

Stafford Borough Local Development Framework

PLANNING

for our

FUTURE

Core Strategy
Development Plan Document
Preferred Options Report



Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Core Strategy

Development Plan Document

Preferred Options Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 *The purpose of planning policies in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document is to deliver the strategic approach for spatial planning across the Borough Council area. The Core Strategy Development Plan Document will be the principal planning document in the Stafford Borough Local Development Framework and will form part of the new Development Plan for Stafford Borough alongside the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Core Strategy will aim to cover the same time period as the Regional Spatial Strategy.¹*
- 1.2 *Sustainability Appraisal is a key part of the process for preparing the Core Strategy Development Plan Document in order to assess the planning policies in terms of sustainable development principles. A number of Sustainability Appraisal Reports will be prepared and consulted upon at each stage of the process.*
- 1.3 *The Government requires Local Authorities to ‘front load’ the process for preparing Local Development Documents (LDDs). In January and February 2005 the Core Strategy Development Plan Document’s Issues and Options Paper was published and consulted upon as part of this ‘front loading’ process, seeking consensus around policy options. The Issues and Options stage is important for ensuring that the Development Plan Document (DPD) is both soundly based on evidence and relevant to the local area’s key issues.*
- 1.4 *Following consideration of the responses received to the Issues and Options Paper and recommendations in the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report Members of the Borough Council have now agreed the Core Strategy Development Plan Document Preferred Options Report for consultation. The Preferred Options Report is a statutory stage as part of the new Development Plan process for the Stafford Borough Local Development Framework.*
- 1.5 *The Core Strategy Development Plan Document Preferred Options Report sets out the vision, spatial objectives and preferred policy options for the area. The preferred policy options proposed are credibly based upon national and regional policies and aim to reflect both the Staffordshire County Community Strategy and the Stafford Borough Community Plan.*
- 1.6 *The Core Strategy Development Plan Document contains clear and concise policies for delivering the Borough’s spatial strategy. However it will not contain policies that refer to individual sites as these will be dealt with in subsequent Development Plan Documents (DPDs).*

¹ 2001-2021

2.0 Key Issues

2.1 *This section sets out the key issues and constraints affecting the spatial development of the Borough in order to identify key drivers for change. The following key issues have been identified through the Core Strategy DPD – Issues and Options Paper as well as previous consultations on the Local Plan Review Issues Paper in 2001 - 2002, work on the Local Development Framework in the Spring 2003 and the Gathering Evidence Questionnaire responses in early 2004:*

- *By March 2004 approximately 75% of housing provision, allocated for Stafford Borough in the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011, had already been completed*
- *Of the 150 hectares of employment land provision allocated for Stafford Borough in the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011, 35 hectares of employment land remains to be committed and is considered to be inadequate for the Stafford Borough area.*
- *Review of existing allocated Greenfield housing sites is required*
- *Significant decline in manufacturing employment in Stafford Borough*
- *Re-use of buildings for residential development rather than employment uses in urban and rural areas*
- *Declining and ageing population with an increase in single people*
- *Access to key services in rural areas*
- *Areas of poor quality housing*
- *Pockets of deprivation within a generally wealthy Borough population*
- *Potential release of significant land resources at RAF Stafford, ROF Swynnerton and Meaford Power Station site north of Stone*
- *Maintaining Stafford's status as a retail and local governance centre*

3.0 Vision, Sustainable Development Statement and Spatial Objectives

- 3.1 *It is important that the Vision, Sustainable Development Statement and the Spatial Objectives are unique to the Borough and reflect the circumstances and the characteristics of the area.*

Vision

“The overall vision for Stafford Borough is to create an economically successful, sustainable and adaptable Borough whilst protecting and enhancing the local environment, where:

- Sustainable economic development is encouraged across the Borough
- The market town of Stone and the rural areas provide viable local communities to meet identified local needs; and
- The urban area of Stafford supports future sustainable housing provision

and together they maintain and enhance existing services and facilities, and the high quality environment where all people living and working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs whilst improving the quality of life for future generations”

- 3.2 *The Stafford Borough Local Development Framework is based on the following Sustainable Development Statement in order to place the principles of sustainable development at the centre of the new Development Plan for the area:*

Sustainable Development Statement

“The Core Strategy, Proposals Map, Development Plan Documents, Area Action Plans and the associated implementation framework within the Borough will adopt the following strategic principles based upon the Government’s broad objectives for sustainable development:

- Effective protection and enhancement of the environment
- Maintenance and creation of high and stable levels of economic activity and employment
- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Prudent use of natural and built resources

In order to ensure that the implementation of the Local Development Framework’s spatial development strategy is consistent with these principles the policy framework will be monitored and reviewed through relevant indicators and targets as well as being assessed by Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment”

- 3.3 *The Core Strategy Development Plan Document has a number of spatial objectives which provides the spatial perspective for the Vision and creates links to the individual Development Plan Documents being prepared.*

Spatial Objective 1

To create a joined up multi-centred Borough wide structure where all areas have distinct roles to play and encourage cross-border linkages with adjoining Districts which reflect the distinctive qualities of their area as a contribution to the overall

diversity and character of the Borough whilst mitigating impacts of increased transport movements between settlements.

