

Response and Officer Response to Sustainability Appraisal Report

Guiding principles appraisal	
Natural England	<p>Guiding principles</p> <p>Natural England supports the proposed wording to <i>“Reduce impact on the natural environment in terms of waste, carbon emissions and use of natural resources”</i></p> <p><i>“Avoid areas at risk from flooding including locations vulnerable to either fluvial or surface water flooding”</i></p> <p>Natural England acknowledges and supports this suggested policy wording change. Its importance is emphasised by the fundamental link between this subject matter, effective green infrastructure and its role in providing ecosystem services.</p> <p><i>“Development on Previously Developed Land”</i></p> <p>We draw the Council’s attention to potential biodiversity impacts and the need for appropriate survey and assessment to inform decisions.</p> <p>We note that the <i>“Attitude to area” criterion</i> is assessed as ‘0’ (neutral) – This appears to risk underplaying outcomes from the SANGs approach to major housing in the borough – a stimulus for an integrated approach to green infrastructure provision, with all its benefits.</p>
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	<p>Comments noted. The Revised Sustainability Appraisal report to reappraise policies, taking into account any changes that result from the consultation on the draft publication. The appraisal to take into account assessments of possible biodiversity habitats present on previously development land sites and the social benefits from green infrastructure and SANGS.</p>

	Should there be any strategy for SANGS, this will be reported in the Revised Sustainability Appraisal report.
Strategic Development Locations	
Natural England	<p>Strategic Development Locations</p> <p><i>“Development proposals should be consistent with other local planning policies”</i></p> <p>We strongly support this wording clarification - this has important positive environmental protection and enhancement effects e.g. addresses current lack of SSSI/biodiversity policy coverage in Stone policy. This cross cutting policy approach needs to be cross referenced throughout the Core Strategy. By stating in core policy what is expected across the borough SDL policy can simply refer to relevant policy adding further policy text on environmental issues only where this serves to safeguard and enhance key local features/the sense of place</p> <p>Further examples:</p> <p><i>Policy: New development in the countryside</i> <i>H. They do not harm any protected species on site and provide habitat mitigation and enhancement</i></p> <p><i>Policy: Extensions to the Curtilage of Dwellings</i> <i>Addition of word ‘habitat’</i></p> <p>As for the Strategic Development Locations policy above the protected species and habitats (including <u>BAP Priority species and habitats</u>) issue should be treated as a cross-cutting policy theme.</p>
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	<i>“Development proposals should be consistent with other local planning policies” added to the document.</i>

Stafford Town	
Natural England	<p><i>Environment</i></p> <p><i>Provision of new Green Infrastructure (GI) for Stafford Town such as the Penk and Sow natural parklands as well as the Stafford Common Community Park together with local area schemes that respond to the characteristics, local needs and opportunities for improved GI provision and biodiversity assets of the town;</i></p> <p><i>Ensure that development does not damage the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC);</i></p> <p><i>Ensure that development is not located in areas of flood risk or contribute to flooding elsewhere;</i></p> <p><i>Development is sympathetic to the natural landscape”</i></p> <p>We welcome the distinction between tourism and environment. This clarifies and addresses the current location of SSSI related text under ‘tourism’.</p> <p>With regard to proposed additional wording in last line we propose that specific wording such as ‘landscape character’ replaces ‘natural landscape’ in order to define more clearly what is meant.</p>
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	Agreed landscape character to replace natural landscape
East of Stafford	
Natural England	<p>This part of the SA report doesn’t consider the effects of the proposed eastern access improvement scheme. Baswich Meadows SSSI lies close by and the whole area lies within the Cannock Chase SAC ZOI. See below under ‘eastern direction of growth’ for further SA material of relevance.</p>

Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	Agreed. Revised Sustainability Appraisal to incorporate information from the Staffordshire County Council Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment.
Stone	
Natural England	We note that river quality issues were raised in the evidence base but are not reflected in policy.
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	<p>Agreed. River quality issues to be addressed in the policy through the suggested recommended additions to the policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that new developments adopt sustainable drainage techniques (SUDS) in order to reduce surface water flooding • Facilitate upgrades to Pirehill wastewater treatment works;
Climate Change	
Natural England	<p><i>Natural green-space - Positive impact due to enhanced open space and green links as part of SUDS</i></p> <p>Natural green-space – reference to open space as part of SUDS. Source and send eco-system services info to demonstrate the breadth of these services and their relationship with natural green-space.</p> <p>NB ‘SSSI quality’ criterion in report appears to be used interchangeably with wider biodiversity interests.</p>
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	<p>Noted. No change to appraisal of climate change policy. SUDS are referenced in two policies – climate change and Environmental Management and Green Infrastructure both of which aim to recognise the relationship between SUDS and natural green-space.</p> <p>Agreed regarding the ‘SSSI quality’. Other decision making criteria are set out in the SA Framework - ensure these are followed in the Revised SA Report.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it lead to the protection of designated sites? • Will it lead to the enhancement of designated sites? • Will it result in habitat creation at all scales/Will it conserve and enhance natural/seminatural habitats? • Will it conserve and enhance nationally significant species and habitats? • Will it improve biodiversity within urban areas? • Will it enhance the wider ecological network and seek to minimise the fragmentation of nature corridors and networks?
Policy: Canal Facilities and New Marinas	
Natural England	Assessed as having minor positive effect on natural green-space and SSSI – We believe it is important to note that this positive outcome is subject to effective implementation of other relevant policies in the plan (see comments above re protected/BAP species and habitats)
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	Comment noted. Considered the policy offers adequate environmental protection in terms of habitat and biodiversity but consider an overarching statement in the plan that all planning policies apply to all applications would be beneficial.
Stafford - Eastern direction of growth	
Natural England	We note this concept's reliance upon an Eastern Distributor road or Eastern access improvement scheme. Natural England has set out its concerns regarding the scheme's effects in our representations on the Core Strategy document.
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	Noted. Appraisal to consider effects of this and any other new route in revised SA Report, drawing on work carried out by Staffordshire County Council.
Habitat Regulations Assessment	
Natural England	We acknowledge the SA Report commentary regarding the Cannock Chase SAC Screening

