



New Local Plan

Scoping the Issues Report

(July 2018)

Scoping the Issues Report July 2018

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Introduction

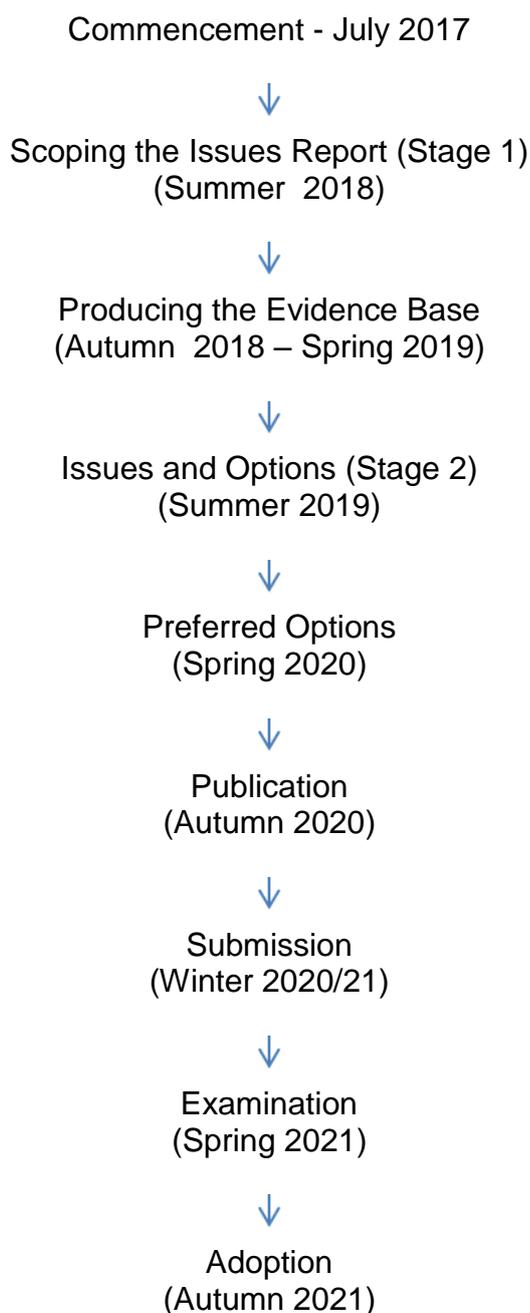
What is the New Local Plan?

- 1.1 The new Stafford Borough Local Plan will replace the Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 adopted in June 2014 and Part 2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough adopted in January 2017. The new Local Plan will guide where new development takes place across the Borough area over the Plan period 2020-2040 by describing what change will occur and identify how places will be shaped in the future.
- 1.2 The purpose of the new Local Plan is to set out a new vision for the development of the Borough, highlight key issues to be addressed, objectives to guide new growth and policies to make sure that new development meets local needs in line with national policy set out through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

How will the Local Plan be prepared?

- 1.3 Preparation of the New Local Plan must follow a number of key stages, as set out in the latest Local Development Scheme. This is to ensure that local people and other stakeholders are fully engaged in the process, as detailed through the Statement of Community Involvement. The Local Plan will be based on robust evidence, a Sustainability Appraisal process, responses received to consultation documents, the testing of alternative options and subsequently examined independently by an Inspector.
- 1.4 The key stages of preparing the Local Plan are summarised below. However due to the complex nature of the work; the programme will be kept under regular review.

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How are communities and key stakeholders going to be involved?

- 1.5 In preparing a new Local Plan, the Council is required by legislation to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI sets out the how and when the Council will carry out community engagement and consultation with the general public and key stakeholders when preparing the New Local Plan. This includes making consultation documents available on the Council's webpage, at the Civic Offices and in all of the Borough's libraries.

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- 1.6 All activities used for engagement and consultation, together with how this has been used to develop the Plan at each stage, will be recorded in the Local Plan - Consultation Statement, which will be submitted to the Inspector for consideration as part of the examination process. This document will be published at each stage of preparing the Local Plan so that people can see how their contribution is helping to shape the Plan.

How will the Local Plan relate to Plans by neighbouring authorities?

- 1.7 The Council is working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities, through an on-going basis, to ensure that the Local Plan takes into account cross border implications and strategic planning issues. This engagement is known as Duty to Co-operate, with further details contained in Statements of Common Ground developed as the new Local Plan progresses where necessary.

