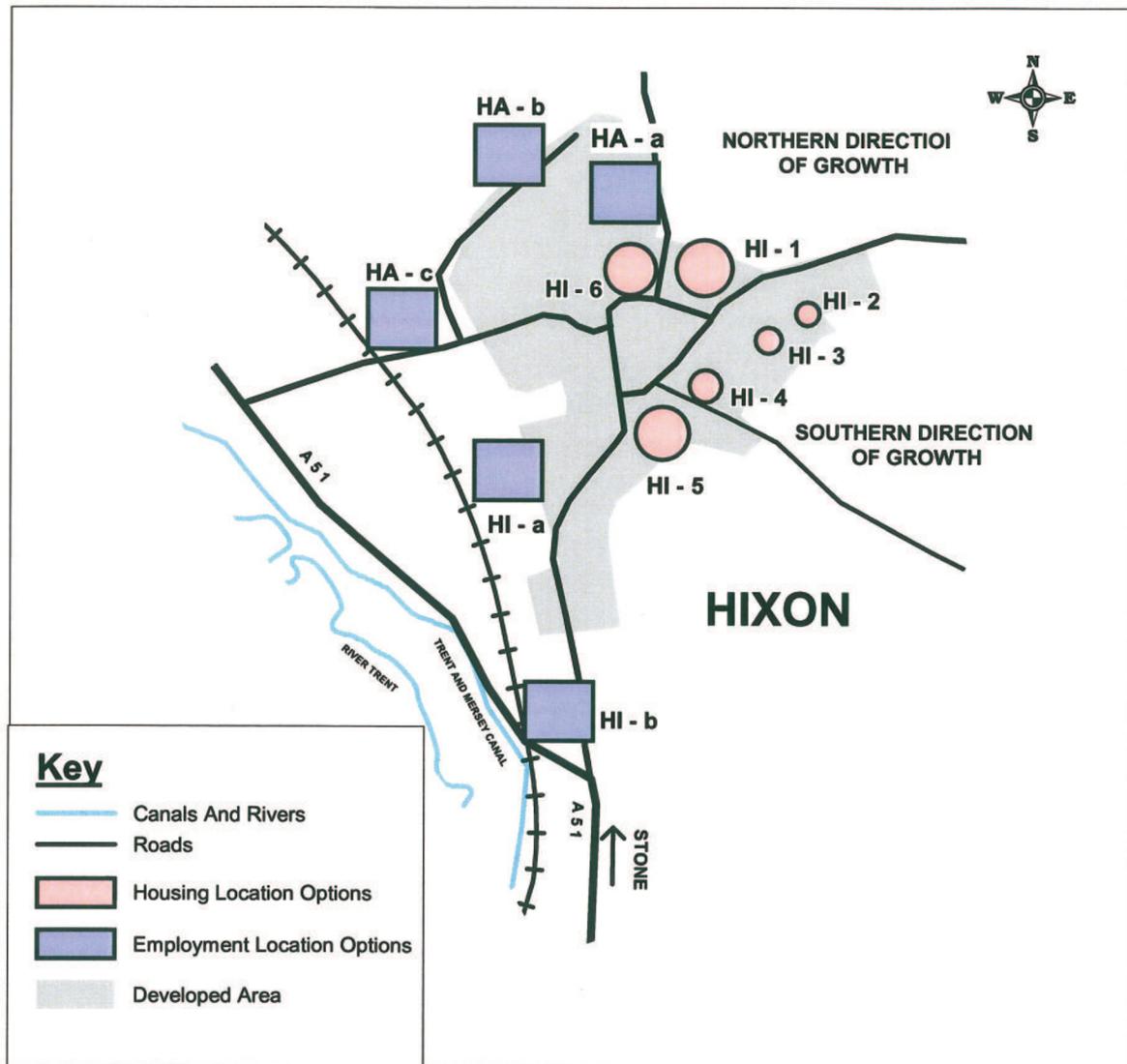
8.31 Please could you provide your views on the most suitable direction of growth for Gnosall and Gnosall Heath and include any other implications of your choice not mentioned above.

Hixon (HI) - Housing Location Options

The diagram below shows a range of options for new homes and employment. No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes or land for employment are to be provided in this or the other individual villages included in the document. More locations are shown in the

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

settlement diagrams than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).



Spatial Options 5

Possible development locations around Hixon can be grouped into two separate directions of growth:

- North
- South

The northern direction of growth includes housing locations HI-1 and HI-6 with employment locations HA-a to HA-c. The southern direction of growth includes housing locations HI-2 to HI-5 and employment locations HI-a and HI-b. Possible housing and employment development locations around Hixon may require major infrastructure provision.

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
HI-1	Land east of Stowe Lane	120
HI-2	Land north of Puddle Hill	60
HI-3	Land south of Puddle Hill	60
HI-4	Land north of Egg Lane	60
HI-5	Land east of Church Lane	150
HI-6	Land west of Stowe Lane	90

Hixon (HI) Possible Employment Locations

Location Reference	Name of Location	Employment Land (hectares)
HI-a	Land between London Road and Church Lane	13
HI-b	Land west of Church Lane	4

Hixon Airfield (HA) Possible Employment Locations

Location Reference	Name of Location	Employment Land (hectares)
HA-a	Land west of Stowe Lane	10
HA-b	Land west of Hixon Airfield Industrial Estate Road	6.5
HA-c	Land north of New Road	9.4

What we need to consider

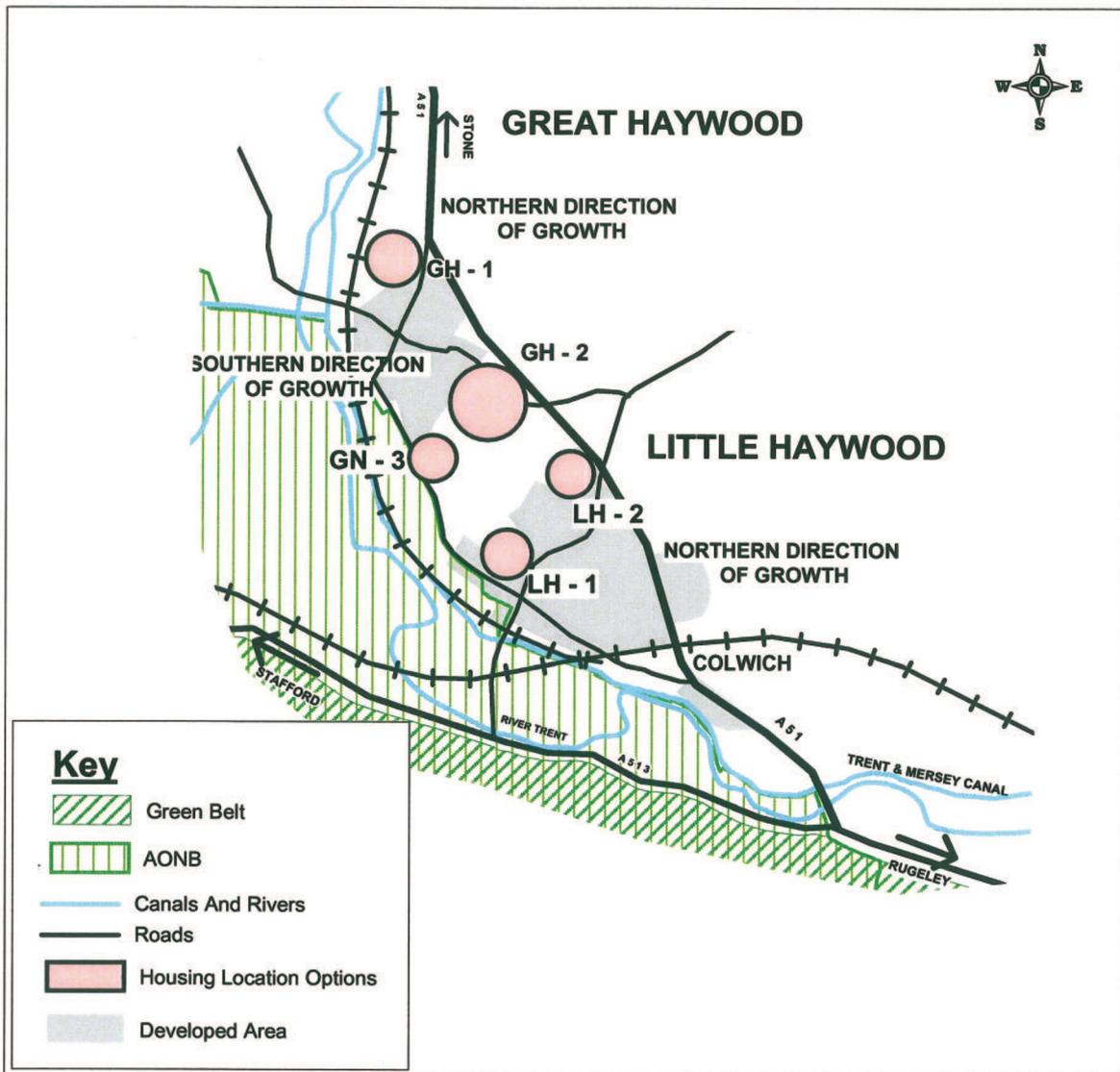
8.32 The settlement has significant sustainability credentials with major employment provision at the Recognised Industrial Estates of Hixon Airfield, Hixon and Pasturefields together with good transport links north towards Stone and Stafford as well as south to Rugeley. However Hixon lacks the range of facilities expected in a settlement of this size and would benefit from the development of improved local services, suggested on land north of Hall Farm Close, if major housing development occurs.

8.33 Please could you provide your views on the most suitable direction of growth for Hixon and include any other implications of your choice not mentioned above.

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Haywoods - Housing Location Options

8.34 The diagram below shows a range of options for new homes in Great Haywood (GH) and Little Haywood and Colwich (LH). No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes are to be provided in this or the other individual villages included in the document. More locations are shown in the settlement diagrams than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).



8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Spatial Options 6

Possible development locations at Great Haywood and Little Haywood can be grouped into three separate directions of growth:

- North of Great Haywood
- South of Great Haywood
- North of Little Haywood

The north of Great Haywood direction of growth includes housing location GH-1. The south of Great Haywood direction of growth includes housing locations GH-2 to GH-3. The north of Little Haywood direction of growth includes housing locations LH-1 to LH-2. Possible housing development locations at Great Haywood and Little Haywood, known as The Haywoods, may not require major infrastructure provision although there are a number of drainage and sewerage concerns.

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
GH-1	Land west of Main Road	210
GH-2	Land south of A51 and adjacent to Little Tixall Lane	300
GH-3	Land east of Main Road and north of The Ring	180

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
LH-1	Land north of Main Road and west of Coley Lane	210
LH-2	Land south of A51 and west of Coley Lane	150

What we need to consider

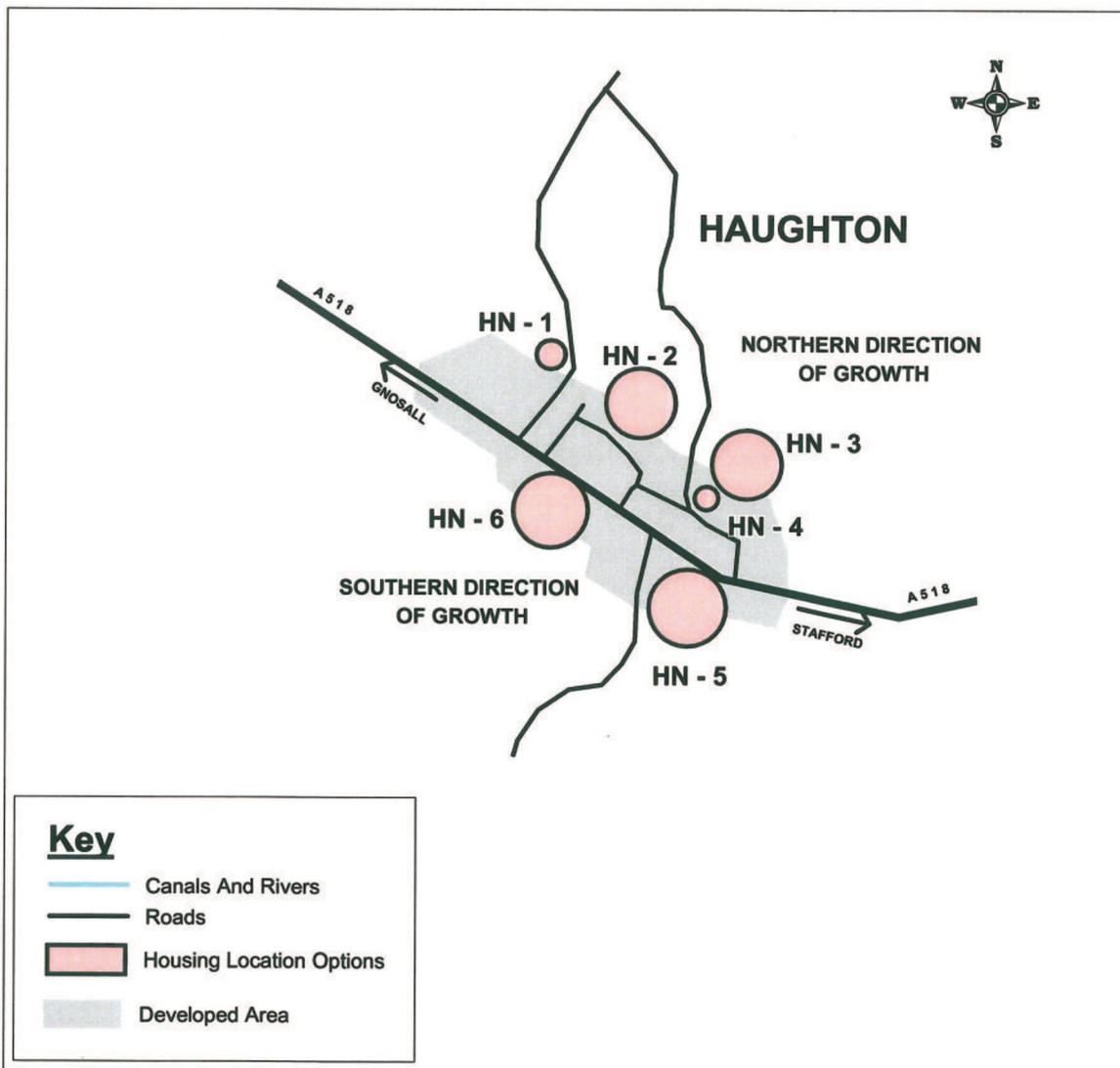
8.36 The settlements have limited employment provision, community facilities including schools, health centre and local retailing together with good transport links north towards Stone and Stafford as well as south to Rugeley. The Haywoods may require a new village centre being developed in association with new development, if major housing development occurs. However The Haywoods is constrained by nearby environmental designations including the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, floodplain, nature conservation sites, a Conservation Area and the Shugborough Estate Registered Park & Garden.

Please could you provide your views on the most suitable direction of growth for the Haywoods and include any other implications of your choice not mentioned above.

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Haughton (HN) - Housing Location Options

8.37 The diagram below shows a range of options for new homes. No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes are to be provided in this or the other individual villages included in the document. More locations are shown in the settlement diagrams than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).



8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Spatial Options 7

Possible development locations around Haughton can be grouped into two separate directions of growth:

- North
- South

The northern direction of growth includes housing locations HN-1 to HN-4. The southern direction of growth includes housing locations HN-5 to HN-6. The settlement has good retail and community facilities for the population including a primary school as well as good transport links east to Stafford and west to Newport. The possible housing development locations at Haughton may not require major infrastructure provision

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
HN-1	Land west of Station Road	30
HN-2	Land east of Station Road	120
HN-3	Land east of Brazenhill Road	120
HN-4	Land north of Rectory Lane	15
HN-5	Land east of Park Lane	180
HN-6	Land west of Park Lane	150

What we need to consider

8.39 The settlement has limited employment provision, but does have some community facilities including a primary school and local shops together with good transport links to Stafford and Newport.

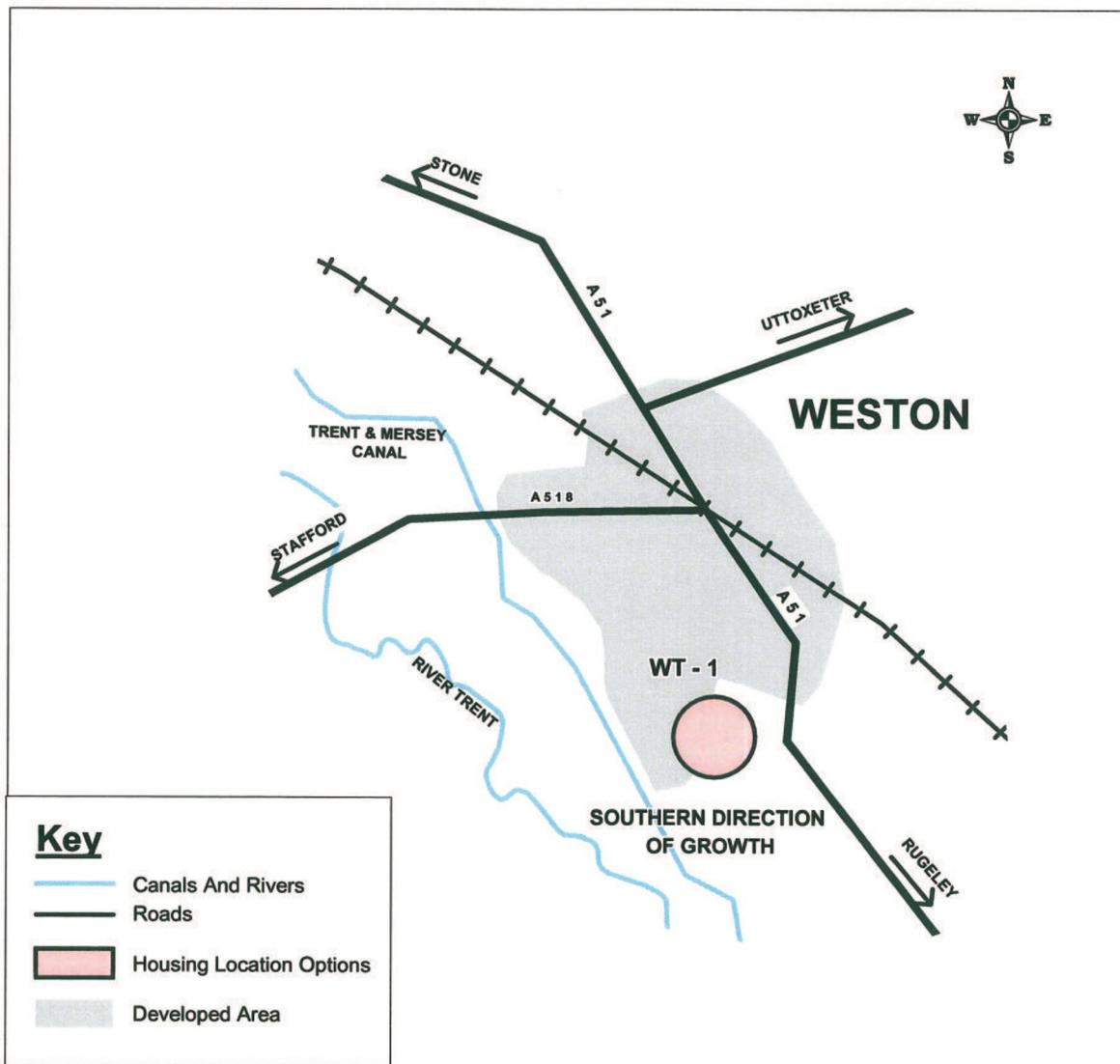
8.40 Severn Trent have stated that there is a flooding problem in the settlement, and that there is a sewerage scheme in the Capital Works Programme.