	<p>report.</p> <p>Does the Council know when HRA for remaining SAC/Ramsar will be available?</p>
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	Agreed. Sustainability Appraisal to provide commentary on the HRA for the remaining SAC and RAMSAR sites. The screening opinion will be refreshed early 2012 and sent to Natural England for comment.
Water Framework Directive	
Environment Agency	<p>As raised within our previous response to your Local Choice consultation, it is key that the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) are achieved through the implementation of the Humber and Severn River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), as new development and redevelopment provides many opportunities to help your Authority work towards its targets for the water bodies in the borough.</p> <p>In light of this, we recommend that your SA assesses the effectiveness of the plan against the local objectives of these RBMPs, and ensures that the plan maximises its opportunities to promote improvement in the characteristics and status of all types of water bodies.</p> <p>We note that Core Policy 3 is marked as having an uncertain impact on water quality (SA Objective 14), and that Core Policy 7 states that the policy does not adequately address water issues raised in the evidence base. The addition of suitable WFD policies within the Core Strategy should ensure that these policies can only have a positive impact on water. The WFD does not allow for any detrimental impact and as such this needs to be addressed within robust proposals and policies.</p> <p>We note that a target of SA Objective 14 is to achieve standards set out by WFD. As WFD puts a large focus on ecological quality of rivers in addition to water quality, we recommend a similar targets is also considered for SA Objective 12.</p>
Change made to Sustainability	Agreed. Section added to appendix setting out the relevant local objectives for the

<p>Appraisal documents</p>	<p>Humber and Severn Basin Management Plan. Further policy wording recommended within Core Policy 14: The Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure:</p> <p>The Borough's natural environment will be protected, enhanced and improved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and guidance including 'Biodiversity by Design' or any other successor documents to increase and enhance biodiversity, in terms of habitats and species as well as geological conservation or geodiversity through appropriate management for a network of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Designated Sites (international, national, regional and local); ii. Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species populations; iii. Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Networks; • Conservation and enhancement of water courses and their settings for their landscape character, biodiversity and recreational value, particularly for the Borough's extensive canal system; • Protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic environment and irreplaceable semi-natural habitats such as ancient woodlands; • Increasing the ability of landscapes and ecosystems to adapt to different weather patterns by increasing the range and extent of habitats, informed by Biodiversity Opportunity mapping produced by Natural England; • Ensuring that no new development takes place in areas where environmental risks, particularly flooding, cannot be managed properly; • Any new development where damage to the natural environment is unavoidable must include measures to mitigate or compensate such impacts through the establishment of replacement habitats or features including appropriate site management regimes. <p>The Borough's green infrastructure network will be protected, enhanced and expanded to enhance quality of life, increase sustainability, reduce the impacts of climate change and improve health and well being across these overarching objectives:</p>
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- Networks of open spaces, natural corridors, access routes and watercourses will be enhanced and created to:
 - i. protect the setting of landscape, heritage and natural (biodiversity and geodiversity) assets
 - ii. reverse habitat fragmentation
 - iii. provide recreational opportunities for new and existing communities
 - iv. provide open breaks between neighbouring residential areas and business developments.

 - The network of existing access routes will be improved and expanded to allow sustainable commuting, including:
 - i. shared surfaces to reduce vehicle speeds
 - ii. providing safe, attractive and well-signed walking and cycling routes between residential areas, employment centres, green spaces and the wider countryside.