How will the Council assess the environmental impacts of the emerging Local Plan?

- 1.8 Undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan is an essential part of the plan making process. The Sustainability Appraisal must address the legal requirements of the EU Directive (2001/42/EC) known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (or SEA) Directive. A failure to undertake the Sustainability Appraisal process can expose the Plan to legal challenge.
- 1.9 The Sustainability Appraisal being undertaken for the new Local Plan sits alongside other appraisal processes, including a health impact assessment to deliver Health in All policies, a community / equalities impact assessment and a Screening Assessment as required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (amended).
- 1.10 The first stage in the Sustainability Appraisal process for the new Local Plan is the preparation of a Scoping Report. The Borough Council sought views on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report during a seven week consultation period from 19 July until 6 September 2017. In due course, as the Plan objectives, options and policies are prepared these will be assessed through Sustainability Appraisal reports and subject to consultation.

What is the status of the Plan for Stafford Borough and other planning documents now that the Council is preparing the new Plan?

- 1.12 For the purposes of making planning decisions on planning applications, the Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (adopted in June 2014), the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 (adopted in January 2017), and Neighbourhood Plans that have been made / adopted, will be used to as the statutory development plan for the area until the new Local Plan is adopted.

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Further Information

How can I have my say on this consultation document?

Consultation on the new Local Plan – Scoping the Issues Report (Stage 1) will take place between 18 July and 18 September 2018. Please provide any responses by 12 noon on Tuesday 18 September 2018.

We strongly encourage responses to be made using the pro-forma available on the Council's website at <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/forward-planning-consultations> and emailing completed forms to forwardplanningconsultations@staffordbc.gov.uk

Alternatively, if you choose to use e-mail or letter please identify the question, paragraph or issue number to which your comments refer. To send responses please use the following address:

Forward Planning,
Stafford Borough Council,
Civic Centre,
Riverside,
Stafford,
ST16 3AQ.

How will my comments be used?

We will acknowledge receipt of your comments and fully consider responses for the next stage of the plan-making process, although the Council will not engage through individual correspondence. All comments received will be published on the Council's website in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (May 2018).

Protecting Your Privacy

We believe you should always know what data we collect from you and how we use it, and that you should have meaningful control over both. As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency, and in relation to the new General Data Protection Regulations (May 2018), we have updated our Privacy Policy.

We will only use your personal information to send you information on the Local Plan and associated planning policy matters. You can find information about how we handle your personal data by visiting www.staffordbc.gov.uk/privacynotices and if you have any queries or would like to unsubscribe from receiving information please contact the Forward Planning section using the details above.

2 Thinking Forward – Developing a Vision & Key Objectives

- 2.1 The Stafford Borough area is facing a period of change in terms of what our towns, villages and countryside will look like in the future. This includes how land will be developed and used, alongside making sure new services and facilities such as health, education and leisure activities are provided to the local community, to ensure prosperity and enhanced well-being.
- 2.2 Different towns, villages and rural areas within Stafford Borough have various pressures, issues and characteristics which are worthy of protection and conservation. In addition, different areas have the potential for new opportunities which could be realised by new development or regeneration.
- 2.3 By way of example the County Town of Stafford is located on the national road and rail network, with the highest level of services and facilities in the Borough area, which means it, could be the key focus for major new development.
- 2.4 The market town of Stone has a distinctive local character alongside the canal with quality restaurants and year round community activities, supporting a vibrant local economy, and providing a very attractive place to live and visit.
- 2.5 Some rural areas within the Borough have exceptionally high landscape and nature conservation designations, making the attractive rural villages an aspirational place to live. However, these locations generally have fewer services and facilities. These issues make it more expensive for local residents to live within the rural areas of the Borough. Furthermore there are two areas of Green Belt within Stafford Borough, around the North Staffordshire conurbation, as well as in the south east area of the Borough, which also includes the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Stafford Borough Council Corporate Business Plan

- 2.6 Stafford Borough Council's Corporate Business Plan 2018 – 2021 vision is to create:

'A prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities.

Over the next three years we will focus on the following corporate business objectives:

- *To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.*
- *To improve the quality of life of local people by providing a safe, clean, attractive place to live and work and encouraging people to be engaged in developing strong communities that promote health and well-being.*
- *To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focused on delivering our objectives'.*

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- 2.7 The new Local Plan needs to deliver this vision and explore key questions such as; “what will the Borough as a place look like in the future?”, “where will people be living and working?” and “what will they be doing in their spare time?”.