Spatial Objective 2

To secure an improvement in the quality of life in the rural area of the Borough by maintaining and promoting thriving, balanced, viable, inclusive and sustainable rural communities with access to services and securing the protection and enhancement of its environmental resources.

Spatial Objective 3

To maintain a high and stable level of employment by supporting the diversification and strengthening the modernisation of the Borough's economy whilst ensuring that opportunities for new growth and retention of existing businesses are linked to meeting the needs of the local community, respecting local environmental impacts.

Spatial Objective 4

Develop the local economy and meet local employment needs by providing a sufficient number and variety of employment locations and opportunities, including the review of existing under used and derelict sites, whilst respecting local environmental impacts.

Spatial Objective 5

To create a variety and choice of high quality, healthy, affordable and sustainable residential environments with access to local services, which respect the environment.

Spatial Objective 6

Meet housing requirements in the Regional Spatial Strategy, including provision of affordable housing and housing for key workers by enabling new residential developments on previously developed land in settlements rather than Greenfield locations in the context of other land uses which respect the environment.

Spatial Objective 7

To ensure the quality of the natural environment, including habitats and species, are protected, conserved and enhanced across all parts of the Borough taking care to safeguard sites within national and internationally important designations and sites subject to non-statutory designations, including registered Commons.

Spatial Objective 8

To encourage improvement of the Borough's transport systems in an integrated, sustainable and accessible way for all, whilst reducing, where possible, the need for travel, increasing active travel (walking and cycling) and protecting the environment through mitigation measures.

Spatial Objective 9

To provide for local community services and facilities in key locations to increase social cohesion and improve health, community pride and effective, viable centres through high quality design and reducing impacts on the environment.

Spatial Objective 10

To maintain, improve and enhance high quality, vital and viable town and district centres ensuring that if new development takes place outside of these centres practical linkages are incorporated.

Spatial Objective 11

To conserve and enhance unique and sustainable developed areas and other locations where development takes place to be increasingly attractive places where people wish to live, work, visit and invest, whilst utilising previously developed land respecting local environmental factors in the most effective way and providing a variety and choice of high quality, healthy and sustainable living and working environments.

Spatial Objective 12

To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, in particular the Borough's Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens and Sites of Archaeological Value.

Spatial Objective 13

To maintain the principles of Green Belt designation from inappropriate development.

Spatial Objective 14

To secure planning obligations in order to ensure that development benefits the wider community and compensates for any harmful impact

Spatial Objective 15

To protect ancient woodlands, other manageable woodlands and significant trees in Stafford Borough and to increase the area of native broadleaf woodland.

Spatial Objective 16

To improve the Borough's sport, recreation, leisure and tourist facilities in those areas with an identified quality or quantity deficiency of facilities and to provide accessible natural greenspace including woodlands with priority given to local needs whilst sustaining the Borough economy and protecting the environment.

Spatial Objective 17

To encourage the exploitation and development of renewable energy sources wherever they have prospects of being economically attractive, and environmentally and socially acceptable.

Spatial Objective 18

To ensure a balance between the growth of new and existing telecommunication systems and the environmental, social, health and physical impacts of any such development.

Spatial Objective 19

To ensure that the impacts of climate change are taken into account so new and existing development is not at risk of flooding or detrimental to flooding elsewhere and to ensure pollution control and protection of controlled waters leads to key water resources being maintained for the future for economic, social or environmental benefits.

Spatial Objective 20

To encourage protection and enhancement of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4.0 CORE POLICIES – PREFERRED OPTIONS

- 4.1 *The following Core Policy preferred options have been identified following consultation and community involvement through the alternative policies in Core Strategy Development Plan Document – Issues and Options Paper to provide a local policy context to support national guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Notes / Statements. The Core Policy preferred options in this Development Plan Document (DPD) have been prepared with the aim of avoiding re-iterating national guidance.*
- 4.2 *The Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Core Strategy DPD was consulted upon at the same time as the Issues and Options Paper. Following an assessment of the policy alternatives through the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report a preferred option was recommended for each Core Policy. For further information please refer to the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report.*
- 4.3 *The Core Strategy Development Plan Document – Issues and Options Paper contained three alternative policy approaches for each Core Policy area. The alternative approaches related to the level of restriction over development, as follows:*
- *Option A – Greatest restriction over development*
 - *Option B – Less restriction over development*
 - *Option C – Least restriction over development*
- 4.4 *For further information about the alternative policy approach beyond this précis please refer to the Core Strategy DPD – Issues and Options Paper. Following consideration of the responses received to the Core Strategy Development Plan Document – Issues and Options Paper as well as the recommendations in the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report the following preferred options have been prepared.*