 - Local landscape and heritage features should:
 - i. Be retained as focal points for new neighbourhoods,
 - ii. Have their historic nature protected
 - iii. Act as attractive green and open spaces where communities can come together.
- To alleviate the effects of climate change **and meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive:**
- i. Measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems and street trees must be included in new developments and should be 'retro-fitted' into existing developments
 - ii. Green spaces will provide a flood storage / management function (where appropriate)
 - iii. Provide adequate development easement from watercourses (culverted or otherwise)
 - iv. Incorporate proposals for deculverting and renaturalisation of watercourses.
- All new developments will:
- i. Be set within a well designed and maintained attractive, green setting demonstrated through a detailed management plan
 - ii. Provide a variety of spaces to meet the needs of people and nature

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. Provide safe opportunities for sustainable transport iv. Achieve at least the green infrastructure standards laid out in a Supplementary Planning Document.
Flood Risk	
Environment Agency	<p>We note that Core Policy is correctly marked as red against SA Objective 5, due to the fact that key sites are located within the floodplain. As outlined within our response to the Core Strategy, the SA should demonstrate these sites are acceptable as they are the only suitable sites for such a development. Details should therefore be included which demonstrate how PPS25's Sequential Test has been applied and passed for these sites (and any other within the floodplain).</p>
Change made to Sustainability Appraisal documents	<p>Comments noted. An appendix to be added to the Revised SA Report showing how sites identified within The Plan have satisfied the sequential test methodology as set out in the SFRA Level 1.</p>

Suggested changes to The Plan for Stafford Borough arising from the Sustainability Appraisal and associated consultation

Core Policy 1: Guiding Principles

Sustainable development and the creation of high quality places where people want to live and work is at the core of the Council's philosophy for plan making. Accordingly the council will apply the following priorities when determining planning applications:

- Development should be of a high quality design, respects the natural and built environment, reflects locally distinctive character with higher density development on sites within or close to the town centres;
- **Reduce impact on the natural environment in terms of waste, carbon emissions and use of natural resources**
- Deliver the scale **and range** of housing and employment development required;
- Encourage economic growth and inward investment to ensure an appropriate balance between new housing and new employment land provision;
- Improve accessibility for all to services, education, employment, health, leisure and housing;
- Protect, conserve and enhance the heritage, cultural and environmental assets including the high quality open countryside across the Borough area;
- Protect and conserve the two areas of Green Belt in the Borough and the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Avoid areas at risk from flooding including locations vulnerable to **either fluvial or** surface water flooding;
- Support sustainable communities with an enhanced range of services and facilities particularly at Stafford and Stone;
- Prevent all out of centre retail developments which would undermine the vitality and viability of Stafford and Stone town centres;
- **Support development in line with parish plans and neighbourhood plans**
- Phase development at Stone to ensure the urban renewal initiatives in the North Staffordshire conurbation are not prejudiced or undermined;
- Maximise the use of brownfield redevelopment sites within the Borough's towns and villages to reduce the need for greenfield sites. Therefore only where insufficient sites on previously developed land, in sustainable locations, are available to meet new development requirements should greenfield sites be released.

Core Policy 2: Spatial Strategy

Stafford Borough will accommodate new growth and investment over the plan period to enable it to flourish and provide a place where people want to live and work. Throughout the Borough, provision will be made for the development of at least 500 dwellings per year over the plan period, including military housing requirements and provision for gypsies as well as 8 hectares per year of employment land to provide for the future needs and prosperity of residents (refer to Appendix 1 for more details). The Borough Council will ensure that the majority of future development will be delivered to the most sustainable locations and will work together with its partner organisations to ensure that the required level of infrastructure and facilities are delivered to the following areas:

- Stafford Town Urban Area
- Stone Town Urban Area
- Key rural villages

Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) will be delivered on a phased basis to ensure a consistent delivery of houses for the Plan period is achieved, having regard to the necessary infrastructure and environmental requirements. SDLs may be brought forward from a later phasing period where this would not undermine the delivery of sustainable development, including the availability of infrastructure. Development in Stone may be phased later in the Plan period where the cumulative completion rates for the Borough exceed 500 new homes per year.

Applicants for development on SDL's will be required to consult with local communities prior to submitting a planning application.

Development proposals should be consistent with other local planning policies

Core Policy 3: Stafford Town

In support of the overall Spatial Strategy, Stafford as the County Town and the principal settlement, will seek to enhance its role by increasing both the range and quality of services and facilities. This will be achieved through the following actions:

Housing

Continue to meet the housing requirements of 400 new homes per annum for Stafford Town, including Ministry of Defence personnel, by:

- Increasing the range and type of housing including a greater number of specialist houses and extra care provision for the elderly;
- Providing a range of development locations for new homes over the Plan period to 2031 including for affordable housing. This will include new housing development at the following Strategic Development Locations:

- North of Stafford
- West of Stafford linked to delivery of the Stafford Western Access Improvement Scheme
- East of Stafford linked to delivery of the Eastern Access Improvement Scheme

- Sites within the urban area of Stafford town will have good accessibility to public transport, services and facilities;
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Strategic Development Locations adjacent to Stafford's urban area will minimise the impact on surrounding landscapes, be fully accessible by public transport with facilities to encourage walking and cycling; increasing and enhancing the provision of educational, health and community facilities to provide for increased growth including for the elderly population.