8.41 Please could you provide your views on the most suitable direction of growth for Haughton and include any other implications of your choice not mentioned above.

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Weston (WN) - Housing Location Option

The diagram below shows an option for new homes. No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes are to be provided in this or other individual villages included in this document. More locations are shown in the settlement diagrams than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).



Spatial Options 8

Weston has one direction of growth suggested at housing location WN-1 south of Green Road. The possible housing development location at Weston may not require major infrastructure provision. The settlement has certain sustainability credentials with some retail and community facilities including a primary school. There are also good transport links north towards Stone, west towards Stafford and south to Rugeley.

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
WN-1	Land south of Green Road	111

What we need to consider

8.42 Weston is a historic settlement, whose population has grown substantially in recent years. The settlement has some employment provision, with good road access to areas of employment in Hixon. Weston also has some community facilities including a primary school, local retail together with transport links to Stafford and Stone. Some services such as health care only occur on certain days and this may need to be addressed in the future.

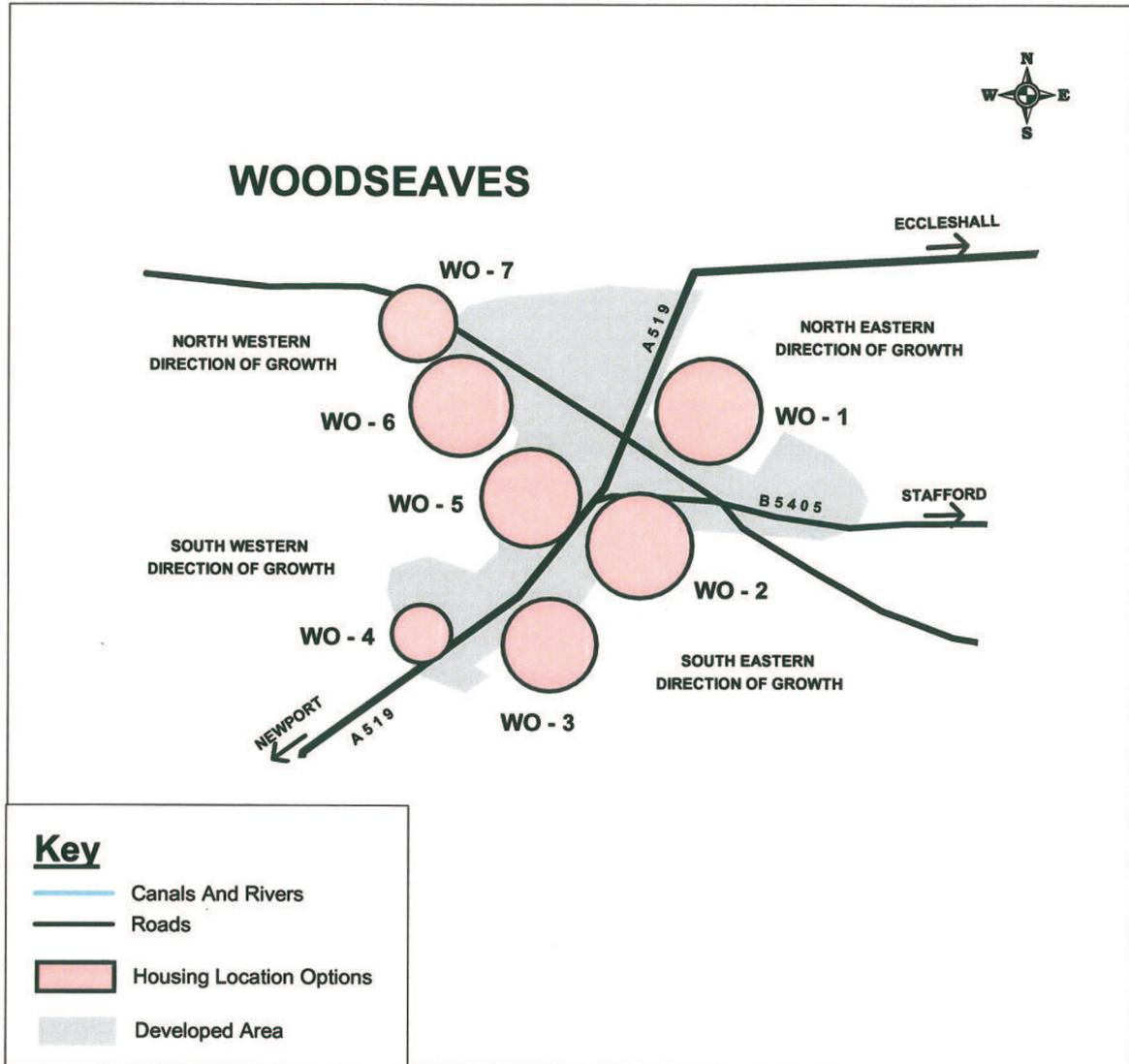
8.43 The settlement is located between the Stoke to London railway and the Trent and Mersey Canal. The canal area was designated a Conservation Area in 1988 and any development will need to be good quality and sympathetic design and layout of any development in the adjacent area.

Please could you provide your views on the direction of growth for Weston and include any other implications not mentioned above.

Woodseaves (WO) - Housing Location Options

8.44 The diagram below shows a range of options for new homes. No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes are to be provided in this or the other individual villages included in the document. More locations are shown in the settlement diagrams than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8



8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Spatial Options 9

Possible development locations around Woodseaves can be grouped into four separate direction of growth:

- North east
- North west
- South east
- South west

The north eastern direction of growth includes housing locations WO-1. The north western direction of growth includes housing locations WO-6 to WO-7. The south eastern direction of growth includes housing locations WO-2 to WO-3. The south western direction of growth includes housing location WO-4 to WO-5. The possible housing development location at Woodseaves may not require major infrastructure provision.

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
WO-1	Land north of Dicky's Lane	108
WO-2	Land south of Stafford Road	120
WO-3	Land east of Newport Road	72
WO-4	Land south of Moscow Lane	33
WO-5	Land west of Newport Road	66
WO-6	Land south of The Green	120
WO-7	Land north of The Green	54

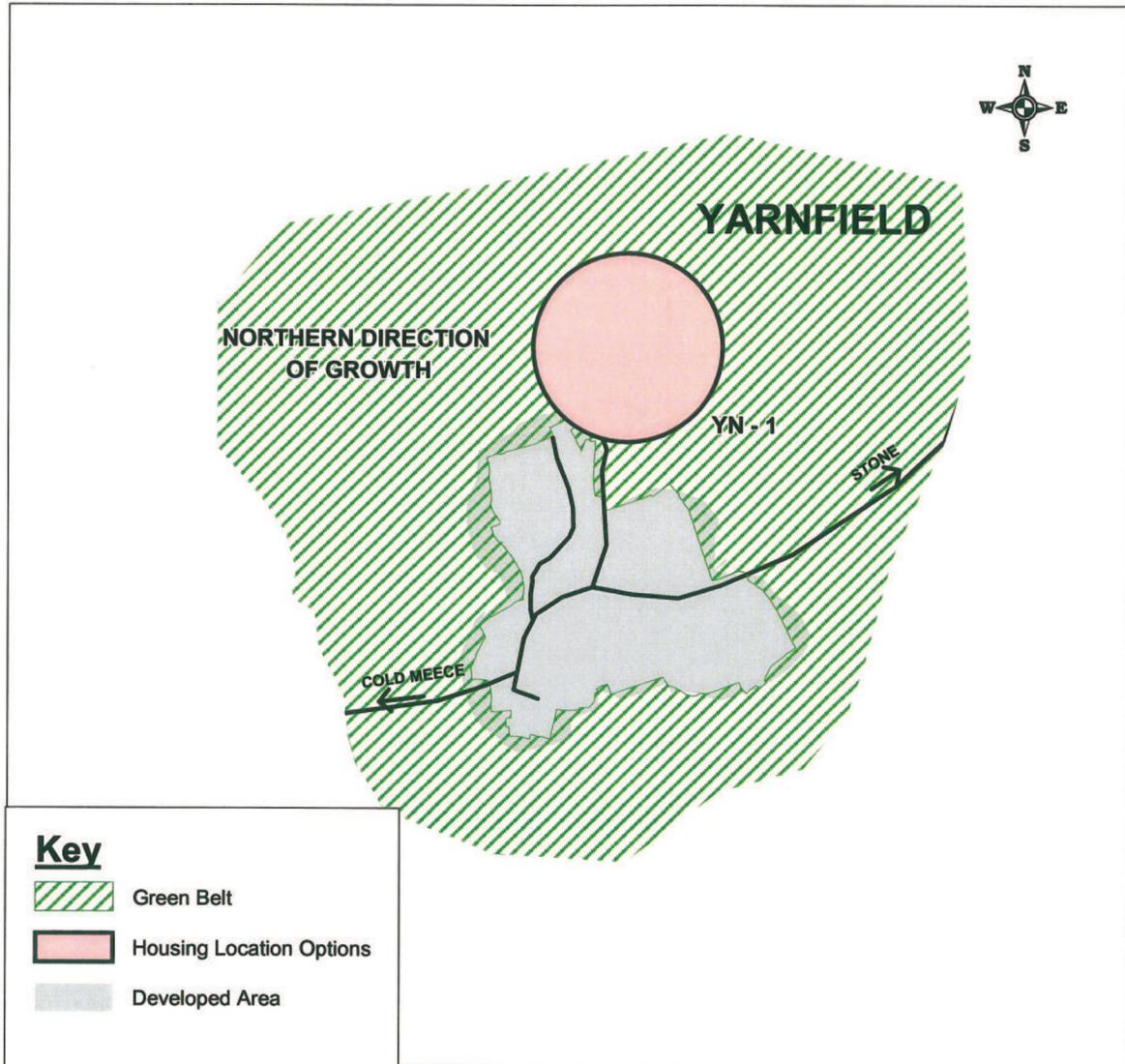
What we need to consider

8.46 The settlement has a primary school but limited retail and community facilities. Therefore Woodseaves may require new facilities to be developed possibly on land north of Dicky's Lane alongside the primary school if major housing development occurs. Consideration could also be given to new employment provision at Woodseaves as an alternative to certain housing locations identified to provide a sustainable community in the future and reduce commuting to Eccleshall, Newport and beyond.

Please could you provide your views on the most suitable direction of growth for Woodseaves and include any other implications of your choice not mentioned above.

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Yarnfield (YN) and Tittensor (TT) - Housing Location Option



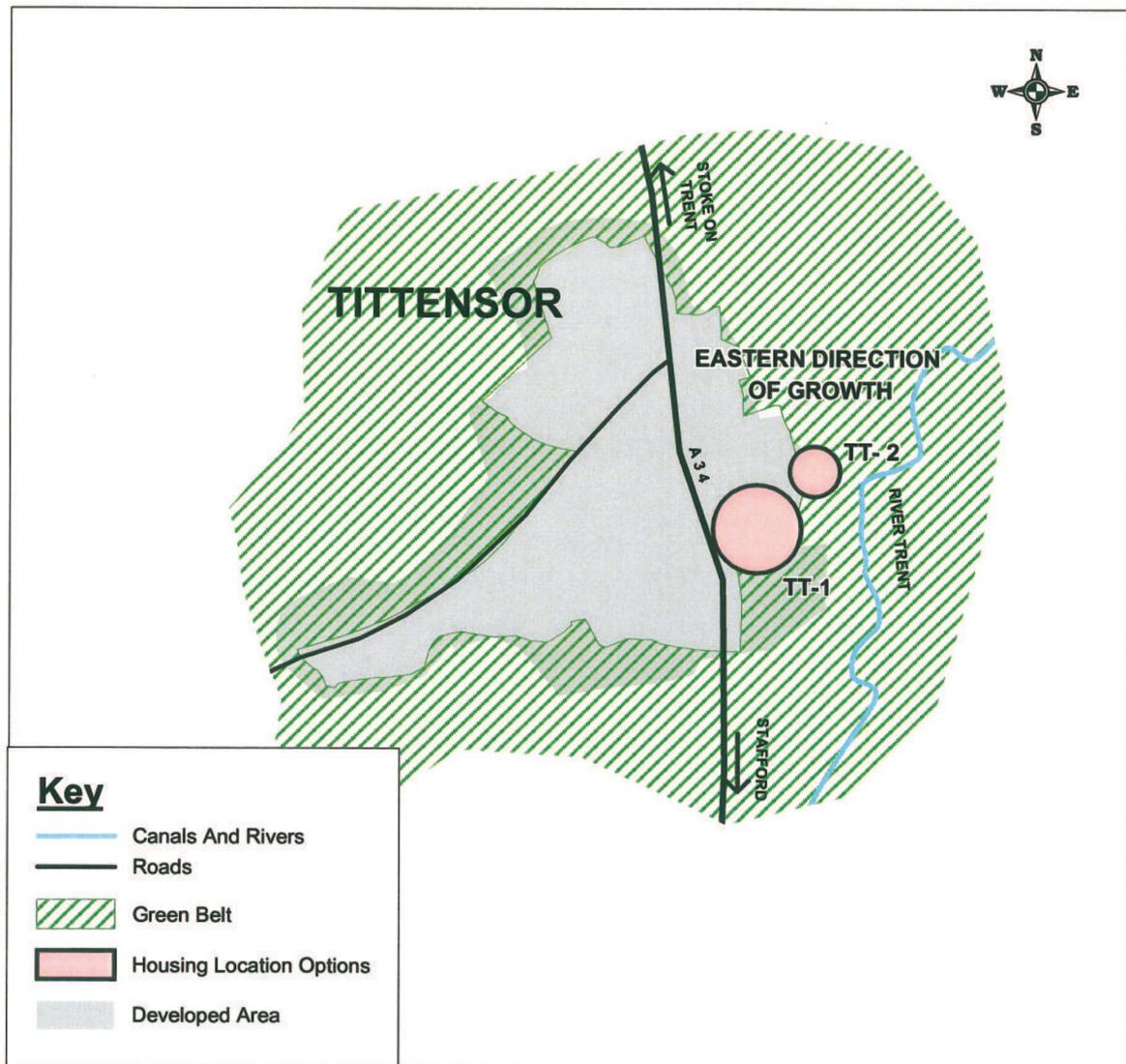
Spatial Options 10

Yarnfield - Major Developed Site in Green Belt

Yarnfield has one direction of growth suggested at housing location YN-1 north of Yarnfield. The settlement has some retail and community facilities for the population including a primary school as well as good transport links to Stone. The possible housing development location at Yarnfield may not require major infrastructure provision.

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
YN-1	Land at BT Training Centre, north of Yarnfield	250



Spatial Options 11

Tittensor - Suggested Major Developed Site in Green Belt

Tittensor has one direction of growth suggested at housing location TT-1 and TT-2 east of the A34. The settlement has some retail and community facilities for the population including a primary school as well as good transport links north towards the North Staffordshire conurbation and south to Stone. The possible housing development location at Tittensor may not require major infrastructure provision.

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Location Reference	Name of Location	Housing Number
TT-1 & TT-2	Land at Bassett's Transport, east of A34 Stone Road	45

What we need to consider

8.47 We do not consider that there are major infrastructure implications for development proposed at Yarnfield and Tittensor. Both locations are for the re-development of previously developed land.

- At Yarnfield this involves the parts of the site which are currently unused. The entire site is in the Green Belt. Yarnfield has been previously identified as a major site in the Green Belt.
- At Tittensor the redevelopment involves the existing developed site, the rear portion of which is in Green Belt. Whether the site should be considered as a major site in the Green Belt is a matter on which your views would be welcomed.

8.48 Where redevelopment of major developed sites in the Green Belt is considered this will be in the policy context of [PPG2 Green Belts](#) Annex C4.

8.49 **More locations are shown in the settlement diagrams than will be needed. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, decisions will be made on preferred locations. The diagrams above show the individual locations. No decisions have been made yet on how many new homes are to be provided in this or the other individual locations included in the document. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).**

8.50 **In both instances we consider that new facilities might be required as part of the proposed new development. Housing development both at Yarnfield and Tittensor may have implications on the North Staffordshire urban regeneration initiatives.**

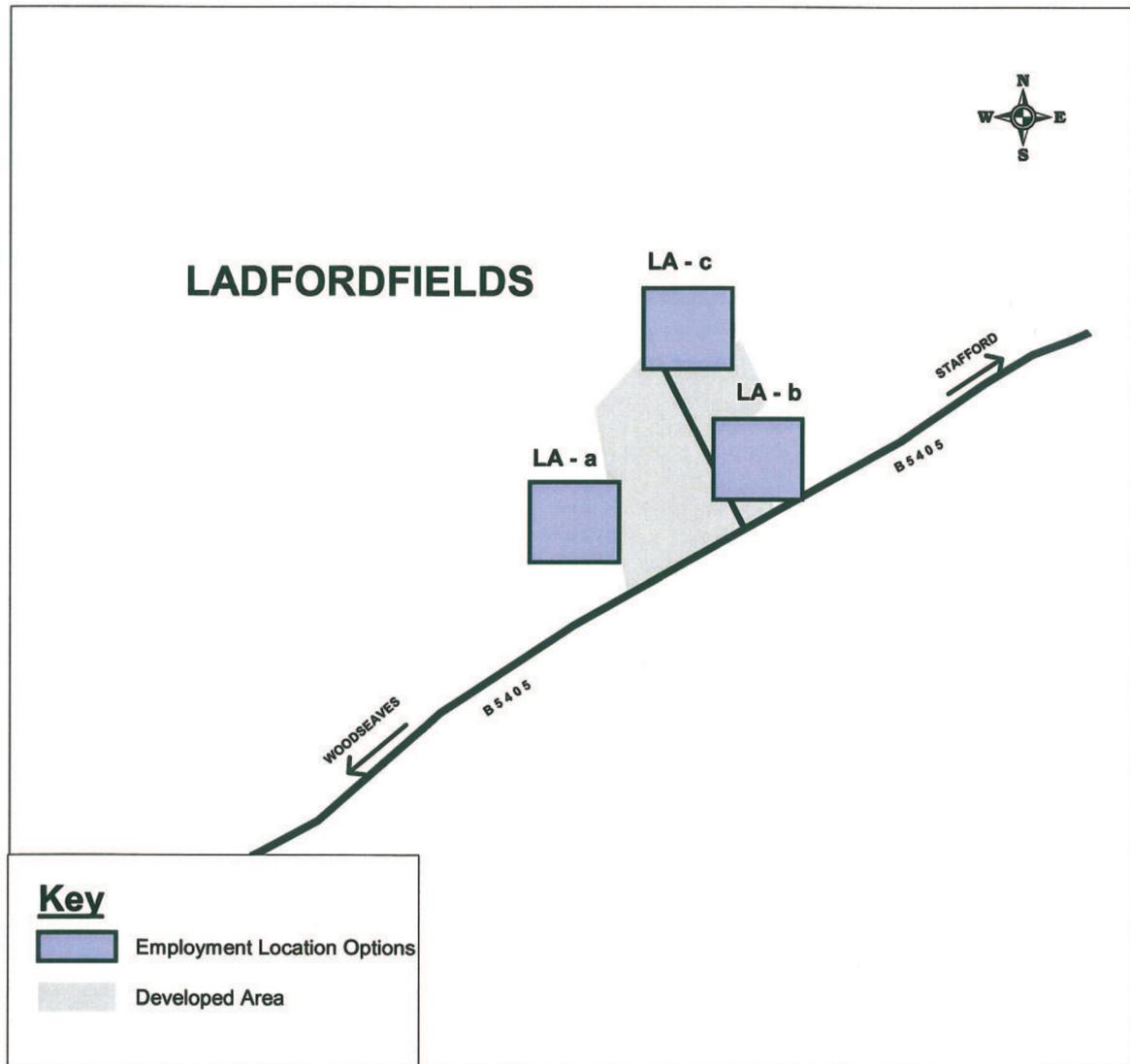
Please could you provide your views on these matters and include any other implications.