5.0 Monitoring and Delivery

- 5.1 *A crucial element of preparing the Core Strategy Development Plan Document is to establish a clear monitoring and implementation framework. As part of this monitoring and implementation framework the national core indicators will be monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report to assess the delivery of core policies in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document.*
- 5.2 *Following consultation on the Core Strategy DPD - Preferred Options Report each core policy will have clear objectives in order to monitor the effectiveness and delivery of the policies. These objectives will be linked to the national core indicators or have separate indicators. Delivery of the policies will be assessed through the Annual Monitoring Report.*

Core Policy 1: Development of the Borough

The purpose of this policy is to direct most new development to Stafford whilst retaining and enhancing existing facilities elsewhere.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

Previously developed land and buildings will primarily be used to meet new development needs in the Borough.

1. Sustainable employment development will be encouraged across the Borough
2. The urban area of Stafford will be the focus for sustainable housing development and providing major services to the rural hinterlands
3. Health, education, leisure, retail, community, cultural and other social facilities to serve rural areas will be concentrated in the market town of Stone and the following settlements:

| | | |
|-----------|------------|--------------------------|
| Gnosall | Eccleshall | Great Haywood |
| Barlaston | Hixon | Little Haywood & Colwich |

The retention and appropriate enhancement of existing facilities will be sought in other rural settlements. All new residential, commercial and industrial developments and renovations will be expected to provide on-site renewable energy generation, where practical and economically viable.

Core Policy 2: Sustainable Rural Living

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that new development maintains and improves the character and quality of life in the rural area and its settlements.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

The essential character and economic and social fabric of rural areas and settlements shall be maintained or improved by:

- a) only encouraging development which assists in supporting existing businesses or diversifying the local economy, to help to underpin or improve services and community facilities;
- b) the provision of housing to meet the needs of existing rural communities including affordable homes and housing for key workers;
- c) ensuring that development does not have a harmful impact on the rural setting or have undesirable impacts on local infrastructure, facilities and transportation networks;
- d) conserving and enhancing the natural, built and water environments;
- e) maximising the use of previously developed land (brownfield sites) in preference to greenfield sites; and
- f) ensuring that new development provides adequate foul drainage services to prevent pollution to controlled waters.

Core Policy 3: Sustainable Urban Living

The purpose of this policy is to encourage partnership working to deliver quality development schemes in urban areas.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

Sustainable urban living will be achieved by encouraging and implementing initiatives which will enhance the image, create vitality and improve safety, comfort and environmental quality. This approach will be developed through partnerships with other agencies and the development industry, for schemes and proposals which:

- a) facilitate new built development and economic investment;**
- b) enhance the image, attractiveness and accessibility of the town and district centres within the urban areas, boost vitality and encourage new investment;**
- c) aim to reclaim and reuse derelict, contaminated, degraded, vacant or underused land and buildings for new employment, housing, commercial, retail, leisure, in preference to taking greenfield land;**
- d) seek to improve the availability, accessibility, quality and diversity of the housing stock; and**
- e) protect, conserve and enhance the character and quality of the Borough's townscapes and public realm;**
- f) protect and enhance environmental quality through the creation, retention, improvement and extension of areas of wildlife value, open spaces, access to watercourses and historic assets where relevant; and**
- g) provide high quality designed developments which will improve the quality of life and the built environment.**

Core Policy 4: The Balance of Economic Growth

The purpose of this policy is to promote economic prosperity and support the Borough's employment base through targeted employment allocations and development proposals.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

Diversification of the Borough's economy will be encouraged through the promotion and development of targeted employment allocations and attracting inward investment to the urban areas of Stafford and the market town of Stone, with an emphasis on creating greater opportunities for development and support for existing economic activities by:

- a) enabling the economy to diversify and modernise through the growth of existing businesses and the creation of new enterprises;**
- b) maintaining and improving the Borough's economic position;**
- c) enhancing the Borough's role as a centre of governance, a high technology business centre and University location within the Regional economy; and**
- d) improving access to employment opportunities for the Borough's residents in order to meet local employment needs, maintain viable and sustainable local communities.**

Economic growth opportunities in rural areas will be encouraged by locating development where:

- (i) it includes the re-use of existing buildings and assists with appropriate rural diversification; and**
- (ii) it can help create more sustainable communities by generally providing a better balance between housing and employment and limit the need for commuting.**

Existing economic activities in the Borough will be encouraged to modernise both to stay competitive and to embrace the opportunities offered by new technologies including Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The potential for existing and new industries to apply renewable energy technology to help address the implications of climate change will be encouraged, where practical and economically viable.