The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031

- 2.8 The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough’s spatial vision seeks to deliver sustainable development through economic, social and environmental objectives through a place-based approach, through the creation of 500 new homes and 8 hectares of employment land every year over the Plan period 2011-2031, in order to provide for the future needs and prosperity of residents. It focuses development at Stafford, Stone and the Key Service Villages¹, with additional employment generating uses provided for at the Recognised Industrial Estates.
- 2.9 A number of the key objectives alongside the spatial vision are set out in the Plan for Stafford, which are now being delivered. In creating the vision for the new Local Plan, it is important to revisit our previous goals and reflect on the successes and challenges, but ultimately, it is important to move forward in order for the Borough to become an even greater place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence.
- 2.10 Preparation of the New Local Plan needs to be in line with national policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012). It should be noted that the Government consulted on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework in March to May 2018, with the final updated version anticipated this summer. The New Local Plan will need to reflect these new national policies.

Question 1

What would you like the Borough to be like in the future?

Question 2

What do you think should be the key economic, housing, environmental, social, community and health outcomes that the Local Plan should help to deliver?

¹ Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon, Great Haywood, Little Haywood / Colwich, Haughton, Weston, Woodseaves, Barlaston, Tittensor and Yarnfield

3 Key Policy Areas

Making the Most of Our Location

The Local Area

- 3.1 The Borough's excellent strategic transport links represent, together with High Speed Rail 2 (HS2), major drivers for positive change and regeneration in the Borough. However, more needs to be done at the local level to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are fully shared by all sections of the community.
- 3.2 Whilst there is much to celebrate in terms of major new developments and jobs that have been created, there are also areas of the Borough which have not seen much investment in recent decades and are now in need of renewal and regeneration. These include older housing and industrial areas across the Borough, as well as some district and local shopping centres, where the quality of the environment and condition of buildings has begun to deteriorate. Equally, declining levels of investment or changing economic circumstances have meant that some areas no longer have easy access to an adequate range of services necessary to meet their needs.

New Homes

- 3.3 The Government has a strong agenda to increase the supply of housing in order to meet the national housing shortage. Planning is a key focus for the Government to deliver new housing.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.4 The housing target set out in the Plan for Stafford Borough is to deliver a minimum of 10,000 new houses between 2011 and 2031. The Plan requires that new development must provide an appropriate mix of dwelling types, tenures and sizes.
- 3.5 The Plan for Stafford Borough focuses primarily on directing development to Stafford, Stone and the Key Service Villages and employment opportunities at the Recognised Industrial Estates (RIE's).

Question 3

Policies in the Local Plan can seem very high level but at their heart they are all about creating better places to live, work and play. What would you change in your local neighbourhood to make it a better place to live?

Deciding Where Homes Should Go

- 3.6 National policy currently states that the Plan should seek to encourage sustainable patterns of movement which means that it should make sure new housing is properly serviced by existing or new infrastructure.
- 3.7 The draft NPPF introduces a new chapter on Rural Housing. It states that plans should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.8 The majority of development will be delivered through the Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy at Stafford, Stone and the Key Service Villages. Other smaller settlements in the Borough are currently not considered appropriate for growth as they have fewer services and facilities.

Question 4

How could the new Local Plan support local villages and their communities to grow and thrive?

Making effective use of land

- 3.9 National policy currently does not provide any specific advice on density of new development. However the draft NPPF states that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, that low density development should be avoided. The use of minimum densities standards should be set for town centre locations and that the use of minimum density standards should be considered for other parts of the plan area.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.10 The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 includes a policy that development proposals should take into consideration the local character, context and density. However it does not set out density standards.

Question 5

Do you consider that the new Local Plan should set out a range of densities for the Borough and if so, are there any specific locations?

Prioritising Brownfield Land

- 3.11 Current National policy encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), an approach that is also promoted through the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough. However, it is not always possible to build on this land and/or there is not enough of this land available.
- 3.12 In late 2017 / early 2018 the Council undertook a Call for Sites exercise to inform the New Local Plan about the availability of new sites for development. Over 160 sites were submitted during this exercise and a report documenting all of the sites, and their development status will be published in due course through the Strategic Housing & Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA). It is important to remember that the SHELAA report is only a technical evidence document and it does not allocate sites for development.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.13 The Local Plan prioritises the development of brownfield sites and seeks to promote the majority of new development at Stafford, Stone, the Key Service Villages. It should be noted that significant areas of employment land have now been built or have planning consent, with the number of dwellings completed or committed in the plan already having been exceeded. Going forward it is important to ensure that there is sufficient land for additional growth.