Employment Outside Stafford and Stone

8.51 Over the Plan period to 2026 Stafford Borough may be required to deliver 120 hectares of new employment land to meet the requirements in the Regional Spatial Strategy. A proportion of this provision may be required adjacent to the following Recognised Industrial Estates, identified in the existing Development Plan, the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 (i.e. boundaries around Recognised Industrial Estates within which employment development will generally be permitted).

8.52 Broad Greenfield locations for new employment development on the periphery of the Recognised Industrial Estates listed below are identified on the associated diagrams. However Moorfields Recognised Industrial Estate is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt area and therefore Greenfield expansion of this employment area has not been considered.

8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development



Spatial Options 12

Ladfordfields (LA) – Possible Employment Locations

Possible employment development around Ladfordfields Recognised Industrial Estate (RIE) can be grouped into three separate directions of growth:

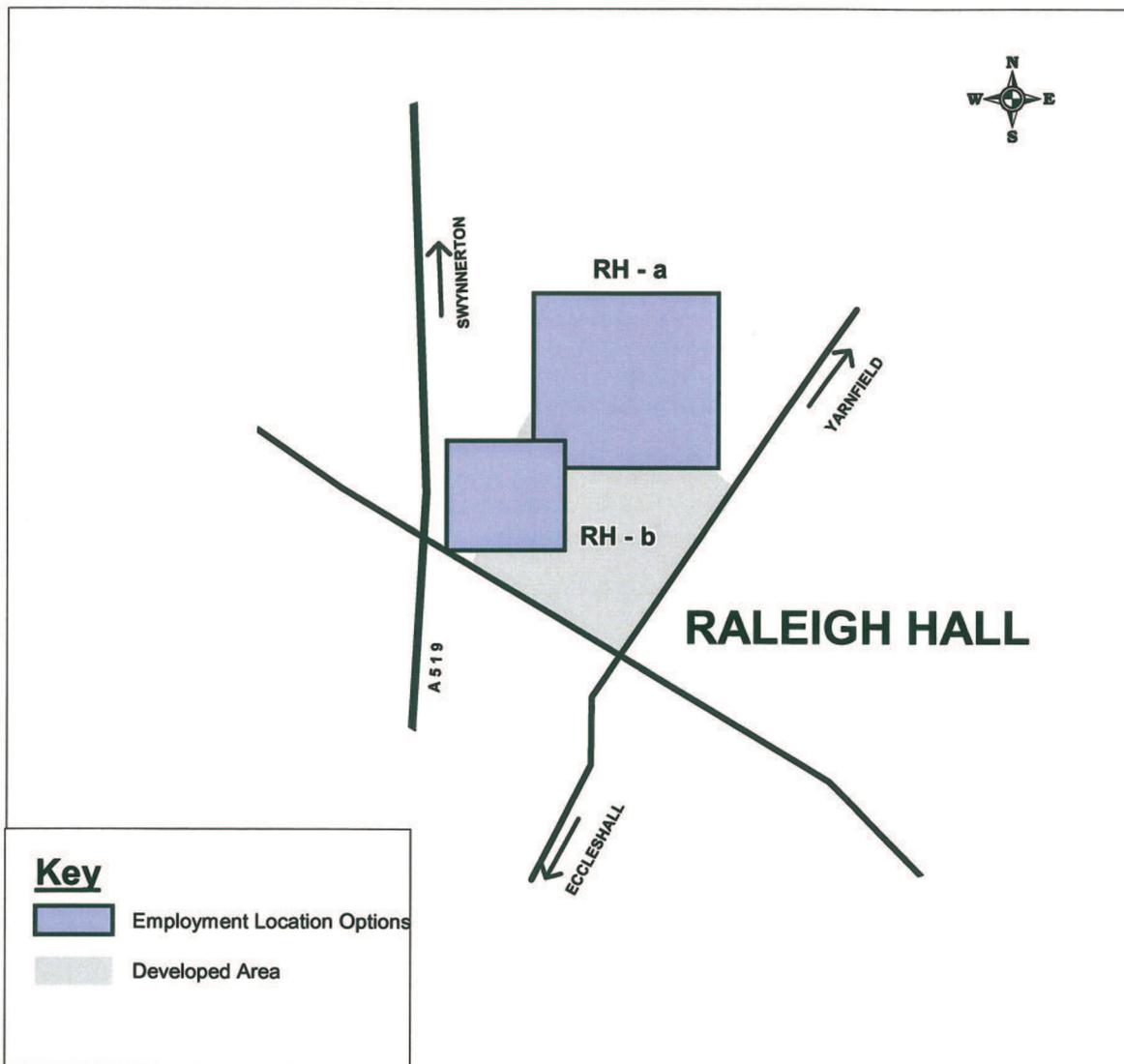
- West
- East
- North

The western direction of growth includes LA-a, the eastern direction of growth includes LA-b and the northern direction of growth includes LA-c.

Identifying Potential Locations for New Development 8

Location Reference	Name of Location	Employment Land (hectares)
LA-a	Land south of Bridle Lane	9
LA-b	Land north of Woodseaves Road	6
LA-c	Land north of Ladfordfields RIE	10

8.53 No employment locations have been identified to expand Pasturefields Recognised Industrial Estate although there is an employment commitment south of the estate.



8 Identifying Potential Locations for New Development

Spatial Options 13

Raleigh Hall (RH) – Possible Employment Locations

Possible employment development around Raleigh Hall Recognised Industrial Estate (RIE) can be grouped into one direction of growth - north covering RH-a and RH-b.

Location Reference	Name of Location	Employment Land (hectares)
RH-a	Land off Cold Meece Road	17.5
RH-b	Land north of Sturbridge Lane	6

What we need to consider

8.54 In terms of the employment locations which we have identified for new development above, we would welcome your views on these locations being used for new development giving reasons for your response. In particular it would be useful if you can provide further information to prove how development can be delivered at an identified location. You may also wish to respond in terms of the proposed use of the land by suggesting an alternative i.e. from employment to housing for example. We suggest that you insert your comments in relation to individual locations by clicking on the icon adjacent to the location on which you wish to comment.

More detailed maps showing the range of options for employment can be viewed [online](#).

8.55 Please let us know if you think that we should consider other rural sites for employment uses.

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9 Delivering a Sustainable Future

9.1 Decisions about where and how new development will be built in Stafford Borough will have a significant impact on the area as well as its towns and villages. **Consequently we intend to set high standards of design for all new development.** There are locally distinctive characteristics and issues in Stafford Borough which will be affected by the location and timing of when new development takes place so it is vital that decisions are made based on local evidence in order to achieve the vision.

9.2 In addition **we think that the scale of new development in Stafford Borough will also have implications for neighbouring areas such as South Staffordshire District, which adjoins the urban area of Stafford town.** Furthermore the North Staffordshire conurbation, including the City of Stoke on Trent, has an urban regeneration programme called RENEW which is encouraging the revitalisation of the housing market in the core area of the conurbation. This programme could be affected by housing development in the north of Stafford Borough as people desire to move to attractive rural and market town locations such as Stone, enabled through good transport links. **We think that there may be a case for generally restraining and phasing growth to the North of the Borough, including the town of Stone, to avoid prejudicing the regeneration of North Staffordshire.**

9.3 Although parts of Stafford Borough have a good range of services and facilities such as schools, health and social facilities, shops and jobs, transport links and the provision of utilities such as water and electricity **we think that the scale of new development will have significant implications on these resources, services and facilities.** It is important to make sure that implementation of the development strategy adequately provides for the local community in the future.

9.4 The Plan for Stafford Borough is being prepared by focusing on the Borough as a whole as well as particular towns and villages in the area to establish how locally important issues facing the specific places can be dealt with through the provision of new development and what the place could ultimately look like after the development has been completed.

9.5 In order to provide a robust and effective Plan we are carrying out a Habitat Regulations Assessment, in order address any possible effects on European Designated Sites in accordance with the Habitats Directive. If potential negative effects are identified, the Plan will need to demonstrate sufficient mitigation measures. Further information on this process can be found [here](#).

9.6 A significant level of evidence gathering work is currently taking place, which is highlighted and incorporated into this chapter. Discussions with key stakeholders across the environmental, social and economic sectors have also taken place in order to establish the level of impact and deliver strategic solutions to overcome particular issues around sustainable growth. For further information please refer to the [Evidence Base](#) on the Stafford Borough Council web-site.

9 Delivering a Sustainable Future

Stafford Borough Area

Climate Change

What you have told us (previous consultations)

Consultation responses focused on energy use and supply, sustainable construction and design, and adaptation and mitigation measures. Types of renewable and low carbon energy supply were highlighted along with the possibility of developing an eco-town in Stafford Borough.

9.7 The UK is committed to reducing its carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 12.5% from 1990 levels by 2012. Furthermore there is a target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 20% by 2010 and to have 10.4% of electricity from renewable sources of energy by 2011.

9.8 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 CO₂ emission in Stafford Borough is estimated at 3 tonnes, which is above the West Midlands average of 2.5 tonnes.

Energy

9.9 The principal sources of renewable energy within Stafford Borough's area are biomass, wind and solar. Staffordshire has experienced a rapid increased in renewable energy technology in recent years, based on the market for biomass energy crops developing in response to Government targets to generate 10% of the UK electricity from renewable sources by 2010.

9.10 The Eccleshall Biomass project, owned by the local fuel supply company BiEcc and the Talbott's 2 mega watt biomass power generator, are local examples of how biomass energy crops can be used, providing electricity to 2,000 households. The number of individual small scale renewable energy developments such as solar panels or mini wind turbines on houses are not known, as planning permission is not always required and therefore monitoring is difficult.

9.11 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. **We would welcome your views on this.**

9.12 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 Based 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.

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This source of energy could be used alongside future renewable energy generation in the Borough. **Do you think that the new Plan should explicitly support the use of hydrocarbon energy resources?**

On-site renewable energy

9.13 Some Councils in the UK are promoting policies requiring that new development proposals must include an element of on-site renewable energy generation, commonly 10% to 15% of the requirements of the development. These are sometimes referred to as Merton Rule policies after the Council which first introduced them. The Council has not yet considered whether such policies would be appropriate in Stafford Borough and, if so, what thresholds in terms of scale of development and proportion of energy requirements expect to be provided. **We would welcome views on this.**

Code for sustainable homes

9.14 There have been recent discussions of whether planning policies may be used to impose higher standards for new development such as those included the [Code for Sustainable Homes](#). The Code is the national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes. The Code aims to reduce our carbon emissions and create homes that are more sustainable.

9.15 It is now mandatory for all new homes to be rated against the Code and include a Code or nil-rated certificate within the Home Information Pack. 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.

9.16 The Code sets minimum standards for energy and water use at each level. The rating a home receives depends on how it measures up in nine categories: • Energy and CO2 Emissions • Pollution • Water • Health and Wellbeing • Materials • Management • Surface Water Run-off • Ecology • Waste

9.17 1 star homes will be 10% more energy efficient and 20% more water efficient than most new homes. 3 star homes would be 25% more energy efficient and have many more sustainable features than a 1 star home. 6 star homes would be highly sustainable and over the course of the year their net carbon emissions would be zero. Needing over 90% of the points available, a 6 star home would include most of the sustainability features in the Code.

9.18 In 2006 the Government announced a 10-year timetable towards a target that all new homes from 2016 must be built to zero carbon standards, to be achieved through a step by step tightening of the Building Regulations. Some Councils are seeking to require that new homes achieve or exceed a specified minimum level expressed using the star rating. Such requirements are not mandatory and there is no agreement on whether it is appropriate to require higher standards than those which are required by the Building Regulations. **Your views on this subject are invited.**

Green Belt areas

What you have told us (previous consultations)

There have been mixed responses relating to the future of the Green Belt and Green Belt boundaries. Several sites within the Green Belt have been put forward for development and redevelopment.

9 Delivering a Sustainable Future

9.19 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.

9.20 The Green Belt area to the north of Stafford Borough delivers the national purposes in the Government's [Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts](#) by checking the unrestricted sprawl of the North Staffordshire conurbation and assists in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land in the conurbation. 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 provides opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population, retains attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes near to where people live and secures nature conservation interests.

9.21 **We have no intention of amending the Green Belt boundaries within Stafford Borough as we do not consider that exceptional circumstances exist for any changes.**

9.22 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. You can view these settlements and their boundaries in the [Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001](#).

9.23 National planning policy in PPG2: Green Belt (Annex B) enables Development Plans to identify land well beyond the Plan period to serve development needs which could be excluded from Green Belt. This land is known as 'safeguarded land'. **We are not proposing any areas of safeguarded land in the new Plan for Stafford Borough.**

9.24 National planning policy in PPG2: Green Belt (Annex C) introduces the policy approach for Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt. In the [Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001](#) the following locations are listed as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt defined with a boundary:

- Creda Limited, Blythe Bridge
- Former BT Training School, Yarnfield
- Moorfields Industrial Estate, Swynnerton
- Meaford Power Station, Meaford, Stone (planning permission granted for employment)

9.25 **We have been asked to consider the inclusion of a further site in this list, the Bassetts transport site at Tittensor. Both the Yarnfield and Tittensor sites are the subject of landowner / agent representations seeking their allocation for residential redevelopment.**

9.26 **We would welcome views on how you think that the sites listed above should be treated in the future.**

9.27 **Outside of these Major Developed Sites there is a general presumption against new development in the Green Belt and we would expect to follow national policy as expressed in [PPG2 - Green Belts](#) throughout the Green Belt areas of the Borough.**

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Housing

What you have told us (previous consultations)

Comments have focused on local needs housing, including affordable housing, special needs housing and housing in the rural areas. There was concern over the design and location of housing.

Design

9.28 We think that planning policy and robust development processes can be used to produce schemes of good quality. Notably, higher standards of development may now be required through national policy, most significantly in [Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development](#) and [Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing](#).

9.29 National policy indicates matters to consider when assessing design quality including the extent to which the proposed development:

- Is easily accessible and 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.
- Provides, or enables good access to, community and green and open amenity and recreational space (including play space) as well as private outdoor space such as residential gardens, patios and balconies.
- Is well integrated with, and complements, the neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access.
- Facilitates the efficient use of resources, during construction and in use, and seeks to adapt to and reduce the impact of, and on, climate change.
- Takes a design-led approach to the provision of car-parking space, that is well-integrated with a high quality public realm and streets that are pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly.
- Creates, or enhances, a distinctive character that relates well to the surroundings and supports a sense of local pride and civic identity.
- Provides for the retention or re-establishment of the biodiversity within residential environments ⁽¹⁾

9.30 We think that there is a case for high design standards and advocate that the majority of new dwellings should meet the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment's (CABE) Silver Standard (14/20-15/20) in a [Building for Life](#) Assessment. In addition, it is anticipated that a high proportion of new dwellings will need to achieve gold standard (16/20 or higher) and that all major development sites are developed using a comprehensive set of [Masterplans](#). We would particularly welcome developer views on these approaches.

Residential Density

9.31 National planning policy advocates a more efficient use of land and buildings including the development of housing density policies with a range of densities across the plan area, although it also states that planning for below the national minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare would need to

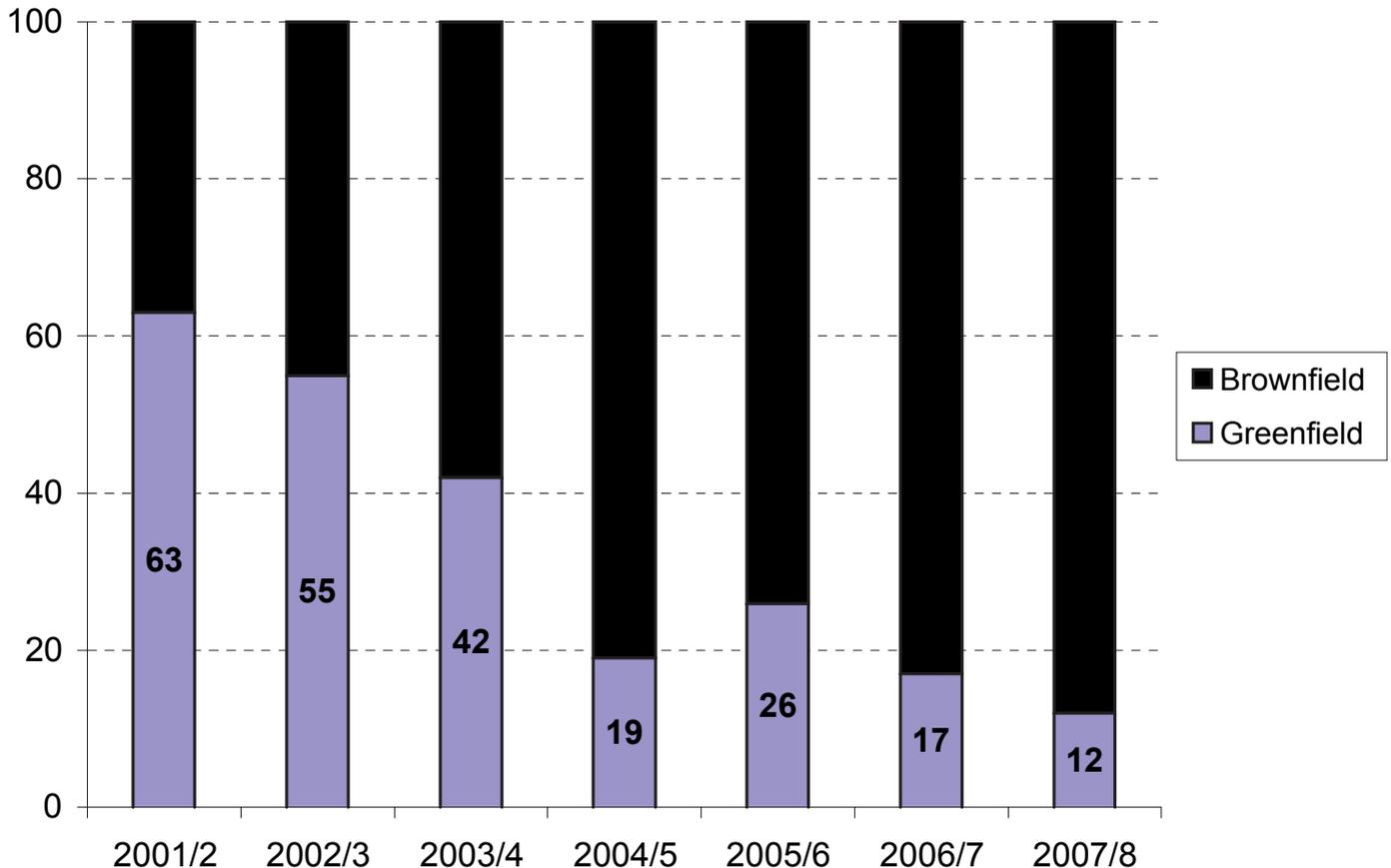
1 Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, paragraph 16

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be justified. We recognise the requirements of [PPS3](#) to defining densities as a general policy but have concerns about the potentially adverse effect which overly prescriptive policies on densities may have on the delivery of new housing. Generally we consider that this might be better considered at a more site specific level taking account of the characteristics of the area and the nature of the proposals. **We would welcome your views on the most appropriate approach to density policy.**

Greenfield and previously developed (Brownfield) land

9.32 The bar chart below shows the percentage of all completions on Greenfield and Previously Developed Land (PDL) between April 2001 and March 2007 in Stafford Borough, which clearly shows the percentage of completions on PDL have increased steadily over the period. These targets can be compared with the national target set out in national Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing of 60% on PDL.