Open Space, Sport & Recreation

Increasing and improving the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities by addressing specific deficiencies identified through the local evidence base in the PPG17 Assessment and to serve new development through:

- A lack of allotments on the eastern and western sides of Stafford town and the poor quality of several allotments elsewhere across the town
- Improving safety and accessibility of children's play areas
- Poor quality and limited size of many green spaces in the south western part of Stafford;
- Inadequate access to natural green spaces in the south western and eastern part of the town;
- Poor accessibility to multi-sport courts in the northern half of Stafford;
- Inadequate range of facilities for teenagers;

Employment

- Create employment growth and promote economic diversification by:based industries;
- Supporting further development of Ministry of Defence land at Stafford as a military base in the West Midlands;
- Supporting the continuing retention and growth of existing public and private sector employers as well as targeting new businesses through the provision of a range of premises, support and advice;
- Providing opportunities for new enterprises and businesses by allocating new employment sites with good transport links that contribute to sustainable development. New employment sites will be included in the following Strategic Development Locations:
 - North of Stafford
 - East of Stafford
- Providing facilities and sites for new start-up businesses, particular business incubation units for knowledge-based and creative industries;

Stafford Town Centre

Strengthen Stafford town centre's role as a principal centre for the Borough by:

- Encouraging the development and expansion of the town centre to provide an increase of 38,000 square metres of non-food (comparison) retailing and 7,000 square metres of food (convenience) retailing and include the level and quality of the offer as well as establish new development opportunities;
- Ensuring that there is 45,000 square metres of new office space and commercial premises within Stafford town centre;
- Promoting mixed use development on larger development sites, particularly those that are within the town centre, through a phased approach for the major regeneration plan on the following sites:
 - Kingsmead
 - Riverside
- Consolidating the primary retail core / shopping area as well as protecting and enhancing its distinctiveness, vitality and viability;
- Supporting an enhanced range and diversity of educational, health, cultural and community services and facilities in the town centre;
- Improving accessibility to the town centre, particularly by public transport, from the rest of the Borough;

Transport and Access

Strengthen Stafford Town's role as the principal transport hub in Stafford Borough by:

- Supporting the introduction of better bus services, by increasing service levels, frequency and punctuality of services between Stafford town centre and other parts of the Borough;
- Deliver the Western Access Improvement Scheme and the next phase of the Eastern Access Improvement Scheme from Beaconside to St Thomas' Lane;
- Extend existing and create new, cycle and walking paths, as an integral part of new developments in the town;
- Improve access to the rail station for all users and secure appropriate levels of parking for both cars and bicycles;
- Ensure that new developments that have significant transport implications, are capable of providing safe and convenient access by foot, cycle, public and private transport that addresses the needs of all, particularly those with disabilities.

Environment Tourism

Promote Stafford as a tourist destination with its unique architectural character and heritage by:

- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, the context and character of its buildings and streets, its rich heritage and areas of cultural importance, which will be complemented by new, distinctive, high quality and well designed buildings, protecting sight lines to historic buildings such as St Mary's Church;
- Increasing tourist opportunities for visitors through additional high quality accommodation, promoting links with the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Staffordshire County Showground, the Shire Hall Gallery, Ancient High House, Stafford Castle and St Mary's Church by facilitating the development of innovative new tourist attractions;
- Improving access into the countryside by means other than by the private car, such as public transport, walking and cycling.

Environment

- **Provision of new Green Infrastructure (GI) for Stafford Town such as the Penk and Sow natural parklands as well as the Stafford Common Community Park together with local area schemes that respond to the characteristics, local needs and opportunities for improved GI provision and biodiversity assets of the town;**
- **Ensure that development does not damage the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC);**
- **Ensure that development is not located in areas of flood risk or contribute to flooding elsewhere;**
- **Development is sympathetic to the landscape character**

Core Policy 8: Stone Town

The Council will seek to enhance the role of Stone as a market town by increasing both its range and quality of services and facilities. This will be achieved through the following actions:

Housing

Continue to meet the housing requirements for Stone Town by:

- Increasing the range and type of housing available including a greater number of semi-detached and terraced properties **and a greater number of affordable housing**;
- Providing a range of development locations for new homes over the Plan period to 2031 including for affordable housing. This will include new housing development at the following Strategic Development Location deferred to later in the plan period to support the urban regeneration initiatives of the North Staffordshire conurbation:

West of Stone in the longer term beyond 2021

- Sites within the urban area of Stone town will have good accessibility to public transport, services and facilities;
- The Strategic Development Location adjacent to Stone's urban area will minimise the impact on surrounding landscapes, be fully accessible by public transport with facilities to encourage walking and cycling;
- increasing and enhancing the provision of educational, health and community facilities to provide for increased growth including for the elderly population.

Open Space, Sport & Recreation

Ensure that there is adequate provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities by addressing the following requirements identified in the local evidence base through the PPG17 Assessment and to serve new development:

- Deficiencies in the quality of allotment provision in the town;
- Deficiency of a floodlit Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP);
- Low play value of a number of play areas, especially in the southern part of Stone;
- Small size of most green spaces, apart from Westbridge Park and Stone Meadows;
- Lack of multi-sport courts except in the north of the town;
- Very limited provision for teenagers.