Question 6

National policy states that the Council should prioritise the development of redundant brownfield sites that have good access to existing services for new housing. What should the Council look to do if it cannot find enough suitable brownfield sites to meet its housing and employment needs?

Deciding What Types of Homes to Build

- 3.14 Housing should be of a high quality, sufficient quantity, affordable and of the type needed in order to create successful communities. It is important to plan for a mix of homes, and a range of sizes and types to meet both current and future housing needs.
- 3.15 Currently national policy encourages Local Plans to plan positively for a mix of housing based on an assessment of the type of people that live in the Borough both now and in the future. This includes providing a mix of homes to meet the needs of different groups such as families with children, older people, those with disabilities or particular support needs and those wishing to build their own homes.
- 3.16 Over the next few decades, the age profile of residents in Stafford is expected to change dramatically. There will be a considerable 'demographic shift' with both the number and proportion of older people increasing. Population projections conducted in 2010 predicted that the number of people aged 65 and over are expected to increase by 45.5% (or by 15,800) by 2035, whilst the number of residents aged 75 and above is expected to increase by 101.7% (or by 11,700) by 2035.
- 3.17 The Stafford Borough Strategic Housing Market Assessment - Final Report 2012 states that 75% of properties in the Borough are houses; 11% are flats, 11% are bungalows with the remaining 3% unknown. This evidence base will be updated through the New Local Plan process.
- 3.18 The draft NPPF seeks to promote a greater mix of sizes of sites to support small and medium sized housebuilders, and also self build plots.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.19 In terms of general housing mix, the Local Plan says that it should respond to the identified needs of the community, whilst considering the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and indicative current waiting list data.

Question 7

National policy encourages Local Plans to plan positively for a mix of housing, based on the demographic of people that live in the Borough both now, and the expected future population. What types of housing do you think will be most needed in the Borough over the coming years?

Question 8

The new Local Plan could seek that a percentage of large sites (e.g. over 20 dwellings or more) should be made available for self build. What are your thoughts on this, and if you are supportive, what percentage should be made available for dwelling plots?

Making sure the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people are met

3.20 The National Planning Policy for Traveller Sites document requires all Local Authorities to set targets for, and deliver new sites and pitches. Local Authorities must also identify and maintain a five-year supply of sites in order to meet their targets for new permanent residential and transit pitches. National policy provide a definition of gypsy and travellers as “Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their families or dependents’ educational or health needs or old age has ceased to travel temporarily or permanently”

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

3.21 The Local Plan provides a policy framework for positively determining planning applications for gypsy and traveller accommodation. A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) was published in 2015 as evidence to support the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2. This evidence demonstrates a need for 43 new pitches up to 2027. The Council has already made significant progress towards meeting the requirement but new provision will need to be made for gypsies and travellers up to 2040.

Question 9

National policy states that the Council should prioritise the development of redundant brownfield sites that have good access to existing services for new housing which includes pitches for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people. Where should the Council look for suitable brownfield sites for new pitches?

Job Creation

3.22 The NPPF states that the planning system must support sustainable economic growth, through the creation of jobs and prosperity to meet the development needs of business. Policies in new Local Plans should be flexible enough to accommodate needs, respond rapidly to changes in economic circumstances, whilst simultaneously facilitating flexible working practices.

3.23 In recent years, there has been a contraction of the Borough’s traditional manufacturing industries resulting in significant job losses for this sector. In contrast to many other districts, Stafford has a particularly high proportion of public sector workers. Within this context, it is necessary to encourage a more balanced economic base in the future.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.24 One of the key aspirations addressed in the Local Plan is to facilitate growth in new high technology areas, such as that in creative industries, as well as developing a low carbon economy by nurturing the existing skills base and supporting local businesses.
- 3.25 As the Borough is predominantly rural, one of the key aspects is to give support to achieving rural sustainability, and a prosperous rural economy. As part of the new Local Plan, the Council will need to develop a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating across the Borough and wider area. This will include an assessment of the need for additional land or floorspace for economic development, including both the qualitative and quantitative needs for anticipated types of economic activity over the Plan period, including retail and leisure development.
- 3.26 Alongside the need to ensure the availability of appropriate land and property to meet the forecasted growth in people seeking employment, the Local Plan will also need to support efforts to diversify the Borough's unbalanced employment base, which is dominated by the public sector.