(2)

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9.33 Currently Stafford Borough is consistently delivering a high proportion of Previously Developed Land (PDL) completions in line with the Government aspirations that the majority of new housing should be provided in sustainable locations. Stafford Borough now exceeds the national target of 60% ⁽³⁾ and the 66% target for Staffordshire ⁽⁴⁾

9.34 It is anticipated that Stafford Borough may ultimately develop its own target for PDL completions through the new Development Plan process. However the proposed housing requirements of at least 10,300 new dwellings to be completed in Stafford Borough between 2006 and 2026 with 7,000 new dwellings at Stafford is likely to require significant Greenfield allocations of land and a reversal of the recent trend. **We are wary of setting targets in advance of establishing the level of housing requirements and site phasing.**

9.35 It has been suggested that the release of greenfield land for development makes it less likely that previously developed land will be developed, although evidence to demonstrate this may be limited. Furthermore in the past, before PPG3, the cost of developing housing on previously developed land may be seen to make other Greenfield sites commercially more attractive. **In a market economy we think that there are potential conflicts between the elements of PPS3 which emphasise the importance of delivering the required housing numbers (e.g. paras 60 - 67, 70 -72) and those emphasising demonstration of deliverability in paragraphs 52 - 57.** Taken overall PPS 3 seems to emphasise delivery of total numbers rather than giving incentives to the brownfield land first approach of its predecessor document PPG3.

9.36 We would welcome views on the emphasis which should be given to the continuation of a sequential approach to housing development taking place to encourage housing provision on appropriate brownfield (previously developed) land in preference to Greenfield sites

Housing mix

9.37 The most marked projected change in household characteristics in [Staffordshire](#) is the growth of single person households, projected to increase by 48%, (93,000 to 138,000) compared to an increase of multi-person households of only 8% (249,000 to 251,000) in the period 2006-2026.

9.38 There has been a continuing reduction in the number of people per household in Stafford Borough from 2.5 in 1991 to 2.4 people in 2001, a trend which is expected to continue over the Plan period.

9.39 In recent years the housing market in Stafford Borough has witnessed a significant number of four or more bedroom houses being completed, However projected changes in the population structure shows that this type of housing may be less appropriate for the area in the future, with further information available in the [Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007](#) prepared for the West Midlands North Housing Market Area.

9.40 National planning policy in Planning Policy Statement 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

3 set out in the Government Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (paragraph 41)

4 given by the Regional Spatial Strategy published in June 2004 (Table 3, page 39).

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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.

9.41 We think that this is an important approach but are aware that developers may take a contrary view and may believe that it is preferable to allow the market to determine the housing mix. Your views on these alternative approaches would be appreciated.

Population change and Lifetime Homes

9.42 [Population](#) information for Staffordshire shows a marked ageing and a change in balance. In 2006 people over the age of 65 comprised 16.8% of the population, by 2026 this is projected to increase to 24.3%. The numbers of the very elderly, (85 years and over) are expected to more than double in the same period.

9.43 The increased number of over 65 year olds during the Plan period will mean that there may be a case for requiring a greater level of [Lifetime Homes](#) which incorporate 16 design features that together create a flexible blueprint for accessible and adaptable housing in any setting. The Lifetime Homes concept increases choice, independence and longevity of tenure, vital to individual and community well being. Currently the Council does not require the inclusion of Lifetime Homes in new developments.

9.44 [Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods. A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society](#) was published by the Government in February 2008. The Prime Minister in his Foreword says:-

"Thanks to better healthcare, new technologies and a more prosperous society we are all now living longer. This is clearly cause for celebration, but it also presents new issues which, as a society, we must address. Ensuring that older people have access to good quality housing is a vital part of helping them maintain their independence and their quality of life.

I want to see all new housing built to Lifetime Homes Standards by 2013 – accessible and adaptable homes in thriving neighbourhoods. And I want to see older people get a better deal on housing right across the board. So we will invest more money in adapting homes to make them suitable for people with impaired mobility, with 30 per cent more funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant by 2010."

9.45 Later in the document it says "Lifetime Homes are an exemplar of good design in themselves, but our wider ambition is to promote inclusive design both inside the home, and across the neighbourhood. We will incentivise good design by introducing a new Beacon theme on inclusive planning to recognise local authorities providing leadership in this area. Good design works well for people of all ages, but for those with mobility problems or with sensory or cognitive impairments it can make the difference between independent living and social exclusion."

9.46 We would welcome the views of developers and the public on a policy to include a proportion of lifetime homes in new housing (and the appropriate proportion).

Specialist housing

9.47 Even with more lifetime homes and more home care increasing numbers of older people may seek more specialist retirement homes and apartments provision in locations with access to services and facilities. Provision of sheltered housing schemes and extra care housing will also be required in

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Stafford Borough to meet the more specialised needs of older people arising from Staffordshire County Council's Changing Lives programme and move-on properties for people with a range of support needs while they work towards independent living as well as 'floating support' services that assist people maintain their housing. **In major housing schemes do you think that it should be required that specialist provision is made both for the elderly and disadvantaged people.**

9.48 The Private Sector House Condition and Energy Efficiency Report 2008, commissioned by Stafford Borough Council and using Government guidance, showed a major improvement from the equivalent survey from 2002 particularly with the reduction in the proportion of unfit housing in the private sector stock which reduced from 8% to 1%. considerably below the 4.8% unfit found nationally.

9.49 Energy efficiency is better than national averages ⁽⁵⁾. The greatest concentration of unfit and defective housing is found at Stafford town according to the survey. These issues are being addressed through the Housing Strategy and by a variety of targeted initiatives and partnerships on condition, grants, adaption and energy efficiency. Currently the Borough has no areas identified as 'low demand housing'. **We do not envisage that housing clearance areas will be included as part of the new Plan for Stafford Borough.**

Neighbourhood Policing

9.50 Within new residential developments of more than 1,000 new homes in Stafford and Stone Staffordshire Police have highlighted the requirement for Neighbourhood Policing Units. Furthermore areas outside of Stafford and Stone with less than 1,000 new homes in settlements may also require provision of a Neighbourhood Policing Unit, which generally takes the form of an office base for Police Officers. **We think this is an appropriate requirement for new development.**

Location of housing development

9.51 The Council's Land for New Homes: Housing Monitor identifies that overall the majority of housing development since 1996 has taken place at Stafford (48%) although Stone has also experienced significant growth at 17%. More surprising is the scale of development elsewhere in the Borough, which in recent years has amounted to 35% of the total new housing. A significant proportion of new rural housing is made up from conversions of former 'traditional' agricultural buildings (e.g. barn conversions). Relatively few of these buildings have been converted to economic development uses.

Rural Areas and conversions to residential use

9.52 National planning policy in [Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas](#) states that the Government's policy is to support the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. Re-use for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations, and for some types of building. Planning authorities should therefore set out in Local Development Documents their policy criteria for permitting the conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic, residential and any other purposes, including mixed uses.

9.53 These criteria should take account of:

5 (Private Sector House Condition and Energy Survey 2002)

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- the potential impact on the countryside and landscapes and wildlife;
- specific local economic and social needs and opportunities;
- settlement patterns and accessibility to service centres, markets and housing;
- the suitability of different types of buildings, and of different scales, for re-use;
- the need to preserve, or the desirability of preserving, buildings of historic or architectural importance or interest, or which otherwise contribute to local character.

9.54 Do you think that the emphasis of policy on conversions should change from residential to economic development?

Affordable Housing

What you have told us (previous consultation)

Affordable housing is a main concern across the Borough area including in rural locations

9.55 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.

9.56 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 their being replaced by better off commuters and people retiring to the countryside.

9.57 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. For the foreseeable future it seems that enabling new provision of affordable housing will continue to feature as an important issue for strategic planning.

9.58 In recent years the cost of housing in Stafford Borough has risen significantly, with further details set out in various studies and documentation including the Council's Housing Strategy, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (April 2008) and the 2002 Housing Needs Survey subsequently revised by the Housing Needs Survey – Update (October 2005).

9.59 In the past, due to the 'right to buy' and 'right to acquire' schemes the stock of social rented housing and the number of homes for social rent has reduced. This has not been made up by the addition of new build affordable homes resulting in an overall reduction in the number of social rented homes. In future it is hoped and anticipated that the balance will change so that the total number of social rented homes will increase.

9.60 In February 2006, the Council's housing stock was transferred to Stafford and Rural Homes, a Registered Social Landlord. At 1 April 2007 there were 1,688 families on the Stafford and Rural Homes Housing Register. More than 200 households in the Borough are accepted as statutory homeless and

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in need of permanent housing each year. This is a trebling of numbers over an 8 year period. 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.

9.61 The [Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) highlights a significant need within Stafford Borough of 293 new affordable homes per year. In recent years new provision has almost entirely been reliant on affordable homes provided in association with market housing where Housing Associations purchase new homes from the developers of individual sites. This source will continue to be insufficient to meet the affordable homes target, however. To move closer to the target major additional public investment would be needed. In December 2008 the Homes and Communities Agency replaced the Housing Corporation as the principal source of funding for Housing Associations. Government has increased the funds available to the Agency and it is hoped that this will result in additional funding for new affordable homes across the Borough in the future. Despite the additional money, in the light of the national need for affordable housing, it seems unrealistic to think that this additional funds would be sufficient to meet the identified shortfall.

9.62 The Housing Needs Survey and Update also quantifies the extent of housing needs. In fact the updated survey demonstrated that the extent of housing needs had increased the need for affordable homes. **It was recommended that the Council should increase the affordable housing target to 40%.** 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, an informed assessment of the economic viability of proportions of affordable housing will be required involving new Economic Viability assessments.

9.63 We think that three threshold sizes could be used to determine whether new sites or conversions will be expected to provide Affordable Housing as follows.

- **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 4 to 7 dwellings will be expected to provide a commuted sum payment for the provision of Exception Need Housing to provide affordable rural housing for local need.**

9.64 The proportion of affordable housing would be calculated by reference to the total number of dwellings (market and affordable) to be provided. For example, on a site for 100 dwellings it would be expected that there would be 60 market and 40 affordable homes (40%). **We think that the affordable housing should be distributed in groups of homes across a site, rather than in a single area, and that their design and appearance should make the affordable homes indistinguishable from the open market homes.**

9.65 In deciding whether a particular site qualifies as being above the requisite site size thresholds set out above, we think it is important to assess not merely the proposal submitted but the potential capacity of the site. The Council will welcome proposals that make reasonably efficient use of the whole site but will be alert to any attempts to deliberately circumvent the stated site size thresholds e.g. by submitting applications for less than the site.

9 Delivering a Sustainable Future

9.66 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, (for example the conversion of a building as one application and the development of its grounds as another) we think that they should be treated as one site for the purposes of the policy.

9.67 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.

9.68 There have been suggestions that it is inequitable for developments below the thresholds to avoid making provision for affordable housing and one suggestion is that a contribution should be sought through a commuted sum payment to provide the equivalent of the value of the affordable housing contribution.

9.69 We anticipate preparing a more detailed Practice Note and/or a Supplementary Planning Document in relation to this subject.

9.70 We would welcome comments from the public, developers, housing associations and other stakeholders on the approaches outlined above.

Rural Exception Sites

9.71 Entry-level house prices reached over 7 times average earnings in the Borough (although this ratio may have fallen as house prices have fallen in the last 12 months). This deficiency is seen to be particularly acute in the rural areas where few sites meet the threshold beyond which it is expected that an element of affordable housing is to be provided.

9.72 The principle of 'Rural Exception Sites' for affordable housing is well established. Its basis lies in the fact that new development is not being focused towards smaller communities, largely as a result of their relatively unsustainable locations. However 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. 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.

9.73 Rural Exception policies, which are now a common element contained within Local Plans and emerging Local Development Frameworks, seek to provide a means whereby housing for local people can be provided where normal open market housing would not normally be allowed. **We think it is important to continue providing a Rural Exception policy in the future.**

9.74 In rural developments there is real need for effective involvement and communication with stakeholders and the community, to bring sites forward and to overcome any opposition. National Planning Policy Statement 3 states:-

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Where viable and practical, Local Planning Authorities should consider allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable housing, including using a Rural Exception Site Policy. This enables small sites to be used, specifically for affordable housing in small rural communities that would not normally be used for housing because, for example, they are subject to policies of restraint. Rural exception sites should only be used for affordable housing in perpetuity. A Rural Exception Site policy should seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection, whilst also ensuring that rural areas continue to develop as sustainable, mixed, inclusive communities.⁽⁶⁾

9.75 One initiative that can help meet this objective and reduce local opposition is a 'Rural Lettings Policy', which prioritises local connections. **We think that this approach should be promoted and therefore will be subject to regular review and flexible enough to account for local circumstances including meeting the needs of people needing to downsizing from large to smaller properties.**

9.76 We think that the key elements of a successful scheme are clear evidence of need, local support (particularly from Parish Councils), a landowner willing to provide a site at an appropriate value and a Housing Association willing to develop. We anticipate preparing a more detailed Practice Note and/or a Supplementary Planning Document in relation to this subject.

9.77 We would welcome views on any aspect of this topic; including on whether you think that exception sites should be specifically allocated and/or a policy directed primarily at seeking delivery wherever there is evidence of need.

Travelling Families

9.78 Currently provision for the travelling families' community in the Borough is made on a Council owned site at Stafford but principally by private sites; predominantly in the Hopton area. The number of currently authorised pitches totals 70.

9.79 In February 2008 the [Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment](#) (GTAA) was published. The 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.

9.80 The assessment follows recent guidance from the Government which aims to give the Gypsy and Travelling community access to decent living conditions. Similar assessments of accommodation needs are now being undertaken across the country.

9.81 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.

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9.82 Government requirements are set out in [Circular 01/06 \(ODPM\): Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites](#) which provides updated guidance on the planning aspects of finding sites for gypsies and travellers and how local authorities and gypsies and travellers can work together to achieve that aim. The following section comprises quotes from the Circular.

"The Government is committed to ensuring that members of the gypsy and traveller communities should have the same rights and responsibilities as every other citizen.

A new Circular is necessary because evidence shows that the advice set out in Circular 1/94 has failed to deliver adequate sites for gypsies and travellers in many areas of England over the last 10 years. Since the issue of Circular 1/94, and the repeal of local authorities' duty to provide gypsy and traveller sites there have been more applications for private gypsy and traveller sites, but this has not resulted in the necessary increase in provision. It is expected that at an early stage in the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and Development Plan Documents (DPDs) planning authorities will discuss gypsies and travellers' accommodation needs with gypsies and travellers themselves, their representative bodies and local support groups. Gypsies and travellers should also be proactive in ensuring that they engage with local planning authorities to ensure that their views are taken into account."

The Circular's main intentions are;

"a) to create and support sustainable, respectful, and inclusive communities where gypsies and travellers have fair access to suitable accommodation, education, health and welfare provision; where there is mutual respect and consideration between all communities for the rights and responsibilities of each community and individual; and where there is respect between individuals and communities towards the environments in which they live and work;

b) to reduce the number of unauthorised encampments and developments and the conflict and controversy they cause and to make enforcement more effective where local authorities have complied with the guidance in this Circular;

c) to increase significantly the number of gypsy and traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission in order to address under-provision over the next 3 – 5 years;

d) to recognise, protect and facilitate the traditional travelling way of life of gypsies and travellers, whilst respecting the interests of the settled community;

e) to underline the importance of assessing needs at regional and sub-regional level and for local authorities to develop strategies to ensure that needs are dealt with fairly and effectively;

f) to identify and make provision for the resultant land and accommodation requirements

g) to ensure that DPDs include fair, realistic and inclusive policies and to ensure identified need is dealt with fairly and effectively;

h) to promote more private gypsy and traveller site provision in appropriate locations through the planning system, while recognising that there will always be those who cannot provide their own sites; and

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i) to help to avoid gypsies and travellers becoming homeless through eviction from unauthorised sites without an alternative to move to."

"The core strategy should set out criteria for the location of gypsy and traveller sites which will be used to guide the allocation of sites in the relevant DPD. These criteria will also be used to meet unexpected demand.

These criteria based policies must be fair, reasonable, realistic and effective in delivering sites. The adequacy of any criteria will be subject to greater scrutiny under changes to the new planning system introduced by the Planning Act (2004). Planning policies that rule out, or place undue constraints on the development of gypsy and traveller sites should not be included in RSSs or DPDs. The Government has powers to intervene in the plan-making process where it considers that the constraints being proposed by local authorities are too great or have been inadequately justified. This will include where a local planning authority does not adequately address gypsy and traveller site provision in its area.

Local authorities must allocate sufficient sites for gypsies and travellers, in terms of the number of pitches required by the RSS, in site allocations DPDs. A requirement of the Planning Act (2004) is that DPDs must be in general conformity with the RSS. Criteria must not be used as an alternative to site allocations in DPDs where there is an identified need for pitches. Local planning authorities will need to demonstrate that sites are suitable, and that there is a realistic likelihood that specific sites allocated in DPDs will be made available for that purpose. DPDs will need to explain how the land required will be made available for a gypsy and traveller site, and timescales for provision.

Identifying and allocating 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.

There are a number of ways in which local authorities can identify specific sites and make land available.

a) Local authorities have discretion to dispose of land for less than best consideration where it will help to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area, as set out in ODPM Circular 06/03.

b) Authorities should also consider making full use of the registers of unused and under-used land owned by public bodies as an aid to identifying suitable locations. Vacant land or under-used local authority land may be appropriate.

c) Authorities should also consider whether it might be appropriate to exercise their compulsory purchase powers to acquire an appropriate site.

d) Cooperation between neighbouring authorities, possibly involving joint DPDs, can provide more flexibility in identifying sites. Such cooperation is particularly important where an authority has strict planning constraints across its area."