Employment

Create employment growth and promote economic diversification in Stone by:

- Supporting the continued retention and growth of existing public and private sector businesses as well as targeting new businesses through the provision of a range of business premises, support and advice;
- Providing opportunities for new enterprises and businesses by allocating new employment sites with good transport links as well as support and facilities for new start-up businesses. The Strategic Development Location for a new employment site is:

- South of Stone Business Park

Stone Town Centre

Strengthen Stone town centre's role as a Market Town by:

- Encouraging the development and expansion of the town centre to provide a vibrant place where people can meet, shop, eat and spend leisure time in a safe and pleasant environment including provision of mixed use development at Westbridge Park;
- Provide for 1,400 square metres of new convenience (food) retailing and 2,200 square metres of new comparison (non-food) retailing at Stone town centre;
- Increase the levels of office space and commercial premises within Stone town centre;
- Enhancing different uses in the primary shopping area as well as protecting and enhancing its distinctiveness, vitality and viability through a greater diversity of independent retailers;
- Improving and strengthening both the range and diversity of educational, health, cultural and community services and facilities in the town;
- Facilitating improvements to the streetscape and the public realm through the enhancement of public spaces that are locally distinctive and strengthen local identity;
- Ensuring that new development around the railway station is reserved for employment uses.

Transport and Access

Strengthen Stone's role as a key transport hub in Stafford Borough by:

- Improving accessibility to Stone town centre, particularly by public transport, from the surrounding villages through better bus services with increased service levels, frequency and punctuality of services;
- Reducing the levels of traffic congestion on A34 at Walton and the A520 road through the town centre including improvements in traffic management and public transport;
- Extending the existing and creating new cycle and walking paths, as an integral part of new developments;
- Improving access to the rail station and secure appropriate levels of parking for both cars and bicycles;
- Ensuring that new developments with significant transport implications are capable of providing safe and convenient access by foot, cycle, public and private transport addressing the access needs of all, including those with disabilities.

Tourism

Promote Stone as a tourist destination with its unique architectural character and heritage by:

- Conserving and enhancing the character of Stone town centre, its buildings, streets and rich heritage;
- Supporting canal based regeneration initiatives in Stone town centre that enhance the context and character of the canal as a focal point and tourist attraction;
- Increasing tourist opportunities for visitors through additional high quality accommodation, promoting links with the surrounding countryside via the

Trent and Mersey canal, the River Trent and by facilitating the development of innovative tourist attractions such as the Stone Food and Drink Festival;

- Improving access to the surrounding countryside by means other than the private car such as public transport, walking and cycling.

Environment

The natural environment in and around Stone will be enhanced through:

- **Provision of new Green Infrastructure (GI) for Stone Town such as the creation of a Stone canal and riverside park as well as local area schemes for improved GI provision and biodiversity assets within and around the Town;**
- **Ensuring that new developments adopt sustainable drainage techniques (SUDS) in order to reduce surface water flooding**
- **Facilitate upgrades to Pirehill wastewater treatment works;**
- **Development is sympathetic to the natural landscape**

Core Policy 8: West and South of Stone

Within the area identified West & South of Stone a sustainable, well designed mixed use development will be delivered by 2031. Any application for development on a part or the whole of this area must be preceded by, and consistent with, a comprehensive Master Plan including building Design Statements for West & South of Stone which has been agreed by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Subject to a viability assessment the development must deliver the following key requirements:

- Delivery of up to 500 new homes with 30% being affordable housing in a mix of housing types, tenures, sizes and styles and a greater proportion will be 2 and 3 bedroomed properties;
- Provision to meet the needs of an ageing population through new extra care and specialist housing;
- Integration with the social and physical infrastructure of the existing area (including provision for new facilities at Manor Hill primary school);
- **Development is of a design and layout that reduces impacts on the surrounding area and landscape**
- At least 18 hectares of new employment land south of Stone Business Park with comprehensive links for a range of transport modes to housing development areas;
- The development should maximise on-site renewable or low carbon energy production including associated infrastructure to facilitate site-wide renewable energy solutions;
- Measure to alleviate flooding and surface water management on the site and reduce associated implications for the River Trent valley corridor through necessary works and **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS)**
- Provision of a network of green infrastructure including play areas, green corridors allowing wildlife movement and access to open space together with necessary measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development on the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation including Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace;

- Protect nature conservation interests including the Site of Biological Importance;
- Improvements to transport capacity along the A34 in the vicinity of the Walton roundabout as well as deliver local transport network measures;
- Measures to improve accessibility by non-car transport modes to Stone town centre through walking and cycling connections.

A development tariff approach will be applied to all planning applications within the West & South of Stone's Strategic Development Location. The tariff will contribute towards the strategic infrastructure required to achieve a comprehensive sustainable development. Details of the development tariff will be set out in a future Developer Contributions SPD.

Core Policy 9: Areas Outside Stafford and Stone

Areas outside of Stafford & Stone will be sustained through the provision of new housing and employment developments at an appropriate scale and type enabling an enhanced role for service centres and meeting the diverse needs of the rural hinterland.