Question 10

What are the main barriers to growth that need to be addressed in the Local Plan to ensure that all sections of the community have access to the benefits of future employment creation in the Borough?

Question 11

Do you think there is a need to identify additional land for employment and if so what types of employment uses should the Local Plan support and promote?

Shopping and Leisure Opportunities

- 3.27 Town and village centres are at the heart of community life and play a key role in shaping people's perceptions of an area. Attractive, vibrant and prosperous town centres can act as an important catalyst for attracting growth and investment into the wider area. Equally, declining centres can have the opposite effect, and serve to deter and undermine efforts to turn round the economic fortunes of an area.
- 3.28 Over the last five years town centres have had to face the challenge of major economic and social change, which has had an impact on the way we shop, the development of new retail formats and changing patterns of retail development. This has been accelerated by a rise in internet shopping, the rapid growth of discount retailers and the 'convenience' shopping concept, the consolidation and concentration of investment into fewer larger centres and an overall decline in the demand for town centre retail floorspace.

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3.29 The NPPF requires planning policies to support the role that town centres play as the heart of their communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. It also supports the diversification and change of use where town centres are in decline and also highlights the important role that residential development has to deliver vitality in centres.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

3.30 The Local Plan seeks to strengthen Stafford town centre role for the Borough as the heart of retail, leisure and cultural provision in the area. The Local Plan also seeks to support Stone's town centre role as a market town, and recognizes that there are a number of both Village and Neighbourhood Centres across the Borough which provide services and facilities, including daily retail convenience outlets.

3.31 Since the adoption of the Plan for Stafford Borough, the delivery of retail provision has changed dramatically, with far reaching implications for the demand and location of new retail and leisure developments.

3.32 As part of the New Local Plan, the Council will need to review the existing policy approach and identify the need for additional guidance on the scale and location of new retail and leisure developments across the Borough. Consideration will also need to be given to the need to prepare more detailed town centre development and regeneration strategies to coordinate, prioritize and implement a range of measures to maintain the viability and vitality of the Borough's wider network of town, village and neighbourhood centres.

Question 12

What do you think are the key challenges facing the Borough's town, village, and neighbourhood centres and how can the Local Plan maintain and enhance their role?

Question 13

What improvements would you like to see in those centres that you visit regularly? Should additional uses be supported other than retail such as residential, entertainment and restaurants? Please state the name of the centre in your response.

Question 14

What are the best locations for new retail and leisure development in the Borough and how can future development be harnessed to support the delivery of wider regeneration and economic growth needs and objectives?

Question 15

Is there a need for the development of retail, leisure and other town centres uses in locations outside the existing established retail centres, and if so, where?

Healthy and Active Communities

- 3.33 The NPPF states that the planning system has an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Policies in new Local Plans should deliver social, recreational and cultural facilities and services to meet the needs of the local community through access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation.
- 3.34 Planning can play an important role in creating healthy, inclusive and active communities. For example, positive planning can lead to reductions in health inequalities, by improving access to healthy food, through offering choices in the local market and reducing obesity by encouraging physical activity through the inclusion of open-spaces and leisure facilities. Planning can also facilitate social interaction which, in turn, can lead to improvements in mental health and general well-being.

Open Space and Sports Facilities

- 3.35 Leisure, sport and open spaces are of prime importance to improving and maintaining the quality of life in the Borough, by encouraging an active and healthy community. The Borough has a wide range of existing public open spaces, parks, and recreational areas, including Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, formal town parks and green spaces with a range of equipped play spaces, and natural play areas. These spaces provide varied opportunities for formal and informal active and passive recreation.
- 3.36 Current National policy recognizes the important role open spaces play in local communities, and indicates that in developing a Local Plan, Local Planning Authorities must assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their areas.
- 3.37 To help protect green spaces which are important to local communities, the NPPF has introduced the ability to designate such land as Local Green Space. The NPPF considers that this special protection would not be appropriate for most open space and should only be used under the following conditions:
- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a local significance, for example because of its historic significance recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
 - Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.38 The Local Plan seeks to retain, protect, supplement and enhance all types of sport, recreation and open space facilities, in order to address deficiencies of both indoor and outdoor facilities. As a general principle, there will be presumptions that open space, sport and recreation facilities will be provided on

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the development site. Only in exceptional circumstances will an off site contribution provided by the developer be accepted to develop on another site, where it is proven that on site provision is not feasible or is unviable.