9.83 In May 2007 Government published [Local authorities and Gypsies and Travellers: a guide to responsibilities and powers](#) to amplify earlier guidance and points out that;-

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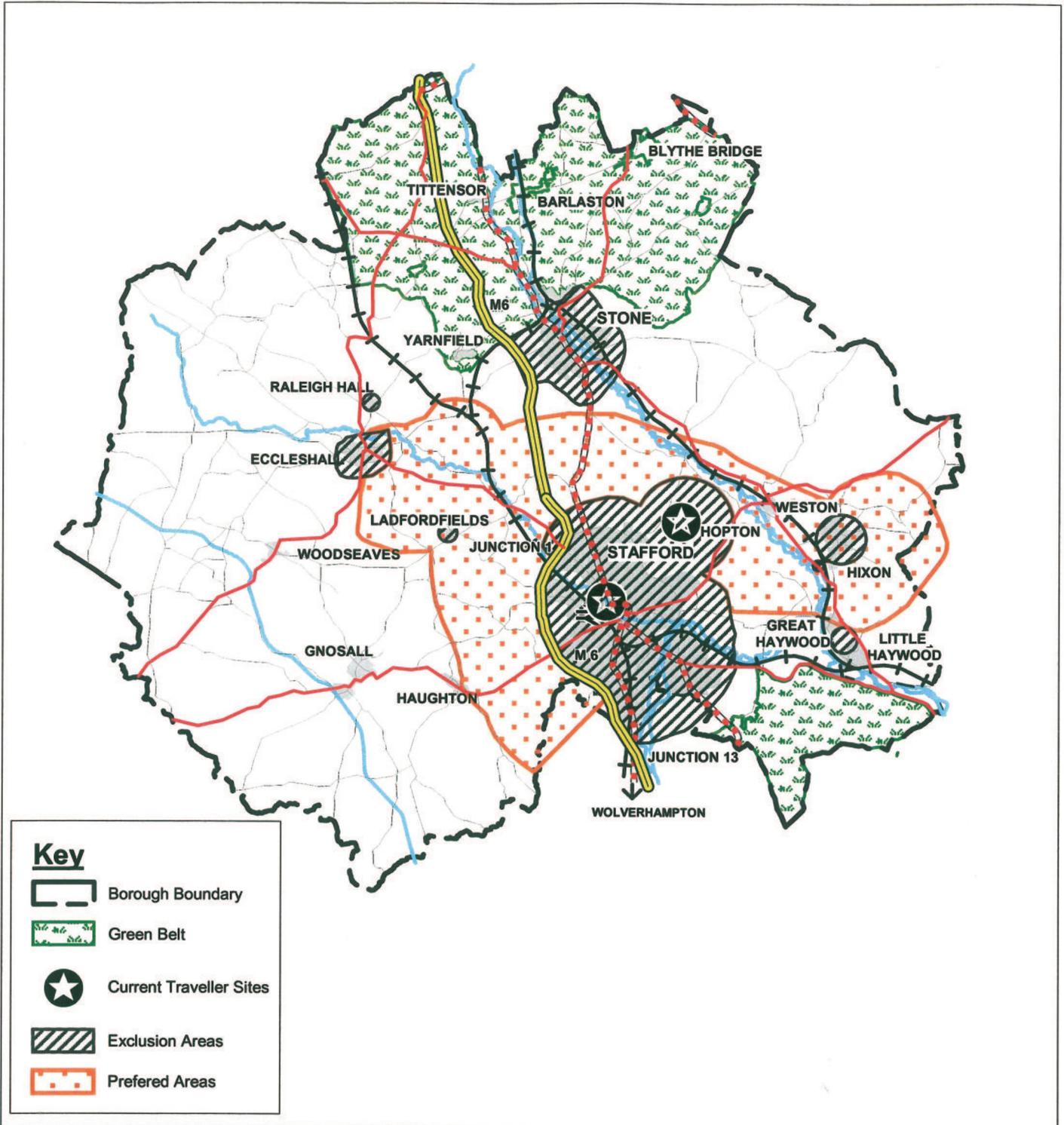
- The Housing Act 2004 requires local authorities to assess the need for Gypsy and Traveller (including travelling showpeople) accommodation in their areas at the same time as they assess the housing requirements of the rest of the population
- Local authorities must then develop a strategy which addresses the need arising from the accommodation assessment, through public or private provision-
- Local planning authorities will be obliged to identify sites in their Development Plan Documents, in line with the requirement identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. It will no longer be acceptable just to specify planning criteria for sites, local authorities will be expected to identify land
- Where there is a clear need, if local planning authorities fail to identify sites in their Development Plan Documents, the Secretary of State has the power to direct them to do so.

9.84 Currently [The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 3](#) has not set the requirements for the number of pitches to be provided in Stafford Borough.

9.85 **We acknowledge that it is likely to prove challenging to identify sites in the Borough which are acceptable and also to deliver the sites.** Initial contact with travelling families suggests that a search for several smaller sites across the Borough would be preferably to one large site. It is suggested that the sites identified by landowners as being available for residential development through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, and which are outside the Green Belt and the

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Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), would be a good starting point for the site search. **Please refer to the map below and give your views on the site areas of search proposed.**



9.86 The [Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment](#) notes:

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"Clearly the process of developing accommodation to meet the need identified here will require significant funding, much of which will be directed at the Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant held by Communities and Local Government."

and in recommendations

"Recommendation 21: Those officers and agencies leading the planning, design and development of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation should involve the target Gypsy and Traveller population in all stages. In turn site (both residential and transit) and 'housing' design should be approached in a creative and innovative manner. Preferences and aspirations of Gypsies and Travellers should be taken into consideration. Important things to consider include: Location to local services and transport networks - Pitch size, Amenities - Sheds- Management - Mixture of accommodation (chalet, trailer, etc.) - Utility of outside space (driveways, gardens, etc. - Homes for life principles - Health and related support issues - Tenure Mix - Space for short-term visitors

Recommendation 22: Authorities should ensure that existing statutory guidelines and emerging good practice are used in relation to residential and transit site design, management and health and safety issues." ⁽⁷⁾

9.87 Local views on the matters raised above, in addition to those of the travelling community, would be welcomed, as would suggestions for appropriate sites.

Employment

What you have told us (previous consultations)

Comments have focused on the need to have the right balance of employment and housing, in order to prevent settlements in Stafford Borough becoming dormitory towns and villages. Concern was raised that recent employment has not focused on the creation of high quality skilled jobs and also the loss of employment land to housing.

9.88 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.

9.89 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.

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9.90 We think that consideration should be given to more closely targeting sites for particular types of employment in the future through the allocation of additional employment sites. Please let us know your views on this approach.

9.91 In recent years there has been a shift in the balance of housing development away from greenfield sites to the development of previously developed land led by Government policy. 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 and Bibby Sterilin at Stone.

9.92 As this trend is still continuing we think that there is a case for encouraging the re-use of existing employment sites in appropriate locations for new employment uses rather than allowing residential or other uses. Do you agree with this approach?

Transport

Car parking

9.93 The availability of car parking has a major influence on the means of transport people choose for their journeys. Some studies suggest that levels of parking can be more significant than levels of public transport provision in determining means of travel (particularly for the journey to work) even for locations very well served by public transport. The maximum car parking standards are set out in Government advice within [Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport](#), Annex D. We think that national car parking standards should continue to be used across the Stafford Borough area for new development proposals.

Cycling

9.94 Stafford Borough has approximately 44 kilometres of dedicated cycle facilities. This total includes all on and off-road routes incorporating both local and national cycle routes. New cycle routes are identified in the [Staffordshire County Council Local Transport Plan](#). We think that provision for new routes and facilities should be included in new development to deliver 'access for all', walking and cycling.

Green Infrastructure

9.95 Green infrastructure is defined as:

'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.' ⁽⁸⁾

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Green infrastructure has the following components:



9.96 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.

9.97 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.

9.98 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.

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Natural Environment

What you have told us (previous consultations)

Comments have focused on the need to protect and enhance biodiversity, in general terms and on all designated sites across the Borough. Comments have also focused on protecting the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

9.99 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (October 2006) introduced a new Biodiversity Duty, which applies to all public authorities including local authorities. Its implications are summarized in 'Guidance for Local Authorities on implementing the Biodiversity Duty', published by the Government's Department of Farming & Rural Affairs in May 2007. Across the Stafford Borough area biodiversity enhancement opportunities are being identified by Natural England and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to direct habitat protection, enhancement and mitigation. The Council has also signed the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge.

9.100 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.

9.101 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

9.102 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.

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9.103 The Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP) has been in place since 1998. It is used by a wide variety of partners throughout the County in developing policy, targeting priorities and accessing funding for biodiversity action. Within the SBAP there are a number 15 Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and 28 Species Action Plans (SAPs).

9.104 **We think that a Green Infrastructure policy should aim to deliver the SBAP and include biodiversity enhancement. We would welcome your views on this matter.**

Flood Risk

What you have told us (previous consultations)

Existing flood problems in particular locations were raised in consultations along with comments focusing on the consideration of flooding on existing and future development.

9.105 The Government's [Planning Policy Guidance 25: Development and Flood Risk](#) provides national advice on this matter. The [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Stafford Borough](#) was completed and published in February 2008, which identified the extent of the floodplain affecting the Stafford Borough area and a range of other issues. **We think that new development should be avoided in areas of flood risk and should also take account of the potential impact of climate change.**

9.106 Generally rainwater falling on greenfield land will infiltrate the ground more effectively than in urban areas. **We think that the Plan should make reference to Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) in order to improve the infiltration rates of rainfall in urban areas. We also think that infiltration rates on new developments should be 20% more efficient than greenfield locations. Do you think that these approaches are appropriate?**

Landscape Character

What you have told us (previous consultations)

Landscape is regarded as an important issue across the Borough, and something that should be highly regarded in the new Plan. Retaining and enhancing landscape character was deemed an important part of retaining local distinctiveness.

9.107 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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9.108 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'.

9.109 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.

9.110 **We think that the new Plan should include a policy reference on the landscape to address issues raised in the documents mentioned above.**

Open Space, Sport and Recreation

9.111 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 are in the urban areas of Stafford and Stone where the Green Network provide 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. (These areas do not include the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.) Further information relating to particular settlements are detailed later in this chapter.

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

9.113 **We would welcome your views on whether you think that the new Plan should continue to identify and protect areas of protected open space and green networks.**

Tourism

What you have told us (previous consultations)

Several comments referred to the promotion of tourism across the Borough, especially canal related uses.

9.114 With regards to tourism and visitor employment within Stafford Borough there has been a significant level of hotel and leisure development in recent years at Stafford and Trentham Lakes. The area has a number of significant tourist attractions including Shugborough Park estate, Trentham Gardens, the Monkey Forest, the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Stafford Castle and the Ancient High House as well as local market events.

9.115 There is an extensive canal network with 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

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which link Norbury Junction to Newport. The currently favoured option 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. **We think that the restoration could provide economic and other benefits and recognise that the connection to the Shropshire Union canal is a vital element to the scheme of restoration as it is the only link to the national canal network.**

9.116 A number of new hotels have been developed mainly within and adjacent to the town of Stafford (four hotels) together with one hotel at Trentham.

9.117 Do you think that provision should be made for additional tourist attractions and for visitor accommodation to be expanded and further developed through the new Plan?

Telecommunications

9.118 Across the Stafford Borough area in recent years a number of planning applications for telecommunication apparatus have raised public controversy due to perceived public health concerns, visual intrusion and local amenity issues. However mobile phone use is increasing with a greater need for new installations especially with the advance third generation (3G) services. In some cases Council consent is not needed for installations but where towers have required Prior Approval or Planning Permission and the Council's decision has been to resist development the decision has generally been overturned on Appeal to the Secretary of State.

9.119 The Government recognises in [Planning Policy Guidance 8: Telecommunications](#) that "Health considerations and public concern can, in principle, be material considerations in determining applications for planning permission and prior approval". However as a result of the Stewart Report, the Government has taken the view that if a proposed development meets the ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation) guidelines it should not be necessary for an authority, in processing an application, to consider health effects further (PPG8, page 10). Consequently all new base stations are expected to meet the ICNIRP guidelines.

9.120 We would welcome your views, including the mobile operators and their agents, on whether you think that Stafford Borough should provide locally distinctive criteria for the location of future telecommunication apparatus in the area and whether provision for new apparatus should be incorporated into new development schemes?

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The County Town of Stafford**What you have told us (previous consultations)****Positive aspects of Stafford town raised through consultations**

- Offers a range of services and facilities.
- Choice of transport modes.
- Capable of self sufficient and managed growth.

Negative aspects of Stafford town raised through consultations.

- Lack of leisure offer and youth facilities.
- Poor design of employment uses on the edge of Stafford, resulting in loss of town character.
- Lack of retail offer, with a high number of vacant units.
- High level of traffic and congestion.
- Lack of a bus station.
- Increase in warehouse distribution as a large employment offer in Stafford.
- Stafford viewed as a dormitory town.

The following development pressures were identified

- Dramatic increase in population, which in turn could spoil the town character.
- Loss of car parking.
- Pressure for services and facilities.
- Pressure on functional floodplain.

The following objectives / aspirations for Stafford town were suggested

- Stafford town should provide shopping facilities which do not reflect other town centres.
- Any further development to the east of Stafford Town is preceded by the building of the Eastern Distributor Road.
- Provides the opportunity to help meet the housing and local regeneration needs of the County
- Deliver sustainable transport including
- Significant improvement to rail capacity in and around Stafford,
- Improved access to Rail Station,
- Park and Ride,
- Bus and coach station.
- Historical centre to be conserved and enhanced.
- Make better tourist use of Stafford historical assets.
- Improve road system, including creation of a by-pass linking Eccleshall Road, Doxey Road, Newport Road and Wolverhampton Road, and improved traffic circulation.

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The following objectives / aspirations for Stafford town were suggested

- Stafford to be a vibrant County Town with a mix of residential, office and retail development, that promotes community cohesion and fosters a sense of well-being.
- Stafford's role to be enhanced by the presence of the University.
- Do not allow development in areas where there will be a loss of agricultural land, openness or impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Maintain and develop its own character.
- Enhance its County Town function acting as the principal service centre not only for the Borough, but also for Staffordshire.
- Provide new employment opportunities.
- Provide a wide range of high quality housing at Stafford Town to meet all components of housing demand in sustainable locations.
- Retail and offices should expand beyond their current limitations up to and beyond the present 'collar' formed by the Queensway, Newport Road, Tenterbanks, and Chell Road network.
- Expansion of police services in Stafford town.

Housing

9.121 Stafford is the largest town in the Borough and faces the greatest level of new development between 2006 and 2026. As indicated earlier in this document Stafford is expected to provide at least 7,000 new houses, and dependent on the outcome of local studies, some of these homes could be built adjacent to Stafford in the neighbouring District of South Staffordshire.

9.122 The most up-to-date information about how many houses have been built in Stafford town since 2006 and the number of planning permissions given for new homes is set out in the Council's annual publication called [The Housing Monitor: Land for New Homes](#). In addition land has been assessed within the Stafford residential development boundary to establish how much potential housing land is available, the findings of which will be set out in the [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\)](#).

9.123 The SHLAA Final Report has identified 96 sites that are both within and outside the Residential Development Boundary of Stafford town. Of these 69 sites are considered to be deliverable, 27 sites are considered developable with a theoretical housing yields of 4,851 and 11,011 respectively. The sites identified within the planning process in Stafford town are all considered to be deliverable, with a potential yield of 1,643 houses. Furthermore, of the five remaining Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 allocations 4 are considered deliverable and 1 developable with yields of 625 and 350 respectively.

A Changing Population

9.124 Analysis of the population information for the County Town of Stafford shows that although the over 65 year olds are a significant group, a range of housing will be important for existing and migrating households as well as encouraging Staffordshire University graduates to settle in the Borough after their studies. **We think that there should be an appropriate split on the types of housing we plan for. Do you agree with this approach?**

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9.125 We think that any housing developments in Stafford must provide for specialist needs and the elderly including retirement homes and specialist accommodation, lifetime homes and extra care scheme of at least 60 units. We think that the level should be not less than 20% of the housing provision on allocated sites. Do you agree with this approach for Stafford?

9.126 Homelessness is a significant issue in Stafford, particularly among young single households requiring support. Housing Corporation grant funding has been secured for a replacement supported accommodation project for single young people. In addition, homeless acceptances are increasing as a percentage of applications in the face of limited local resources. Provision is to be made at The Eagle, Stafford for vulnerable people. **We think that there may be a need to provide further accommodation for vulnerable people in Stafford.** What are your views in terms of locations within Stafford town which would be suitable for this type of accommodation.

Education Provision

What you have told us (previous consultations)

- There is spare capacity in a number of primary and secondary schools in Stafford

9.127 Central government has a major programme aimed at transforming secondary education. In Staffordshire [Building Schools for the Future](#) includes a phased programme for new build, refurbishment and remodelling of the 68 secondary schools in the County at an estimated cost of around £800 million.

9.128 Based on the scale of new residential development for Stafford **we think that education contributions will be required for existing secondary schools in the town to ensure adequate new facilities are provided to accommodate increased pupil numbers.** In addition it is anticipated that in a number of locations identified to meet housing requirements in Stafford Borough additional new primary schools may be required or existing primary schools expanded to meet future education needs.

Health Care

What you have told us (previous consultations)

- Information from Stafford General Hospital states that the current facility at Stafford will be sufficient to meet the demands over the Plan period of increased housing development as well as the changes in the demographic character of the Borough
- Discussions with the Southern Staffordshire Primary Care Trust have raised a number of issues to be addressed.
- The Government's agenda for future health provision is greater use of health and General Practitioner (GP) centres including for minor procedures and consultant appointments.
- Across Stafford Borough and in particular within Stafford town the level of health services are relatively good but the ability of properties to deliver the services is poor.
- 3 - 4 new health centres could be required in Stafford town to meet future demands appropriate to existing patients and new residential development to be built.

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9.129 There has been a trend to increasing the integration of health and social care facilities; an example is the Stafford Childrens' Centre. **We think that some existing health centres be expanded and a wider range of facilities provided in current locations but it may also be necessary to build new health centres. Please give your views on where new health centres should be built.**

Flood Risk

Relevant Issues

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Stafford Borough was made available in February 2008 which identified the extent of the floodplain affecting the urban area of Stafford town. There are localised areas subject to flooding at Sandyford Brook and Stafford town centre during storm events and persistent rainfall periods which need to be addressed through new development.

9.130 No broad locations for potential new development have been identified in floodplain areas due to alternative areas being available. Furthermore national planning policy in [Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk](#) does not support the identification of significant new development in floodplain areas if possible.

We think that floodplain areas will have a significant role to contribute in terms of green infrastructure. We think that these areas should be protected and a proportion should be made publicly accessible for informal open space, sport and recreation. Your views are welcomed on this issue.

Green Infrastructure

9.131 The level of development in Stafford will bring pressure for recreational open space provision, impact on biodiversity and landscape implications. The river corridors through the town will be important to provide increased recreational provision and walking / cycling links to other parts of Stafford as well as links to the open countryside. As part of proposed developments on the edge of the existing Stafford urban area green infrastructure provision will be a key element for future local communities to provide accessible natural greenspace.