New housing development may take place within existing Residential Development Boundaries in the settlements listed below, including provision for affordable housing. Where there is demonstrated local need rural exception sites outside of existing Residential Development Boundaries will also be encouraged to deliver affordable homes. The Site-specific Allocations and Policy document will consider amendments to the Residential Development Boundaries, other than for Green Belt settlements, to provide for local provision if development is not brought forward by 2021 through Neighbourhood Plans.

The Stafford Borough area will achieve the following:

1. Strengthen and enhance its economic role in achieving sustainable communities by:

- Improving and strengthening local community facilities by increasing the range and quality of services and facilities available as well as maintaining existing local services;
- Provision of adequate infrastructure including education, health and community facilities to sustain the local communities alongside new developments;
- Maintaining and improving employment opportunities by supporting and strengthening the rural economy through the creation of increased tourism facilities and supporting provisions for existing traditional rural industries;
- Providing for increased employment through the introduction of renewable energy schemes, **low carbon and** low impact hi-technology industries in agricultural buildings, small scale development of local enterprises and farm diversification schemes;
- Encouraging the use of home working through the development of advanced, high speed broadband networks;
- Delivering a total of up to 11 hectares of new employment land between the following locations;

- Raleigh Hall Recognised Industrial Estate
- Ladfordfields Recognised Industrial Estate

2. Enhancing the high quality natural environment, rural landscapes and distinctive character by:

- Strictly controlling development in the countryside to protect, conserve and enhance the environment, whilst ensuring that any new development respects the character and sense of place of settlements and rural areas;
- Improving the quantity and quality of open space, sport and recreation facilities to serve **both** new development **and to meet identified local need**;
- **Supporting works to improve infrastructure**
- **Where appropriate within Residential Development Boundaries support the re-use of vacant buildings and previously development land**

3. Meeting local housing needs, including for an ageing population, by increasing the level and range of affordable housing provision and types across the Stafford Borough area due to the current lack of provision including rural exception sites.

4. Meeting local transportation needs by delivering the Staffordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan through:

- Supporting the rural transport network that improves accessibility and connectivity contributing to sustainable communities and rural hinterlands;
- Developing walking and cycling networks that conserve and enhance the rural landscape;
- Supporting the implementation of rural traffic management initiatives, including Quiet Lanes, that protect the local character of the area and reduce traffic impacts.

5. Development in the open countryside to meet a proven need for farming, forestry and other local enterprises that have an essential requirement to be located in such locations or for the provision of essential utility or service infrastructure will be supported. The Council will consider removing the restricted occupancy clause on a dwelling where it can be robustly demonstrated; by openly marketing the dwelling to the surrounding area at a price that reflects the limitation of the occupancy condition imposed or that dwelling has been made available to one or more local Registered Social Landlords (RSL) on terms which would allow it to be occupied as an affordable dwelling and that this option has been rejected.

Core Policy 10: New Development in the Countryside

Within the countryside outside of Green Belt areas, development will be permitted where it requires a countryside location and:

- a. Supports the essential needs of agriculture or forestry interests; or
- b. Meets the essential, small scale, and exceptional local development needs of a community which cannot be met within residential development boundaries.

All development in the countryside outside of Green Belt areas should:

- a. Make use of suitable existing buildings or previously developed land before proposing new buildings or development of Greenfield land;
- b. Be well related to an existing farmstead or group of buildings, or be located close to an established settlement;
- c. Be complementary to and not prejudice any viable agricultural operations on a farm and other existing viable uses;
- d. Be sympathetic to the local character of the area and ensures that the impact of the development is reduced to a minimum on its surroundings, including for people living nearby and protects biodiversity through the scale, siting, design, materials, colour, landscape treatment and visual impact;
- e. Be appropriately designed for its purposes;
- f. Not be significantly detrimental to the amenity of the area;
- g. Provide appropriate crime prevention measures including for safety and security; and
- h. Contribute to the vibrancy of the rural area.

In the countryside outside of Green Belt areas, agricultural, forestry and other occupational dwellings will be permitted where there is a proven essential

operational need.

Proposals for the conversion or reuse of a building in the countryside will be permitted where:

- a. It give priority to economic uses before residential uses and demonstrated that every attempt has been made to secure a suitable commercial re-use;
- b. It is complementary to and does not prejudice any viable agricultural operations on a farm and other existing viable uses;
- c. The building is structurally sound and is capable of conversion without the need for significant extension, alteration or rebuilding;
- d. The form, bulk and general design of the building is in keeping with its surroundings and the proposal and any associated development will not harm the character of the countryside and the landscape setting;
- e. The building is well related to an existing settlement and has access to local services and / or is close to a regular public transport service to a town or larger village;
- f. It will not damage the fabric or character of any traditional building and, in the case of a Listed Building, the proposal will not damage the architectural or historic merit of the building or its setting;
- g. The building is large enough to be converted without the need for additional buildings, substantial new extensions or significant alteration;

H. They do not harm any protected species on site and provide habitat mitigation and enhancement

Permitted development rights may be removed from dwellings.