- 3.39 Development that results in the loss of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities will be resisted unless better facilities in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility can be provided or that redevelopment would not result in a deficiency in the local area.

Question 16

What new sport and leisure facilities do you think are needed in the Borough to support existing and new communities?

Question 17

National policy gives councils new powers to protect valued open spaces by designating them as Local Green Spaces. Are there any open spaces that are special to your local community which should be designated? If yes, please provide details of the open space, its location and the reason why it is special to you and your community.

Education Facilities

- 3.40 There are 51 state maintained schools in the Borough, with Stafford Town operating a two tier education system of primary and secondary schools; whilst Stone operates as a three tier education system with first, middle and high schools. Staffordshire County Council is the Admissions Authority, with the number of places required in the Borough regularly reviewed as new data becomes available.
- 3.41 New residential developments and population increase will inevitably bring an increased demand for school places. Although some local schools may have capacity, there could be a need for more places to be made available or for completely new education facilities to be built.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.42 The Local Plan seeks to create new educational facilities to support major new development areas, and enhance, strengthen and improve educational facilities elsewhere across the Borough.

Question 18

What new educational facilities do you think are needed, and where in the Borough are these required to support existing and new communities?

Health and Community Facilities

- 3.1 With a growing and ageing population, the provision of health and community facilities / services in the Borough is going to become even more important in the future.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.43 The Local Plan recognizes the need to provide social and community facilities (including health) that meet existing and future community needs, including those needs arising from the new housing and employment that will be developed in the Borough over the lifetime of the Plan.
- 3.44 Good community facilities provide opportunities for interaction between people, the chance to get involved in activities and to have increased accessibility to basic services. Going forward, the Council needs to continue planning positively to meet the needs for social, recreational, cultural facilities and services. Successful health and community facilities / services are integral to the vibrancy of communities across the Borough.

Question 19

19a What new health, social and community facilities do you think are needed in the Borough to support both new and existing communities?

19 b) Where should these be located/go?

Pollution and Air Quality

- 3.45 The NPPF makes clear that Local Plans can affect air quality in a number of ways, including through what type of development is proposed and where, and the encouragement given to sustainable transport.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.46 The Local Plan recognizes the need to locate more sensitive land uses, especially housing, schools and health facilities away from areas of high pollution. The Plan also requires assessments to accompany planning applications where it has reasonable grounds to believe that a development may breach standards relating to pollution and air quality.

Question 20

What approach could the Local Plan take to ensure that issues relating to pollution and air quality are minimised?

Accessibility

Sustainable Transport Choices

- 3.47 Sustainable transport choices can play a significant role in improving health and wellbeing. Walking and cycling have obvious health benefits, and people who use public transport are more likely to walk for part of their journey than those who drive.
- 3.48 Stafford benefits from an excellent location in terms of rail services to London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Bournemouth and the South West. It also has an extensive network of footpaths and cycle ways, including two National Cycle Routes, providing valuable access to the countryside, local parks and open spaces, helping to promote healthier lifestyles.
- 3.49 The NPPF focuses on the importance of sustainable transport choices and the wider role that this can play in achieving sustainability and health objectives as well as reducing congestion. It also states that new development should be located where it is accessible by public transport, being particularly important for developments with high trip generation. This is more difficult to achieve in rural areas and consideration needs to be given as to how new development can encourage the provision and use of public transport, and how the solutions will vary between urban and rural areas.
- 3.50 The draft NPPF also states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and that local planning authorities should identify development opportunities from existing or proposed infrastructure projects. In the case of Stafford Borough, this would include the new High Speed 2 Rail Link (HS2).

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.51 The Local Plan seeks to reduce the need to travel by private car in urban areas by ensuring that, wherever possible, new development is located close to access points (bus stops, railway stations, and park and ride facilities) along public transport corridors.
- 3.52 It also requires Travel Plans for new developments to maximise travel and accessibility by non-car transport modes via safe, attractive and conveniently designed street, pedestrian and cycling connections within the development and to nearby existing employment and communities.

Question 21

There is a growing need to deliver the infrastructure required to support sustainable transport choices. What could the Plan do to help you make more sustainable transport choices?

Question 22

Are there any specific sustainable transport projects that the Council should be promoting as part of the Local Plan? If yes, please provide some detail about the project.

Question 23

What economic development opportunities do you consider could arise from HS2 for the Borough?