We think that a new country park facility south of Stafford could be proposed to address recreational pressure on the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC). We think areas for accessible natural greenspace and green routes should be provided in Stafford, to and from Cannock Chase and other areas. Do you support this approach?

9.132 The Borough Council commissioned Consultants to produce a [PPG17 Assessment and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy](#) covering indoor and outdoor sports facilities, parks and greenspace, playing pitches and children's play provision. This strategy has been the subject of a previous consultation and sets out challenging options. The outcomes of this study will feed into a subsequent stage of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

9.133 In Stafford a number of deficiencies in both the quality and quantity of provision have been identified including:

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- The limited value of a number of the children's play areas, apart from in the north west area.
- A lack of allotments on the eastern and western sides of the town and the poor quality of several of the sites across the town.
- The relatively poor quality and limited size of many of the greenspaces in the south western part of the town.
- The relatively poor access to natural greenspaces in the south western part of the town and, to a lesser extent, the south eastern area.
- The relatively poor access to multi-sport courts in the northern half of the town.
- The limited range of facilities for teenagers.

9.134 Stafford's new leisure centre opened in April 2008 on the edge of the town centre but it is important to ensure that deficiencies are addressed in other areas and new development provides further open space, sport and recreation provision for the local community.

9.135 **We think that new facilities should be developed alongside new developments. What are your views on this, should they be delivered in one high profile location or smaller scale facilities developed closer to local communities? We also think that that existing facilities should also be improved to meet future requirements including for older people due to demographic changes. What are your views on this?**

Provision of Utilities

What you have told us (previous consultations)

- Stafford's current sewerage system reaches capacity during storm events due to the combination of foul water and surface water run off within the existing system.
- An issue is particularly evident between the main sewerage pumping station at Lammascote and the Branscote sewage treatment works east of Stafford.
- Severn Trent Water advise that prior to further residential development on sites of over 500 houses in Stafford it will be necessary to increase the storage capacity within the sewerage system.
- Although the sewerage infrastructure is able to cope with increased housing development to the south of Stafford due to the capacity of the Baswich pumping station, Brancote will need to increase in order to meet the new housing provision in Stafford.
- Information from Severn Trent Water with regards to the clean water distribution identifies that significant infrastructure provision will be required over the Plan period for demands to be met from new residential development requirements in Stafford.

9.136 An important consideration in terms of new housing development in Stafford is the impact on the current sewerage system, which reaches capacity during storm events due to the combination of foul water and surface water run off within the existing system. The issue is particularly evident between the main sewerage pumping station at Lammascote and the Branscote sewage treatment works east of Stafford which are connected with a rising main pipe. New development to the north, east and central areas of Stafford would increase capacity pressures on the rising main pipe.

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9.137 To solve this issue Severn Trent Water advise that prior to further residential development on broad locations of over 500 houses in Stafford it will be necessary to increase the storage capacity within the sewerage system. This significant infrastructure provision will be delivered using new over-sized pipes and new storage of foul water at specific locations within the network. Although the sewerage infrastructure is able to cope with increased housing development to the south of Stafford due to the capacity of the Baswich pumping station and its rising main to Branscote sewage treatment works nevertheless the storage capacity at Brancote will need to increase in order to meet the new housing provision in Stafford.

9.138 **We think that all new development should provide Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), foul water and surface water run off must be kept separate to minimise capacity pressures during storm events in the future and provide foul water storage.**

9.139 Information from Severn Trent Water with regards to the clean water distribution identifies that significant infrastructure provision will be required over the Plan period for demands to be met from new residential development requirements in Stafford. These costs are being incorporated into Severn Trent Water's draft Business Plan covering the period 2010 to 2015 to be published in April 2009 although this does not take account of any "on site" mains required for particular developments, which will need to be met by landowners and developers.

9.140 Currently information is being sought from the electricity and gas operators to establish whether there are any infrastructure capacity issues for Stafford town with regards to these utilities.

Employment

Relevant Key Issues - evidence base

- Stafford Borough was the worst performing West Midlands District in relation to employment change in the period 1998-2003. However more recently the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programme and the major developments at Beaconside Technology Park and Primepoint 14 have led to a rapid growth in jobs.
- Currently the employment land commitments for Stafford town are approximately 26 hectares.
- Need to provide a quality environment for graduates to remain in the area.
- The number of high quality new jobs provided is relatively limited by warehousing development whilst the amount of land used is substantial.
- Currently 40% of people working in Stafford Borough are in the public sector emphasising Stafford's role as the County town and principal administrative centre.

9.141 To meet the requirements set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy the majority of new housing development, at least 7,000 new homes, will be located at Stafford town so consideration is needed to establish the amount of new employment provision that should come forward. As Stafford Borough has been identified for 40 hectares of new employment land to be 'readily available' every 5 years with a total of 120 hectares as a longer-term requirement there is some scope to allocate new greenfield sites on the edge of Stafford town to provide for new jobs.

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9.142 The Regional Centres Study demonstrates quite graphically that by some measure Stafford Borough was the worst performing West Midlands District in relation to employment change in the period 1998-2003. A similar pattern emerges in relation to employment change in Town and City Centres (Regional Centres Study - Table 3.3 Page 27) where again Stafford was the worst performing Authority.

9.143 Against this background there has been a considerable fight back. More recent indications appear to demonstrate that Stafford has been very successful in adapting and attracting new employment growth. This has occurred in part because the right sites were offered to incoming investment, Primepoint at the M6 Junction 14 and the Staffordshire County Council promoted Technology Park adjacent to the University in particular. However Stafford's economy remains fragile and there needs to be a continuing supply of good quality employment land as part of an integrated growth strategy if recent success is not to be reversed.

9.144 Currently the employment land commitments for Stafford town are approximately 26 hectares. **We think that new employment land should be identified on both brownfield / greenfield locations around Stafford to ensure land is 'readily available'.**

9.145 Staffordshire University has a principal campus based at Beaconside in Stafford. The campus covers over 21 hectares with over 30,000 square metres of floorspace and, together with Stafford College in the town centre, provides a nationally important further and higher education resource for Staffordshire, in particular for Information and Multi-media Technologies. The issue of providing temporary accommodation is important in Stafford town to provide for students during semesters. Furthermore an important issue for Stafford Borough is to provide a quality environment for graduates to remain in the area following completions of studies. To achieve this will require a combination of housing, job opportunities and quality environments for leisure time activities nearby. **We think it is very important to provide job opportunities in Stafford through the right types of employment land in the right locations to ensure graduate retention can be achieved.**

9.146 In recent years a large amount of warehousing development has taken place at Stafford due to the proximity of the M6 motorway and the M6 Toll, in particular land allocated close to Junction 14. However evidence from Instaffs, the Staffordshire inward investment company, as well as the Council's regeneration section attracting new businesses to the area shows that the number of high quality new jobs provided is relatively limited by this warehousing development whilst the amount of land used is substantial. **We think that different types of employment land should now be encouraged in the future such as for small & medium sized enterprises, light industry and research and development. Please give your views on whether new employment development should be located on greenfield and/or brownfield locations within the urban area of Stafford.**

Ministry of Defence

9.147 Ministry of Defence (MoD) land at Stafford is part of the area covered by the West Midlands Estate Group which is looking at the future of MoD sites across the Midlands. MoD Stafford is a core site to be retained for military purposes and it is hoped that in the future more units will move to the site. It is unlikely that any of the MoD land will be released for other uses, rather it is likely that additional land could be required.

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Town & District Centres

9.148 Stafford is identified in the Regional Plan for the West Midlands as a strategic town centre for major retail development, large scale office developments and uses which attract large numbers of people including major cultural, indoor sport, tourist, social, leisure and community venues. Stafford has requirements for 50,000 square metres of comparison retail floorspace within the strategic town centre and 45,000 square metres of new office development within or on the edge of the strategic town centre to be provided by the year 2026. Therefore it is important to consider whether Stafford town centre has sufficient land to provide for this level of new development, using existing town centre sites through intensification schemes or expanding the town centre to include more land for retail and office developments.

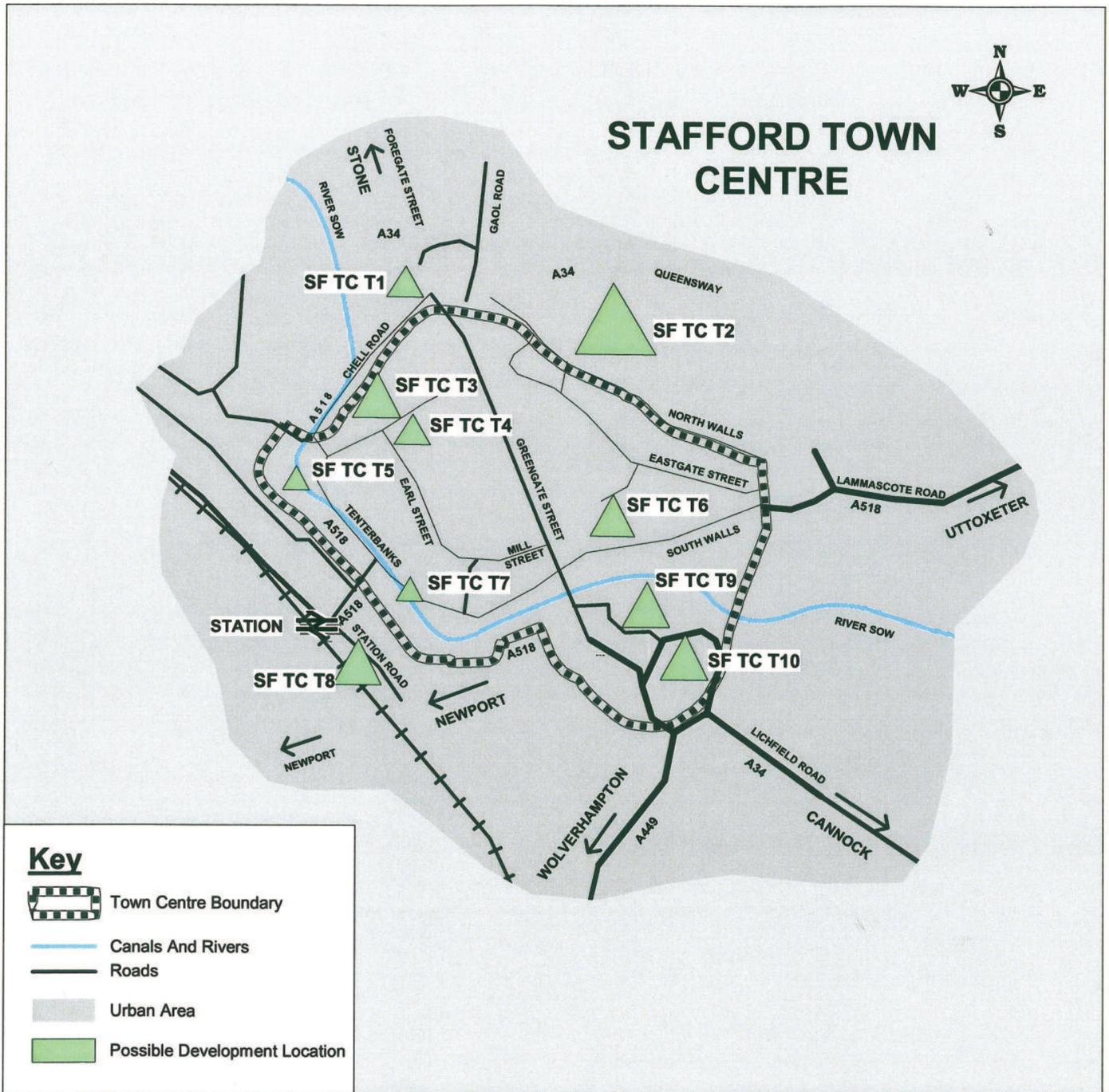
9.149 National planning policy in [Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres](#) requires Development Plans to identify a town centre boundary and a primary shopping area as well as primary and secondary shopping frontages, which are defined in Annex A of PPS6. **We think that the town centre boundary and the primary and secondary shopping frontages should be expanded to include recent new developments for retail and offices. Please let us have your views about whether land within the town centre should be further intensified through taller buildings.**

9.150 **Please refer to the on-line maps of Stafford Town Centre to highlight whether the extent of the town centre boundary and the primary shopping area should change and whether the areas of primary and secondary shopping frontages should be amended.**

9.151 Stafford town centre currently has planning commitments for approximately 14,000 square metres of comparison retail floorspace and 24,000 square metres of office development on the edge of the centre. Further planning applications for an additional 30,500 square metres of comparison retail floorspace are anticipated for the Tipping Street area and the former Tesco and Riverside Recreation Centre locations in the near future together with 16,500 square metres of office development. However comparison retail floorspace in Stafford town centre and office development within or on the edge of Stafford town centre remains to be identified in order to meet the requirement for Stafford by 2026. Evidence set out in the Annual Monitoring Report 2006/2007 shows that very limited retail development and no office development has been developed in Stafford town centre in recent years, although office development has taken place at Greyfriars Business Park and the Staffordshire Technology Park on the edge of the town. There has been significant development in comparison and convenience goods with three superstores on the edge of the centre and retail parks at The Hough, The Green and Madford Retail Park.

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9.152 In terms of the retail and office locations identified on the associated maps please give your support or objection to the areas shown giving reasons for your response. If you have an alternative location please specify. If you support development in a particular location please specify whether development should be for retail or offices.



The following prefixes have been applied to the locations illustrated above. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).

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Spatial Options 14

Stafford Town Centre (SFTC) - Retail and / or Office Locations

- SFTC-T1 Land at corner of Chell Road and Glover Street.
- SFTC-T2 Land between Queensway and North Walls.
- SFTC-T3 Land between Chell Road and Broad Street.
- SFTC-T4 Land south of Broad Street.
- SFTC-T5 Land south of Broadeye.
- SFTC-T6 Land south of Tipping Street.
- SFTC-T7 Land south of Tenterbanks.
- SFTC-T8 Land at corner of Station Road and Newport Road.
- SFTC-T9 Land between Queensway and Bridge Street.
- SFTC-T10 Land between Queensway and Lichfield Road.

9.153 There has been evidence of increasing interest in housing development and mixed-use schemes, including housing within or adjacent to the Stafford town centre such as schemes at Wolverhampton Road and North Walls. In addition mixed use schemes have been developed recently, including residential use, at Pilgrim Place and South Walls. Other schemes include the former St George's Hospital, a Grade II Listed Building with extensive adjacent areas which is adjacent to Stafford town centre and is being promoted for a mixed employment / residential development scheme which would secure the restoration of the Listed Building.

9.154 Across Stafford there are a number of District Centres which provide basis services and facilities including daily retail convenience outlets.

9.155 **Dependant on the scale and location of new housing we think that additional District Centres may be required as part of new residential development. We also think that District Centres should be considered for expansion or replacement with new facilities in existing locations. Please identify any District Centres that you feel should be expanded or replaced to meet new housing requirements.**

Historic Environment

9.156 A number of historic assets are particularly important to Stafford which should be protected and conserved for the future. The Stafford Town Centre Conservation Area, includes the Ancient High House, St Mary's Church and other historically important buildings. Staffordshire County Council have recently produced a [Historic Landscape Characterisation Study](#) which highlights the sensitivities of the landscape around Stafford Castle in particular. With an increased emphasis for new retail and office development in the town centre the loss of character and sight lines between historic assets could increase. **We think that the impact of new development on historic assets and the historic landscape setting of Stafford should be reduced through retention of sight-lines to historic buildings and controlling the height of new development, particularly in Stafford town centre.**

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Transport

What you have told us (previous consultations)

Improved rail services, not just in Stafford but other settlements such as Stone were raised along with a bus station and a park and ride for Stafford. There is concern that new development will result in greater traffic on roads. Improved roads in and out of Stafford has been identified as essential alongside new development. Comments were also received on the Stafford Eastern Distributor Road, and suggested new roads at Stafford and Creswell.

Roads

9.157 Over recent years traffic movements on radial routes from the outskirts of Stafford to the town centre have experienced increasing pressure during peak periods. Incidents on the M6 motorway exacerbate these pressures on the local transport network. Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council have commissioned consultants to complete a new transport model for Stafford town, which provide a range of solutions for consideration in terms of significant new development including public transport and new roads and will be available to assess the impact of the locational options put forward for development at Stafford.

9.158 Currently the Stafford eastern distributor road is a protected route in the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 from Stafford fire station at Beaconside through to the A513 road at Walton on the Hill. Staffordshire County Council has also protected this route as well as a further section from the A513 road east of Walton on the Hill to the A34 Cannock Road south of Wildwood. However this route could have a significant environmental impact, which should be investigated through a full Environmental Impact Assessment / Strategic Environmental Assessment. **Do you think that a new route should be protected from the A34 Cannock Road to the A449 Wolverhampton Road as a new eastern / southern bypass for Stafford?**

9.159 There is also a route indicated to the west of the town centre linking Wolverhampton Road to Newport Road via Brunswick Terrace, Kingsway (Castlefields) to Doxey Road and then from Doxey Road to Foregate. **We think that the western access route should be protected.**

9.160 The Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 identified a developer promoted Park & Ride scheme associated with housing development at Rickerscote but this proposal has not been implemented. **Do you think a Park & Ride scheme should be developed alongside significant new housing development to the north and south of Stafford?**

Rail

9.161 As a result of its strategic location on the rail network, Stafford may be in a strong position to effect significant modal shift from road to rail transport, with improvement to local rail services planned as a means of deflecting traffic away from the M6.

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9.162 Beyond 2010 the Department for Transport and the rail industry are considering a major intervention to improve capacity through Stafford station. Two possible solutions have been identified: a grade separation of the junction at Stafford station, or a new "Stafford bypass" line between Norton Bridge and Colwich Junction. Either solution would help to improve performance, and provide additional paths for services passing through the Stafford area.

9.163 The decisions on the options will not be made by us, although the Council would expect to be consulted on the options or the preferred option and would hope to have some influence on the choice of route and the detail of implementation.

9.164 The completion of the Trent Valley Twin Tracking Programme between Tamworth and Armitage on the West Coast Mainline will facilitate changes to timetables which will see the introduction of more frequent and faster services along these routes. The Council is currently working with Network Rail and Virgin West Coast to significantly increase car parking at Stafford Station to coincide with the introduction of the new timetable. Station improvements by the operator are also anticipated.

9.165 **These changes to the rail network could have the effect of increasing pressure for new housing development in Stafford particularly close to the rail station. The decision on this will be for the owners and operators to make and we will have little influence on this other than in design terms.**

Bus

9.166 The public consultation undertaken as a part of the overall Local Transport Plan (LTP) showed that the issues quoted most commonly as being the most important in Stafford are reducing demand for car travel (40% of respondents quoted as being most important) and improving the quality of bus services (36%).