Core Policy 11: Planning Obligations

On schemes of 15 or more dwellings **in urban areas and 6 in rural areas**, commercial development or where development creates a need for additional improved infrastructure, services, community or open space facilities, or exacerbates an existing deficiency, planning permission will not be granted unless appropriate arrangements for improvement or provision required for the development are agreed and completed prior to the overall completion of the scheme; taking account of the cumulative impact of schemes where relevant.

Arrangements for provision and improvement to the required standard will be secured through planning obligations if appropriate. A supplementary planning document (SPD) will provide further detailed guidance on the implementation and the nature of planning obligations.

Core Policy 14: The Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure

The Borough's natural environment will be protected, enhanced and improved by:

- Implementation of the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and guidance including 'Biodiversity by Design' or any other successor documents to increase and enhance biodiversity, in terms of habitats and species as well as geological conservation or geodiversity through appropriate management for a network of:
 - i. Designated Sites (international, national, regional and local);
 - ii. Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species populations;

iii. Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Networks;

- Conservation and enhancement of water courses and their settings for their landscape character, biodiversity and recreational value, particularly for the Borough's extensive canal system;
- Protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic environment and irreplaceable semi-natural habitats such as ancient woodlands;
- Increasing the ability of landscapes and ecosystems to adapt to different weather patterns by increasing the range and extent of habitats, informed by Biodiversity Opportunity mapping produced by Natural England;
- Ensuring that no new development takes place in areas where environmental risks, particularly flooding, cannot be managed properly;
- Any new development where damage to the natural environment is unavoidable must include measures to mitigate or compensate such impacts through the establishment of replacement habitats or features including appropriate site management regimes.

The Borough's green infrastructure network will be protected, enhanced and expanded to enhance quality of life, increase sustainability, reduce the impacts of climate change and improve health and well being across these overarching objectives:

- Networks of open spaces, natural corridors, access routes and watercourses will be enhanced and created to:
 - i. protect the setting of landscape, heritage and natural (biodiversity and geodiversity) assets
 - ii. reverse habitat fragmentation
 - iii. provide recreational opportunities for new and existing communities
 - iv. provide open breaks between neighbouring residential areas and business developments.
- The network of existing access routes will be improved and expanded to allow sustainable commuting, including:
 - i. shared surfaces to reduce vehicle speeds
 - ii. providing safe, attractive and well-signed walking and cycling routes between residential areas, employment centres, green spaces and the wider countryside.
- Local landscape and heritage features should:
 - i. Be retained as focal points for new neighbourhoods,
 - ii. Have their historic nature protected
 - iii. Act as attractive green and open spaces where communities can come together.

To alleviate the effects of climate change **and meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive:**

- i. Measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems and street trees must be included in new developments and should be 'retro-fitted' into existing developments
- ii. Green spaces will provide a flood storage / management function (where appropriate)
- iii. Provide adequate development easement from watercourses (culverted or otherwise)
- iv. Incorporate proposals for deculverting and renaturalisation of watercourses.

All new developments will:

- i. Be set within a well designed and maintained attractive, green setting demonstrated through a detailed management plan
- ii. Provide a variety of spaces to meet the needs of people and nature
- iii. Provide safe opportunities for sustainable transport
- iv. Achieve at least the green infrastructure standards laid out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Development Management Policy 7: Replacement Dwellings

Outside of Residential Development Boundaries planning permission will be granted for a replacement dwelling if all of the following criteria are met:

- a. The present dwelling has a lawful residential use and is not in a state of abandonment, partial or complete demolition or collapse;
- b. The present dwelling is not the result of a temporary planning permission, a temporary form of construction or a caravan / mobile home;
- c. the building is not worthy and capable of retention through renovation;
- d. appropriate measures have been taken to reuse or recycle materials from the original dwelling;**
- e. the replacement building will be more energy efficient than that of the original dwelling;**
- f. the replacement building is of a similar floor area, volume and massing as the original whilst respecting the character of the existing site and its surroundings;
- g. the number of new dwellings is no more than the number of dwellings to be demolished and replaced; and
- h. any new replacement dwellings should be positioned on the footprint of the existing dwelling, unless on design, landscape, highway safety, residential amenity, or other environmental grounds a more appropriate location can be agreed.

Permitted development rights may be removed from replacement dwellings. Where the proposal relates to the replacement of a dwelling of traditional style and construction, replacement will only be acceptable where the application is accompanied by a structural survey that demonstrates that the demolition of the existing dwelling is necessary, as it cannot be viably altered or renovated to provide an acceptable standard of accommodation.

Development Management Policy 9: Extensions to the Curtilage of Dwellings

The extension of residential or other curtilages beyond and outside Residential Development Boundaries will only be permitted where there would be no harm to the character, **habitat**, appearance and landscape quality of the area such as the new curtilage extension brings it into line with the existing adjacent properties.

Permitted development rights, including those for the erection of curtilage structures and means of enclosure, will normally be withdrawn. Special regard will also be had to landscaping and boundary treatment.