Getting Around By Road

3.53 Stafford Borough's location ensures that it benefits from excellent north-south transportation links: Two M6 motorway junctions are located adjacent to Stafford town providing good accessibility to the North West, the rest of the West Midlands region and beyond via the M6 and M6 Toll. However, connections in the east-west direction are less dominant.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

3.54 With the scale of development that is proposed in the Local Plan, a number of road improvements are proposed within the Borough including new sections of road and public transport provision.

Question 24

Are there any specific transportation projects that the Council should be promoting in the Local Plan? If yes, please provide some detail on the project, its location and the reason why you believe it is necessary.

Environmental Quality

High quality Design

3.55 High quality design is fundamental to the creation of quality places by enhancing both appearance and functionality. High quality design has a significant impact on quality of life. It influences safety and security, and encourages economic investment as well as fostering community cohesion and inclusion. It can encourage greater levels of walking and cycling, to address health and wellbeing, as well as addressing the causes and effects of our changing climate.

3.56 High quality design is crucial if the settlements throughout the Borough are to maintain and enhance their valued local distinctiveness and emerge as more sustainable, higher quality places that thrive economically, socially and

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environmentally.

3.57 National policy reinforces good design as a key aspect of sustainable development, and states that Local Planning Authorities should:

- Create a high quality built environment
- Secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity
- Promote mixed use development
- Take account of the roles and characters of different areas
- Plan positively for high quality and inclusive design, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and the wider area
- Should have local design review arrangements in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

3.58 The Local Plan requires all new development to be of a high design standard to enhance the quality of the built environment that reflects and respects the character, setting and local context, including those features that contribute to local distinctiveness of the area.

3.59 Going forward the Local Plan will need to find a way to make sure that existing assets such as buildings, streets and spaces, green infrastructure and community facilities are managed imaginatively and that new developments are designed intelligently.

Question 25

National policy reinforces good design as a key aspect of sustainable development and provides support to ensure high standards of design generally.

Should closer ties with the local design panel be established to provide assessment and support for major or particularly complex or sensitive development proposals?

Historic Environment

3.60 The historic environment has a powerful influence on people's quality of life in terms of health, safety and personal security. The quality of the historic environment and the presence of heritage assets contributes to the character, distinctiveness and cultural heritage value of Stafford Borough as well as supporting tourism, recreational and green infrastructure objectives. It supports tourism and recreation, from visitors to the Grade II * listed Ancient High House in Stafford town and the Grade I Shugborough Hall with its landscaped estate, to attractive leisure walks and routes along the Borough's network of historic canals, all of which are designated as linear Conservation Areas. It also

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provides a distinctive quality environment for everyday life, including quality spaces for shops and businesses, attractive High Streets and parks, as well as the homes of many of the Borough's residents. Our historic environment is valued as it creates distinctive quality places and attracts inward investment.

- 3.61 The Borough is particularly rich in terms of its rural and agricultural heritage, including many surviving historic farmsteads and 'model farms' from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and historic parkland and estates, such as at Shugborough, Trentham, Aqualate and Sandon.
- 3.62 Protecting and enhancing the historic environment is an important component of national planning policy, which encourages Local Planning Authorities to promote a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in their Local Plans. It goes on to state that the strategy put forward should recognize that conservation is not a passive exercise and that Local Plans should identify specific opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets.
- 3.63 National policy also seeks to promote the idea of locally listed heritage assets. Around half of all local planning authorities have produced lists of locally important buildings and sites, although not all of these have adopted the list as part of their development plan.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.64 The Plan for Stafford Borough has a strategy which seeks to preserve, manage and enhance the Borough's heritage; this includes specifically identified features as well as the wider historic environment. The unique legacy of the Borough's historic environment should inspire excellence in design whilst retaining character and local distinctiveness, and contribute to the Council's emphasis on the positive management of change.

Question 26

What could the Plan do to protect and enhance the Borough's Heritage Assets?