9.167 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. In other towns and cities with dual carriageway or four lane carriageways one lane has been dedicated to buses, at least during peak periods. In Stafford, with the exception of Foregate, there are no radial routes which could offer such an opportunity although there may be an opportunity to provide more bus priority lanes within the town centre. **We think that more dedicated bus lanes ought to be provided in Stafford to favour the bus over the car. Please could you put forward your views on this matter.**

9.168 A number of suggestions have been made suggesting the need for a bus station although there appears to be no consensus on what this should comprise, the most appropriate location and how it should be funded e.g. an extension of the facilities at North Walls, an enclosed bus station in association with new development at North Walls or South Walls, an interchange facility at the Station. **Your views are invited on these options although we need to make it clear that funding is likely to be the key deciding factor and the Borough Council is unlikely to be able to provide this.**

9.169 For a number of years a network approach has been followed through developer contributions secured by the Stafford Urban Area Traffic Management Strategy (SUATMS). The study underpinning SUATMS forecasts that traffic from new developments and background traffic growth will result in a number of key routes and junctions operating above capacity by 2011. To remediate these problems

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and promote a more sustainable travel patterns, SUATMS recommends £4.8 m of capital expenditure between 2001 and 2011 for transport improvements. These initiatives will address congestion, accessibility, road safety and regeneration issues and improve town centre conditions for all travellers.

9.170 Full implementation may result in a 3% shift from car to sustainable travel modes at peak times, sufficient to effect a significant reduction in levels of congestion and travel times. Contributions towards transport improvements are being shared equitably between public resources and private companies wishing to develop in the town. The strategy is under continual revision and is flexible enough to be adapted to support a step change in housing and employment going forward.

9.171 The Government proposes to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy following commencement of the Planning Bill. This will enable the network approach to developer contributions to continue but given the significant amount of highway infrastructure to be delivered in and around Stafford developer contributions are likely to be significantly increased above the level currently sought through SUATMS. **Do you think that the SUATMS scheme should continue beyond 2011?**

9.172 A number of walking and cycling routes have been delivered to provide links from the town centre mainly along the Rivers Sow and Penk, the former railway lines to Newport and the former RAF Stafford (now MoD Stafford) and along the canal towpath through to the open countryside. **We think that linked routes including walking and cycling should be protected and extended as an integral part of new developments.**

Sustainable Community Strategies

9.173 The key issues and broad locations identified for future development at Stafford have been put forward in order to meet the vision and objectives of the Stafford Borough Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Community Strategy as well as the spatial vision and key objectives in the Development Plan.

9.174 **We think that the issues and potential development options described above meet the vision and objectives of these documents. If you disagree please state how the issues and potential development options could be amended.**

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The Market Town of Stone

Issues raised in consultation

Issues relating to Stone

- Loss of character.
- Recent development along the canal has resulting in a loss of openness and a tunnel effect.
- Not all uses of the river are supported.
- Loss of identity as a small market town.
- Housing development taken place without investment in appropriate infrastructure.
- Lack of housing for younger people.
- Disproportionate quantity of housing for the elderly.

Development pressures

- The responses states that development in Stone could dramatically increase its population, which in turn could spoil their character.
- Development in Stone will be limited due to the environmental and physical capacity of the settlement being reached.

Objectives / aspirations for Stone

- A suggestion of pedestrianising Margaret Street to Radford Street was given, as this would allow increased pedestrianisation of the shopping area.
- The response stated there are some uses of the river that are not supported and that the Residential Development Boundary should be retained in Stone.
- Introduce a mechanism to control release of additional housing in and around Stone to support the RENEW agenda in the North Staffordshire conurbation.
- More green space should be provided in all settlements.
- Improved rail services.
- Stone railway station and associated rail services be fully reinstated prior to any further development in Stone.
- Limit infill of gardens.
- Provide more parking in town centres.
- Maintain Stone as Market Town.
- Restrict use of brownfield land for apartments in Stone.
- Historical character of the centres of Stone to be preserved and enhanced with development having regard to Town Design Statements.
- Town centres to be vibrant places where people can meet, shop, eat and spend leisure time in a safe, clean and pleasant environment.
- Employment opportunities at Stone Business Park should be supplemented at Meaford.
- Support for canal-based regeneration in Stone to further development and tourist attractions.
- Retain young people in the town through appropriate job availability and affordable housing.
- Development to be retained within the limits of the valley ridge.

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Housing

9.175 Stone is the second largest town in the Borough. The vision and development approach set out within this document is directing a certain amount of new development to Stone to contribute towards at least 3,000 new homes required in the Borough outside of Stafford town. A number of issues need to be considered in terms of new development at Stone. To the north of the town is the North Staffordshire Green Belt which surrounds the Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle conurbation, a key purpose of which is to support urban regeneration to the conurbation. **We think that new development at Stone should be phased to support the urban regeneration initiatives in the North Staffordshire conurbation. Please state your views on this approach.**

9.176 The most up-to-date information about how many houses have been built in Stone and the number of planning permissions given for new homes is set out in the Council's annual publication called [Land for New Homes: Housing Monitor](#). In addition land has been assessed within the Stone residential development boundary to establish how much potential housing land is available, the findings of which are set out in the [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\)](#). However it is evident from these documents that there is insufficient land available to provide significant new housing at Stone and therefore Greenfield locations on the edge of the town may have to be considered for new housing development.

9.177 **The question is how much land should be made available, in which locations around Stone and when over the next 20 years should it be built. How many of the minimum 3,000 new homes to be accommodated elsewhere in Stafford Borough should be provided at Stone?**

A Changing Population

9.178 Analysis of the population information for Stone shows that the over 65 year olds will increasingly be a significant group. However an element of family housing will still be required to provide for local needs. **We think that a locally specific housing mix, including affordable housing, might be identified for Stone to try to meet the future needs of the town. Please say whether you agree with this approach and what do you think are the likely needs?**

Education Provision

9.179 Central government has a major programme aimed at transforming secondary education. In Staffordshire [Building Schools for the Future](#) includes a phased programme for new build, refurbishment and remodelling of the 68 secondary schools in the County at an estimated cost of around £800 million.

9.180 Information from the Staffordshire County Council Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate identifies that a number of primary schools in Stone have spare pupil places, although certain other schools currently have no surplus pupil capacity. **We think that the scale of potential new residential development for Stone will require education contributions to be made to the existing schools in the town to ensure that adequate new facilities are provided to accommodate increased pupil numbers. It is not anticipated that additional primary schools will be required to meet future education needs although significant development in the Walton area of the town may require re-development of existing school sites in the locality.**

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Health Care

9.181 In terms of hospital facilities the nearest services are at Stafford General Hospital in Stafford and North Staffordshire University Hospital at sites in the City of Stoke on Trent and Newcastle Borough. It has been established that both of these hospital facilities will be sufficient to meet future demands over the Plan period from increased housing development in Stone as well as changes in the demographic character of the Borough. However discussions with the Southern Staffordshire Primary Care Trust have suggested that a new health facility could be developed at Stone to meet future demands for existing patients and new residential development. **We think that a new health centre should be built in Stone to provide increased capacity through the consolidation of existing facilities.**

Flood Risk

9.182 The [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Stafford Borough](#) was completed and published in February 2008 which identified the extent of the floodplain affecting the urban area of Stone. No broad locations for potential new development have been identified in floodplain areas as alternative locations are available. However a number of locations identified in Stone are adjacent to the floodplain and within the River Trent corridor. National planning policy in [Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk](#) does not support the identification of significant new development in floodplain areas if possible. However these floodplain areas do have a significant role to contribute in terms of green infrastructure. **We think that floodplain areas in Stone should not be used for new housing and employment development.**

Open Space, Sport & Recreation

9.183 Studies produced as part of the Stone Market Town Initiative have stressed the importance of continued investment in services and infrastructure to support existing and future population needs. The Trent Corridor provides an opportunity to deliver valuable open space, sport and leisure facilities that will help link the communities either side of the A34, as well as the newly developed areas to the north of the town centre. **We think there is scope for the Borough Council and other landowners in the Trent Corridor to use their assets to improve biodiversity, increase accessibility, improve flood protection, provide better quality leisure facilities, and create tourism opportunities.** In order to achieve this, it will be necessary to accept limited development of areas with lower flood risk within the Trent Corridor to generate the capital to fund such improved community infrastructure.

9.184 The Borough Council commissioned consultants to produce interlinked strategies covering indoor and outdoor sports facilities, parks and greenspace, playing pitches and children's play provision. The full report [PPG17 Assessment and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy](#) has been the subject of previous consultation and sets out challenging options. **Your comments are invited on the content of the study and the implications for Stone.**

9.185 In Stone evidence from studies on open space, sport and recreation has identified a number of deficiencies in both the quality and quantity of provision including:

- Deficiencies in the quality of allotment provision
- Limited provision for bowls
- The low play value of a number of play areas, especially in the southern part of the town
- The small size of most green spaces in the town, apart from Westbridge Park and Stone Meadows
- The lack of multi-sport courts except in the north of the town

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- The very limited provision for teenagers

9.186 As part of proposed new housing developments on the edge of the Stone we think that green infrastructure will be a key element for future local communities including the provision of links such as walking and cycling routes. **To meet the provision of open space, sport and recreation for Stone in the future existing facilities could be improved and expanded to provide for future requirements or new facilities could be developed alongside new development. Should new facilities be located at one high profile location or should smaller scale new facilities be developed closer to local communities?**

9.187 We think that protection of existing and new facilities should reflect changes in the demographic profile of the Borough and be location specific to particular housing types. For example new recreational facilities close to new housing for older people or changing the use of existing facilities to meet future new requirements.

North Staffordshire Green Belt

9.188 In preparing the possible broad locations for new development on the edge of the Stone urban area consideration was given to land north of the town. However this area is part of the North Staffordshire Green Belt designation and therefore, due to national planning policy stating that development should only take place in the Green Belt under exceptional circumstances, locations in this area has not been included.

Provision of Utilities

9.189 A number of schemes are currently taking place in Stone town centre to solve problems, which occur during storm events with regards to foul water and surface water run off. Therefore an important consideration in terms of new residential development in Stone is the impact on the current sewerage system, which reaches capacity during storm events due to the combination of foul water and surface water run off within the existing system. The issue is particularly evident between the main sewerage pumping station at Westbridge Park and the Pirehill sewage treatment works south west of Stone. There is the potential that new development to the east or west of Stone may increase storage capacity pressure at Westbridge Park.

9.190 To solve this issue Severn Trent Water advise that prior to further residential development of broad locations around Stone it will be necessary to increase the storage capacity within the sewerage system at Westbridge Park. **We think that all new development should provide Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), foul water storage, and foul water and surface water run off must be kept separate to minimise capacity pressures during storm events in the future. Severn Trent Water do not support new development on low-lying land adjacent to the River Trent due to water resource implications and we agree with this approach.**

9.191 Information from Severn Trent Water with regards to the clean water distribution identifies that significant infrastructure provision will be required over the Plan period to meet the demands from new housing developments in Stone. These costs are being incorporated into Severn Trent Water's draft Business Plan covering the period 2010 to 2015 to be published in April 2009 although this does not take account of any "on site" mains required for particular developments, which will need to be met by landowners and developers.

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9.192 Currently information is being sought from the electricity and gas operators to establish whether there are any infrastructure capacity issues for Stone with regards to these utilities.

Employment

9.193 As part of the Plan, if a majority of the new housing development outside of Stafford is to be located at Stone **we think that a proportion of new employment provision should be considered for the town.** As part of Stafford Borough's provision there is scope to allocate new greenfield sites on the edge of Stone to provide for new jobs.

9.194 The Council has completed an [Employment Land Review](#) which has assessed existing employment areas and established that the majority of these locations should be retained in order to sustain a balanced future community in Stone and the Borough. Currently the employment land commitments for Stone and the former Meaford Power Station site are approximately 47 hectares, with approximately 35 hectares being at Meaford. **We do not think that there is sufficient employment land committed to the Stone area to meet future needs.**

9.195 In recent years warehousing development has taken place at Stone due to the proximity of the M6 motorway and the M6 Toll, in particular at Stone Business Park. There is also evidence in Stone that existing employment sites have been developed for housing with employers relocating to greenfield locations elsewhere including within Stafford Borough. **We think that new employment sites should be encouraged for small and medium sized enterprises and light industry. Please could you tell us your views on this approach.**

Town Centre

9.196 The Regional Plan for the West Midlands highlights the role of non strategic centres as being of great importance for people to satisfy day-to-day needs. **We think that Stone is a non strategic centre within the Borough and meets local needs for convenience shopping, local service and facility provision and day-to-day comparison shopping.**

9.197 **We think that land uses in the town centre could be intensified, particularly between the High Street and Crown Street but we do not think that schemes providing more than 10,000 square metres of gross new comparison retail floorspace in Stone is required over the Plan period.**

9.198 **Do you think that the town centre should be expanded to increase the amount of land made available for retail?**

9.199 **Please refer to the on-line maps of Stone Town Centre to highlight whether the extent of the town centre boundary and the primary shopping area should change and whether the areas of primary and secondary shopping frontages should be amended.**

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9.200 In terms of the retail and office locations identified on the associated maps please give your support or objection to the areas shown giving reasons for your response. If you have an alternative location please specify. If you support development in a particular location please specify whether development should be for retail or offices.



The following prefixes have been applied to the locations illustrated above. More detailed maps showing the range of options can be viewed [online](#).

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Spatial Options 15

Stone Town Centre (SNTC) - Retail and / or Office Locations

- SNTC-T1 Land south of Christchurch Way
- SNTC-T2 Land on corner of Newcastle Street
- SNTC-T3 Land south of Newcastle Street
- SNTC-T4 Land north of Crown Street
- SNTC-T5 Land south of Crown Street
- SNTC-T6 Land south of Abbey Street

Historic Environment

9.201 A number of historic assets are important to Stone particularly within the Stone Town Centre Conservation Area, which has recently been amended. With an increased emphasis for new development in the town centre the loss of character and sight lines between historic assets could increase. **We think that the impact of new development on historic assets in Stone should be reduced.**

Transport

9.202 Over recent years traffic movements on principal routes bisecting Stone have increased pressure on the road network during peak periods. Furthermore incidents on the A34 road close to Stone exacerbate pressures on the local transport network. The Staffordshire County Council [Local Transport Plan](#) provides a range of solutions for consideration in terms of significant new development in Stone, including public transport and traffic management initiatives. Discussions with key stakeholders have suggested that the greatest pressures are on the A34 at the Walton and Stone Business Park roundabouts as well as through the centre of Stone on the A520 road.

9.203 **As a result of new development at Stone over the Plan period we think that new routes should be identified to reduce traffic pressures. Please refer to the associated maps to respond to the proposed new roads suggested for Stone.**

9.204 The completion of the Trent Valley Twin Tracking Programme between Tamworth and Armitage will facilitate changes to timetables on the Trent Valley railway line with a new Crewe to London Euston service stopping at a re-opened Stone station. Minor station improvements by the operator are anticipated, which could have the effect of increasing pressure for limited new housing development on brownfield land currently used for employment close to the rail station. **We think that existing employment land close to Stone railway station should be protected from new housing.**

Sustainable Community Strategies

9.205 The key issues and broad locations identified for future development at Stone have been put forward in order to meet the vision and objectives of the Stafford Borough Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2020, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Community Strategy referred to earlier in this document as well as the spatial vision and key objectives in the Development Plan. **We think that**

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the issues and potential development options for Stone described above meet the vision and objectives of these documents. If you do not agree please state how the issues and potential development options could be amended.

Areas Outside of Stafford and Stone

Green Belt areas

9.206 In preparing the potential broad locations for new development on the edge of identified settlements consideration was given to land within the Green Belt. However due to national planning policy stating that development should only take place in the Green Belt under exceptional circumstances, locations in this area have not been included. The only exception to this might be land identified as a 'Major Developed Site' in the Green Belt where development could be provided whilst preserving and enhancing the character and openness of the Green Belt. Further details have been set out earlier in the document.

9.207 Within Stafford Borough the settlements of Gnosall / Gnosall Heath, Eccleshall, Hixon, Great Haywood and Little Haywood have populations of more than 1,600 people and are located outside of the two Green Belt areas in the north and south east of the Borough. **In terms of these settlements we do not think these are sufficiently close to the North Staffordshire Green Belt to significantly impact on the urban regeneration programmes in the City of Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle conurbation.**

Housing

9.208 The most up-to-date information about how many houses have been built in areas outside of Stafford and Stone and the number of planning permissions given for new homes is set out in the Council's annual publication called [Land for New Homes: Housing Monitor](#). In addition land has been assessed in and around settlements with Residential Development Boundaries to establish how much potential housing land is available, the findings of which will be set out in the [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\)](#). Depending on the number of new houses suggested to particular settlements there is the possibility that insufficient land would be available within the existing Residential Development Boundaries and therefore greenfield locations on the edge of settlements would have to be considered for new housing development.

9.209 **The question is how much land should be made available, in which locations around particular settlements and when over the next 20 years should these be built. How many of the minimum 3,000 new homes to be accommodated elsewhere in Stafford Borough should be provided outside of Stafford and Stone?**

A Changing Population

9.210 Analysis of the population information for areas outside of Stafford and Stone shows that the over 65 year olds will increasingly be a significant group. However an element of family housing will still be required to provide for local needs in these areas. **We think that a mix of housing types should be delivered outside of Stafford and Stone over the Plan period to correspond to the demographic changes. Do you think that a locally specific housing mix is required for areas outside of Stafford and Stone and if so how should this housing mix be divided between one bedroomed, two bedroomed, three bedroomed and four or more bedroomed houses?**

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Education Provision

9.211 Information from the Staffordshire County Council Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate identifies that a number of primary schools in areas outside of Stafford and Stone have spare pupil places, although certain primary schools have no surplus pupil capacity. **We think that the scale of potential new residential development in certain settlements may require education contributions to be made to the existing schools to ensure adequate new facilities are provided to accommodate increased pupil numbers arising from new housing development.** However it is not anticipated that additional primary schools will be required to meet future education needs in any areas outside of Stafford and Stone.

Health Care

9.212 In terms of hospital facilities the nearest services for areas outside of Stafford and Stone are at Stafford General Hospital in Stafford and North Staffordshire University Hospital. It has been established that both of these hospital facilities will be sufficient to meet future demands over the Plan period from increased housing development as well as changes in the demographic character of the Borough. **At Gnosall a significant health facility has recently been opened and we think this provides sufficient services and facilities in the western part of Stafford Borough. However following discussions with the Southern Staffordshire Primary Care Trust we think that a new health facility should be developed in the eastern part of the Borough to meet future demands from existing patients and new residential development. Do you think the existing health facilities at Great Haywood should be expanded or do you have any suggests for which settlement should have this new health facility?**

Flood Risk

9.213 The [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Stafford Borough](#) was completed and published in February 2008, which identified the extent of the flood risk. No broad locations in identified settlements for potential new development have been identified in floodplain areas because alternative options are available outside of such areas. National planning policy in [Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk](#) does not support new development in floodplain areas if alternative locations are possible.