Development Management Policy 15: Development within and outside Recognised Industrial Estates

Within the Recognised Industrial Estates the following appropriate employment uses will be permitted provided there are no significant adverse impacts on the

surrounding environment, nearby residents or transport networks:

- a. Light industrial (B1), general industrial (B2), and storage and distribution (B8);
- b. A limited element of retailing where this is ancillary to another main use under (a);
- c. Services, **facilities and works** specifically provided for the benefit of businesses based on, or workers employed within the Recognised Industrial Estate;
- d. Other employment-generating uses, such as those related to recreation and tourism, which meet local needs and / or promote the rural economy.

To maintain an adequate supply of smaller incubator units, proposals for the development of two or more small units (700 sq metres or less) will be supported, provided that the Council is satisfied there is a need for such units in the locality.

Permission will be subject to a condition requiring subsequent proposals for the amalgamation of the units to be submitted to the Council.

The use of employment sites for employment purposes other than B1, B2 and B8 will not be permitted unless it can be proven to the Council that the proposed use cannot be located within Stafford or Stone town centre.

Outside allocated and existing industrial areas, where the site is within the Residential Development Boundary, the expansion of existing sites and the change of use of existing employment sites to an alternative employment use will generally be supported subject to detailed design considerations. Proposals for B1 uses will be permitted provided the use, either individually or cumulatively will not have an adverse effect on residents or the environment.

Development Management Policy 19: Primary & Secondary Retail Frontages

Planning permission will be refused for non-retail uses in the town centre primary and secondary retail frontages, if it would:

- a. Have a harmful effect on the character or appearance of the shopping frontage;
- b. Undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole; and
- c. Result in more than 2 permitted non-retail uses operating adjacent to each other in the defined Primary Retail Frontages or result in more than 3 permitted non-retail uses operating adjacent to each other within the defined Secondary Retail Frontage; or
- d. Result in over 20% of the primary retail street frontage (measured 50 metres either side of the application site) being in non-retail use or result in over 40% of the secondary retail street frontage (measured 50 metres either side of the application site) being in non-retail use.

Applications will be expected to be accompanied by a statement giving full details of the marketing of the property for retail use.

Development Management Policy 20: Vacant and Upper Floors

Within the town centres support will be given to bringing upper floors back into use, particularly for C3 residential purposed and B1 business uses. Proposals should not lead to any significant loss of ground floor space or street frontage and must not prejudice the amenity and conversion of adjoining properties or other floors in the same property

Development Management Policy 21: New retail and leisure development outside the defined town centres

Proposals for new retail development, including new district centres, extensions to existing retail units, recreation, leisure and entertainment uses outside the defined town centres will be permitted only when:

- a. A clear qualitative and primarily quantitative need exists and can be demonstrated;
- B. The sequential approach to site selection has been applied, including application of flexible formats to enable the possibility of locating closer to the established centre;
- C. The proposal where possible uses previously development land;**
- d. The proposed development will be accessible by a variety of modes of transport, walking and cycling. Proposals must be accompanied by an agreed Green Travel Plan;
- e. The proposal will not significantly undermine the vitality and viability of the nearest centre, its function and role at the local level and its position in the wider network of centres;
- f. Adequate parking arrangements can be provided in connection with the proposal; and,
- g. The range of goods and products sold at the proposed retail development is appropriate for its location.

In order to meet these objectives if planning permission is granted for retail development in an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location, the range sold at the development may be restricted either through planning conditions or legal agreement. No new development for retail warehouses and superstores is required in these locations.

New developments and extensions to existing village and neighbourhood shops will be assessed against the following:

- a. The proposed retail development does not exceed 200 sq metres gross (if the proposal does exceed 200 sq metres gross the proposal will be considered against criteria a to f above);
- b. The proposal will not result in the loss of local amenity particularly in terms of noise, litter, smell, parking and traffic creation and trading hours.

Core Policy 22: Tourism

Opportunities for tourism and new visitor accommodation will be promoted and enhanced in appropriate locations throughout Stafford Borough by;

- Promoting and enhancing the Borough's landscape and historic character by preserving this unique environment, including Stafford and Stone town centres as well as the Borough's villages;
- Encourage water-based recreation and continuing the regeneration and restoration of the extensive canal system across Stafford Borough to maximise water based transport, walking and cycling without undermining water quality, flood risk areas, nature conservation and biodiversity;
- Canal-based developments should be within or adjacent to settlements to protect the open countryside;
- Promoting and enhancing visitor and recreational attractions such as Shugborough Park estate, Trentham Gardens, the Monkey Forest, the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty through sensitive

management, Stafford Castle, the Staffordshire County Showground and the Ancient High House as well as local market events;

- Promoting new walking, cycling routes and linkages to national networks through the Borough's countryside;
- Supporting tourism opportunities in rural areas to sustain the local economy providing they are sensitively designed and are not detrimental to the natural environment or **local amenity**;
- **Support opportunities that reduce the carbon footprint of the development and promotes sustainable tourism.**