Landscape

- 3.65 The landscape forms the context for people's lives. Its character and quality is key to maintaining a strong sense of place.
- 3.66 National policy requires Councils to move from local landscape designations to a comprehensive assessment of Landscape Character. This approach has the benefit of assessing the whole of an area's landscape, rather than focusing on particular locations, including major developments within designated landscape areas. Staffordshire County Council has developed a Landscape Character Assessment process, which identifies the landscape into Character Areas. It

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places the Borough in 3 Character Areas:

- 61 / 62 Shropshire, Staffordshire & Cheshire Plan / Cheshire Sandstone Ridge
- 67 Cannock Chase & Cank Wood
- 68 Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands

3.67 Additional details assessing and mapping the general sensitivity of these landscape units across Stafford Borough are set out in Staffordshire County Council's Landscape Character Assessment document, 'Planning for Landscape Change: Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011'. Staffordshire County Council has also undertaken detailed Historic Landscape Characterisation Assessment for the County area, including Historic Environment Character Assessments for Stafford Borough.

3.68 Cannock Chase is also designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the NPPF affords such sites the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

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

Question 27

What approach should the Local Plan take to ensure that Borough's landscape, AONB and its key features are protected and enhanced?

Nature Conservation

3.70 The Borough has a variety of habitats for both animal and plant life, many of which are protected under European or English Law.

Within Stafford Borough there are the following European sites:

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

Within the Borough there are the following Ramsar sites, which are a World designation:

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

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- Mottey Meadows SAC (on the edge of the Borough)

3.71 The NPPF expects Local Planning Authorities to include criteria based policies in their Local Plan against which the impact of development proposals on or affecting protected biodiversity and geodiversity can be considered. It also requires distinctions to be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites. This is so that protection afforded to these sites is proportionate with their status, and appropriate weight is given to their importance and the contribution made to wider ecological networks. It also states that Local Plan Authorities should plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

3.72 The Local Plan sets out a range of policies which seek to conserve and enhance the Borough's biodiversity network and green assets through appropriate design and management, proportionate to their status.

3.73 The new Local Plan needs to maintain and improve the natural environment and will include policies to ensure that development proposals provide net gains whilst minimising any negative impacts on biodiversity.

Question 28

What approach should the Local Plan take to ensure that Borough's natural assets are protected and where possible enhanced?

The Green Belt

3.74 The Green Belt is an important nationally recognised designation that imposes a major policy constraint on development. The NPPF states that the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

3.75 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 and to the north of Stone forming part of the North Staffordshire Green Belt area. These areas have been designated because of their ability to meet the aims and purposes of the Green Belt set through national policy.

3.76 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

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Hilderstone, are within or abut areas of Green Belt in Stafford Borough.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.77 As there is sufficient land to serve the development needs of Stafford Borough beyond the planned period, safeguarded land for development in the Green Belt has not been identified. The Plan identifies 3 major locations that are listed as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt defined with a boundary; namely at Hadleigh Park (Blythe Bridge); Moorfields Industrial Estate (Swynnerton); the former Meaford Power Station (Stone) for employment uses.
- 3.78 The draft NPPF makes provision for local affordable housing needs to be accommodated on previously developed land in the Green Belt provided that this does not have a greater impact on its openness.

Question 29

The NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries should only be reviewed in exceptional circumstances through the preparation of the Local Plan. Less than a quarter of the Borough is covered by Green Belt. Do you consider review is necessary?

Climate Change

- 3.79 The National Planning Policy Framework states that the planning system has a key role for addressing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability to, and providing resilience to, the impacts of climate change, including mitigation and adaptation, as well as delivering renewable and low carbon energy.

The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 says...

- 3.80 All development must incorporate sustainable design features to facilitate a reduction in the consumption of natural resources, improve the environmental quality and mitigate against the impact of climate change. This includes the provision of sustainable drainage, sustainable construction, recycling facilities and ensuring protection from flooding.

Question 30

Which renewable technologies do you think are most suitable for development in the Borough? Please provide additional information as to why you deem these to be suitable.

Creating Successful Places

- 3.81 It is the Council's view that the production of an integrated Local Plan which provides strategic policies alongside more detailed policies and allocations will help to create successful places and facilitate the delivery of high quality, sustainable and well located development supported by the timely provision of infrastructure.
- 3.82 For the New Local Plan to create successful places it needs to be developed in a collaborative way with those who live and work or have an interest in the Borough to discover what their needs and aspirations are and how these can be addressed through the Local Plan.
- 3.83 The strategy, policies and development allocations in the New Local Plan need to be shaped by communities, which is why we need you to get involved. The only way we will know what you think is if you tell us, and the more people who have their say, will enable the Plan to be a true reflection of local requirements for the future.

Question 31

This document sets out the issues that need to be addressed through the new Local Plan. There may be matters that have been missed or that are not covered by the other consultation questions. Are there any matters you think also need to be considered at this stage and why?