Open Space, Sport & Recreation

9.214 New development outside of Stafford and Stone could bring limited pressure for recreational open space provision, impact on biodiversity and landscape implications. **As part of proposed new housing developments on the edge of any identified settlements we think that green infrastructure should be provided as well as identifying protected open space within settlements. Please could you tell us your views on this approach.**

9.215 The Borough Council commissioned Consultants to produce interlinked strategies covering indoor and outdoor sports facilities, parks and greenspace, playing pitches and children's play provision. The full report [PPG17 Assessment and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy](#) has been the subject of previous consultation and sets out challenging options. **Your comments are invited on the content of the study and the implications for the areas outside Stafford and Stone.**

9.216 In areas outside Stafford and Stone evidence from studies on open space, sport and recreation has identified a number of deficiencies in both the quality and quantity of provision on the eastern and western sides of the Borough, including:

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- The lack of allotments on the eastern side of the Borough and the limited provision on the western side
- The difficulties that residents of the western side of the Borough have in accessing artificial turf pitches
- The lack of provision for bowls
- Very limited children's play provision
- The lack of fitness, sports hall, swimming pool and multi-sports court provision
- The lack of facilities for teenagers in the western half of the Borough
- The limited tennis court provision

9.217 Do you think that existing facilities should be improved and expanded to provide for future requirements or should new facilities be developed alongside new development? Should protection of existing and new facilities reflect changes in the demographic profile of the Borough?

9.218 Across the Borough there is a lack of country park provision as well as indoor bowls and indoor tennis provision, with facilities in adjoining local authority areas readily accessible to only a limited number of Borough residents.

Provision of Utilities

9.219 A number of schemes are currently taking place in Barlaston to solve flooding problems which occur during storm events with regards to foul water and surface water run off. Furthermore there are local flooding issues to be addressed in Gnosall, Haughton, Little Haywood and Eccleshall. An important consideration in terms of new residential development in areas outside of Stafford and Stone is the impact on the sewerage system, which reaches capacity during storm events due to the combination of foul water and surface water run off within the existing system. **We think that new development at these settlements will need to increase current storage capacities as well as provide Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), foul water storage, and foul water and surface water run off must be kept separate to minimise capacity pressures during storm events in the future. Severn Trent Water do not support new development on low-lying land adjacent to rivers and we agree with this approach.**

9.220 Information from Severn Trent Water with regards to the clean water distribution identifies that some infrastructure provision will be required over the Plan period for demands to be met from new residential development requirements in areas outside of Stafford and Stone. These costs are being incorporated into Severn Trent Water's draft Business Plan covering the period 2010 to 2015 to be published in April 2009 although this does not take account of any "on site" mains required for particular developments, which will need to be met by landowners and developers.

9.221 Currently information is being sought from the electricity and gas operators to establish whether there are any infrastructure capacity issues for areas outside of Stafford and Stone with regards to these utilities.

Employment

9.222 As part of the development strategy if a majority of the new housing development outside of Stafford and Stone is to be located at Gnosall / Gnosall Heath, Eccleshall, Hixon, Great Haywood and Little Haywood **we think that a proportion of new employment provision should be considered next to the settlement or in the locality.**

9 Delivering a Sustainable Future

9.223 There are currently five employment areas outside of Stafford and Stone, called Recognised Industrial Estates, at Pasturefields next to Hixon, Hixon Airfield, Ladfordfields, Moorfields and Raleigh Hall. **As part of Stafford Borough's provision there is scope to either extend the existing Recognised Industrial Estates to reflect new housing development in nearby settlements or alternatively allocate new Greenfield sites on settlements where new housing development will take place. Which approach do you think is most appropriate?**

9.224 As well as the level of employment land commitments in Stafford Borough, indicated in the evidence base, the Council has recently completed an [Employment Land Review](#) which has assessed existing employment areas and established that the majority of these locations should be retained in order to sustain a balanced future community in the Borough. Currently the employment land commitments for areas outside of Stafford and Stone is approximately 15 hectares, of which over 12 hectares are at Recognised Industrial Estates in Hixon. Less than 1 hectare of employment land is committed adjacent to Raleigh Hall and Moorfields Recognised Industrial Estates. Moorfields is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. **We do not think that sufficient employment land is currently committed in areas outside of Stafford and Stone to meet future needs. Should rural based industries outside of Recognised Industrial Estates or settlements be encouraged in farm buildings through appropriate conversions?**

Historic Environment

9.225 A number of historic assets are important in areas outside of Stafford and Stone particularly within Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens. **We think that the impact of new development on historic assets should be reduced in areas outside of Stafford and Stone by restricting development. Please tell us whether you agree with this approach.**

Transport

What you have told us (previous consultations)

There are concerns that there has been an increased use of rural roads by private vehicles at excessive speeds rat running and encouraged by satellite navigation systems. The volume of lorry traffic is a particular concern for many communities in Stafford Borough as it creates noise, vehicle emissions, dust, community severance and contributes towards local congestion.

9.226 The suggestion has been made that a Quiet Lanes Initiative should be investigated in Stafford Borough. Over recent years traffic movements, in particular Heavy Goods Vehicles, on principal routes through the Borough have increased pressure on the local road network. Lorries can also cause concern for other road users, particularly pedestrians and cyclists. At the same time, the efficient movement of freight is vital for the economy of the Borough. This would principally be a matter for the Local Transport Plan.

9.227 The Staffordshire County Council [Local Transport Plan](#) provides a range of solutions for consideration in terms of reducing these impacts as well as the implications of new development in identified settlements including public transport and traffic management initiatives. A key issue for areas outside of Stafford and Stone is the limited extent of public transport provision.

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9.228 We think that new development in areas outside of Stafford and Stone should provide financial support for the provision of public transport through local transport operators to meet the needs of the local communities. Please let us know your views on this approach.

Rural Services & Facilities

What you have told us (previous consultations)

In areas outside of Stafford and Stone there is some concern about the loss of services and facilities, particularly in the villages, for daily convenience shopping.

9.229 Over recent years a number of public houses, post offices and other retail establishments have ceased trading leading to a greater reliance on travelling to other areas for services and facilities. **We think that services and facilities are important in the areas outside of Stafford and Stone and should be retained.** Please let us know which services and facilities you think are important and how these can continue to serve the population in these areas.

Sustainable Community Strategies

9.230 The key issues and broad locations identified for future development in areas outside of Stafford and Stone have been put forward in order to meet the vision and objectives of the Stafford Borough Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2020, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Community Strategy as well as the spatial vision and key objectives in the Development Plan. **We think that the issues and potential development options described above meet the vision and objectives of these documents.** If you disagree with this approach please state how the issues and potential development options could be amended.

10 Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy

10 Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy

Planning Obligations (Section 106 agreements)

10.1 The Government believes that almost all development will have an impact on local infrastructure, services and amenities and that it is reasonable that those that benefit from development should share some of that gain with the local community to help fund the necessary physical, environmental and social infrastructure to make development acceptable and sustainable.

10.2 The current system of planning obligations relies on agreements negotiated between local planning authorities and persons with an interest in a piece of land (or 'developers') in the context of granting planning permission. They may make development acceptable which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. Obligations are principally delivered through 'Section 106 Agreements' but may also be secured through unilateral undertakings by developers.

10.3 Planning obligations are sought for a wide range of purposes, including transport, open space provision, education facilities and transport including Travel Plans. In recent years one of the main uses of planning obligations has been the provision of on site affordable housing. A full description of policy is set out in [Circular 05/05: Planning Obligations](#).

10.4 The Secretary of State's policy requires, amongst other factors, that planning obligations are only sought where they meet all of the following tests:

- (i) necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms;
- (ii) relevant to planning;
- (iii) directly related to the proposed development;
- (iv) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development;
- (v) reasonable in all other respects.

10.5 Planning obligations can be used for:

- Compensating for the loss or damage caused by a development - where loss or damage will occur due to development, compensation may be required by substitution, replacement or regenerating the loss of, or damage to a resource present or nearby.
- Prescribing the nature of the development - Planning Obligations may be used to secure the implementation of planning policy to make acceptable a development proposal that would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.
- Mitigating the impact of a development – where a proposed development would, if implemented, create a need for a particular facility that is relevant to planning but cannot be required through the use of planning conditions.
- Contributions may be 'in kind' or in the form of a financial contribution, including commuted sums.

10.6 The use of planning obligations is governed by the fundamental principle that planning permission may not be bought or sold. It is therefore not legitimate for unacceptable development to be permitted because of benefits or inducements offered by a developer which are not necessary to make the

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development acceptable in planning terms. Similarly, planning obligations should never be used as a means of securing for the local community a share in the profits of development, i.e. as a means of securing a 'betterment levy'.

10.7 It will in general be reasonable to seek, or take account of, a planning obligation, if what is sought or offered is necessary from a planning point of view i.e. in order to bring a development in line with relevant local, regional or national planning policies. Plan policies are therefore a crucial pre-determinant in justifying the seeking of any planning obligations since they set out the matters which must be addressed in order for development to proceed. Obligations must also be so directly related to proposed developments that the development ought not to be permitted without them – for example, there should be a functional or geographical link between the development and the item being provided as part of the developer's contribution.

10.8 Within these categories of acceptable obligations, what is sought must also be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development and reasonable in all other respects. For example, developers may reasonably be expected to pay for or contribute to the cost of all, or that part of, infrastructure which would not have been necessary but for their development. The effect of the infrastructure investment may be to confer some wider benefit on the community but payments should be directly related in scale to the impact which the proposed development will make or to the benefit it will derive from the facilities to be provided. Planning obligations should not be used solely to resolve existing deficiencies in infrastructure provision.

10.9 Whilst nearly all Councils require the types of contribution currently sought by Stafford Borough Council i.e. affordable housing, transportation, education and public open space, many Councils are going well beyond this and require payments for a wide range of social and community infrastructure.

10.10 Justification for such payment is that new development often creates a need for additional and improved community services and facilities, without which there would be a detrimental effect on local amenity and the quality of the environment. From this research it is apparent that:

10.11 The Government has made it clear that local communities should benefit more from the uplift in land value arising from planning permission to finance the infrastructure needed to support housing growth in particular. As part of their response to Kate Bakers' review of housing supply published in 2004, the Government accepted her recommendation, in principle, and consulted on proposals for a Planning Gain Supplement whereby contributions from developers would be collected nationally and redistributed back to local authorities to provide key infrastructure.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

10.12 The ideas for a planning gain supplement appear to have been refined and are now described as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The introduction of CIL requires primary legislation which will allow (but not require) local authorities to require new development to pay a locally determined levy. The proceeds of the levy would be spent on local and sub-regional infrastructure within Stafford Borough.

10.13 The suggested benefits of CIL are that:-

- It will spread the burden for infrastructure provision more fairly and evenly thus preventing either the first developer in an area or the last developer contributing disproportionately to the cost of the infrastructure in that area, due to their development being the 'tipping point' for the need for a piece of infrastructure, while others make a low or no contribution at all

10 Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy

- It will broaden the range of developments that will contribute to development enabling greater improvements in transparency, greater certainty and predictability as to the level of contribution required
- It will result in the widening of the contributions base by making it easier to levy contributions on less major developments thus enabling infrastructure funding to become more predictable over time
- It will reduce the administrative burden of negotiating planning obligations, which has mitigated against collecting contributions from smaller developments
- It could potentially be a major advance in terms of community participation and transparency as CIL will improve the opportunities for public participation in both the infrastructure underpinning the charging schedule and the procedures for preparing the schedule
- It will enable key sub-regional infrastructure, which benefits more than one local authority, to be more easily funded by enabling local authorities to pool CIL contributions. Sub-regional infrastructure is often larger infrastructure to which a number of authorities and developers need to contribute in order to make it affordable. Key sub-regional infrastructure can often be the most critical type of infrastructure in terms of unlocking significant housing or economic development

10.14 The Planning Bill specifies that CIL can only be used to deliver the infrastructure that is needed to support development in the area. However, this does not restrict CIL to entirely new infrastructure. It may equally be used to refurbish or increase the capacity of existing infrastructure.

10.15 The Government proposes that the definition of infrastructure for CIL should encompass different types of infrastructure such as transport, schools and health centres, flood defences, play areas, parks and other green spaces. However, affordable housing, direct replacement of facilities or amenities caused by development and other matters necessary to make the development site acceptable in planning terms should continue to be provided by the current system of planning obligations.

10.16 Only certain authorities (charging authorities) may charge CIL. These include District Councils, Unitary Authorities, National Park Authorities, Metropolitan District Councils, London Borough Councils and The Broads Authority. However, Regional Planning Bodies, Regional Development Agencies and County Councils which are not unitary authorities but prepare plans for minerals and waste development will not be empowered as charging authorities. Charging authorities may also choose whether or not to implement CIL.

10.17 The charging authority should prepare a charging schedule that sets out the rates and/or formula's for determining how the levy will be applied within their area. There should be a direct relationship between the charging schedule and the infrastructure planning process to allow for feedback between decisions about the level and scope of the charge and the infrastructure planning process.

10.18 The Government proposes that the charging schedule will be part of the folder of documents which make up the Local Development Framework outlined in PPS12. Although the charging schedule will not be formally part of the development plan, it will be subject to the same level of rigorous testing as development plan documents, including a public inquiry before an independent Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate. This enables developers, stakeholders and the local community to influence

Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy 10

how CIL will deliver on local infrastructure priorities. The report of the Inspector will be binding upon the charging authority. However, the charging authority would not be under obligation to adopt the final schedule.

10.19 The Government proposes, subject to thresholds, that CIL will be levied on the majority of residential and commercial development.

- Where appropriate local authorities will be able to use CIL to supplement a negotiated agreement. Negotiated agreements will still be necessary to secure affordable housing and address costs related to the specific development site.
- CIL should be based on a costed assessment of the infrastructure requirements arising specifically out of the development contemplated by the Development Plan for the area (which comprises the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Local Development Framework) taking account of land values.

10.20 Some types of development could be exempt from CIL, although in order to be considered for exemption certain criteria will need to be satisfied, including, for example, the extent to which any exemption might have economically distortionary effects or be difficult to define (and therefore to enforce). There will be a 'de minimis' threshold below which CIL will not be payable. Householder development by homeowners will not be liable.

10.21 The amount of CIL will be calculated with reference to the charging schedule when a planning permission is granted. The planning permission will determine the number of chargeable units and the charging schedule will determine the rate per unit, so the liability will simply be one multiplied by the other. However, payment (including any indexation) would not be due until commencement of development.

10.22 The Planning Bill specifies that any body that has received CIL funds (not just the authority that charged it) should monitor the use which has been or will be made of it; and report how the CIL was collected and spent. It is anticipated that authorities should use existing monitoring frameworks to monitor the collection and use of CIL receipts.

10.23 The following is a list of typical facilities/schemes which could be supported by CIL contributions. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive and it should not be assumed that all of the schemes listed would be applicable to the circumstances of the Council or would be supported in every case.

- Improvements to parks which are not purely local facilities but serve the wider community e.g. Victoria Park
- New / improved sporting and leisure facilities e.g. leisure centres, swimming pools etc.
- Sustainable drainage / flood alleviation schemes
- Contributions towards the conservation and restoration and enhancement of the historic environment
- Regeneration initiatives and neighbourhood renewal
- Traffic calming, signage and other traffic management measures
- Bus services
- Enabling development such as new development to provide funding for a Listed Building
- Youth support / local youth facilities
- Sustainable energy generation and energy efficiency
- Education facilities (primary and / or secondary schools)

10 Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy

10.24 On balance, we think that it is preferable to continue to use standardised Section 106 Agreements where appropriate, taking into account the tests within Circular 05/2005 or its successor document. If CIL is to be introduced we also think that it is important to avoid double charging e.g. if a developer has made provision for affordable housing in a Section 106 Agreement it would be unreasonable to include a further charge for affordable housing in a CIL contribution.

10.25 We would welcome all views on Planning Obligations and the possible introduction of CIL in Stafford Borough. We would particularly appreciate contributions to the discussion from the development industry.

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11 Local Monitoring and Review

11.1 The purpose of monitoring and review is to assess the delivery and implementation of the new Development Plan. The Stafford Borough Annual Monitoring Report provides a robust and effective review and monitoring approach for the Local Development Framework. The Government has set out requirements for Annual Monitoring Reports which are to be based on the period 1st April to 31st March and must be submitted to the Secretary of State no later than the end of December each year. As part of the Annual Monitoring Report information for Stafford Borough is collected and reported in the document on the following national core indicators:

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	
BD 1	Total amount of additional employment floorspace- by type
BD 2	Total amount of employment floorspace on previously developed land - by type
BD 3	Employment land available by type
BD 4	Total amount of floorspace for 'town centre uses'
HOUSING	
H1	Plan period and housing targets
H2(a)	Net additional dwellings- in previous years
H2(b)	Net additional dwellings- for the reporting year
H2(c)	Net additional dwellings- in future years
H2(d)	Managed delivery target
H3	New and converted dwellings on previously developed land
H4	Net additional pitches (Gypsy and Traveller)
H5	Gross affordable housing completions
H6	Housing Quality- Building for Life Assessments
MINERALS (for minerals planning authority only)	
M1	Production of primary land won aggregates by mineral planning authority
M2	Production of secondary and recycled aggregates by mineral planning authority
WASTE (for waste planning authority only)	
W1	Capacity of new waste management facilities by waste planning authority
W2	Amount of municipal waste arising, and managed by management type by waste management authority.

11 Local Monitoring and Review

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

E1	Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on either flood defence grounds or water quality grounds.
E2	Change in areas of biodiversity importance.
E3	Renewable energy generation

11.2 We think that more locally specific indicators and targets need to be produced for the new Development Plan. Do you have any locally specific indicators and targets which you consider should be included in the Development Plan to assess implementation and delivery?

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12 Next Steps

12.1 Please provide your responses to the Borough Council by **12 noon on Friday 3rd April 2009** so that this information can be used in the next stage of the decision-making process.

12.2 The next stage of the process is to prepare a document called the Plan for Stafford Borough - Preferred Options Report, which will be consulted upon later in the year setting out the broad direction for future development and the implementation of planning policies across the Borough area. However this programme may change due to proposed Government changes to the planning system.

Further Information

The following documentation is available providing background information relating to this paper as set out below:-

- West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision can be viewed on the [West Midlands Regional Assembly](#)
- The relevant research studies and evidence on the Local Development Framework can be viewed on the [Stafford Borough Council Website](#)

If you wish to discuss this paper in more detail please contact the Forward Planning Team on 01785 619000.

If you need this information in large print, Braille, other language or on audio cassette please contact 01785 619000

To help in making sure as many people as possible have a chance to hear about what we are doing, Council officers will be available to hear your views and discuss any part of the document at the following locations:

- Wednesday 25th February, **Christchurch church hall, Stone** 2pm-8pm
- Thursday 26th February, **Great Haywood memorial hall**, 2pm-8pm
- Friday 27th February, **Castlechurch church hall**, 2pm-8pm
- Tuesday 3rd March, **Holy Trinity church hall, Baswich**, 2pm-8pm
- Wednesday 4th March, **Barlaston Village Hall**, 2pm-8pm
- Thursday 5th March, **Eccleshall Community Centre**, 2pm-8pm
- Tuesday 10th March, **Hixon Village Hall**, 2pm-8pm
- Wednesday 11th March, **Stafford Community Shop, Guildhall shopping centre**, 10am-4pm
- Thursday 12th March, **Walton Community Centre, Stone**, 2pm-8pm
- Friday 13th March, **Grosvenor Centre, Gnosall**, 2pm-8pm
- Monday 16th, **Stafford Community Shop, Guildhall shopping centre**, 10pm-4pm
- Tuesday 17th March, **St Bertelins, Holmcroft** 10am-6pm