In all cases, the scale and nature of development should ensure that it meets local need and does not encourage further outward movements of people and jobs from the urban areas.

Core Policy 5: Developing Accessibility and Mobility

The purpose of this policy is to support the delivery of initiatives in the Local Transport Plan through spatial planning principles for a modern transport network.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

The creation and retention of a modern transport network in the Borough will be promoted in order to support development and sustainability of quality living environments and the creation and maintenance of jobs in accessible locations, particularly around public transport nodes. Integrated transport networks, including the rural areas, will be created through the Local Transport Plan to promote safe and efficient movement.

Reducing the need to travel, the adverse effects of transportation and the length of journeys will be encouraged by:

- a) locating development in areas which are highly accessible by the motor car, public transport, cycling and walking;**
- b) achieving a balanced mix of land uses and patterns of development;**
- c) promoting and assisting journeys by motor cars, public transport, cycling and walking, by all of the Borough's residents by making them safe, convenient and as attractive as possible;**
- d) requiring those developments that are likely to generate significant trips, have major transport implications or require a Transport Assessment under PPG13 to locate where accessibility by existing public transport can be maximised;**
- e) encouraging the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the purposes of businesses and for other service provision;**
- f) supporting the retention and enhancement of neighbourhood service provision, such as in District centres; and**
- g) promoting safer use of routes in town and local areas by encouraging the development of traffic management schemes as determined by local need.**

Core Policy 6: Conserving and Enhancing the Environment

The purpose of this policy is to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment by ensuring that new development is based on sustainable development principles.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

Environmental capital will be maintained and improved in order to underpin the overall quality of life across all areas and support wider economic and social objectives.

This will be achieved by:

- a) supporting regeneration, by restoring degraded areas, conserving existing environmental assets and creating new, high quality, built and natural environments;**
- b) protecting and enhancing the Landscape Character Areas and other special areas of intrinsic visual or cultural merit within the Borough including registered Commons, the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Hanchurch Hills and Trentham Park;**
- c) protecting and enhancing other irreplaceable assets; and**
- d) protecting and enhancing the distinctive character of different parts of the Borough, including the retention of existing buildings integral to the character of the area where the buildings make a positive contribution;**
- e) promoting accessible natural greenspace standards, biodiversity objectives and Environmental Enhancement Areas in the Regional Spatial Strategy; and**
- f) protecting the natural floodplain from development and utilising Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to control flooding and maintain water quality.**

No loss of irreplaceable environmental assets will be acceptable by any form of development proposal. With regards to replaceable environmental assets all development proposals must mitigate and compensate for any loss of environmental capital and should use natural resources more sustainably. In addition proposals will be expected to provide a net gain to environmental assets.

The purpose of this policy is to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

There will be no review or adjustment of currently defined Green Belt boundaries unless required by the Regional Spatial Strategy. The general form and purposes of the adopted Green Belts will be maintained. Inappropriate development within Green Belts will not be permitted, except in very special circumstances (very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations).

Construction of new buildings will only be appropriate if proven through the following circumstances:

- (a) construction of domestic outbuildings incidental to the enjoyment of an existing building;**
- (b) agriculture and forestry;**
- (c) essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries;**
- (d) acceptable extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings;**
- (e) acceptable infilling in existing villages for affordable housing or essential for rural regeneration to diversify the local economy or improve services or community facilities;**
- (f) acceptable infilling or redevelopment of major existing developed sites identified in the Development Plan; and**
- (g) other uses compatible with the openness of the Green Belt.**

All development within the Green Belt should be appropriate in terms of scale, form, character and siting; it should maintain the visual amenities of the Green Belt and will be subject to other relevant policies.

Core Policy 8: High Quality Design

The purpose of this policy is to achieve high quality of design in all new developments to support the delivery of social, economic and environmental benefits.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

The creation of high quality design for all development in the Borough must be promoted in order to enhance the built environment and support economic, social and environmental objectives for achieving sustainable development.

All new development must:

- (a) adopt appropriate design measures, showing careful attention to the scale, character, setting and compatibility with their surroundings, materials and proposed use;**
- (b) respect and maintain the character, street scene, scale and hierarchy of existing buildings and the spaces between them;**
- (c) ensure through careful design and sustainable construction that the development is usable, durable, adaptable and maximises opportunities, where practical and economically viable, to use recycled materials in their construction;**
- (d) provide for safe and convenient access for all, addressing the needs of all in society, including people with disability;**
- (e) adopt design measures to reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour;**
- (f) make efficient and prudent use of natural resources, including water as well as incorporating waste management, energy efficiency and pollution control measures where appropriate; and**
- (g) contribute to well planned public spaces and opportunities for physical activity.**

The purpose of this policy is to meet the employment needs of the Borough.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

To achieve sustainable development and economic growth, provision will be made for about 150 hectares of employment land in the industrial, office, warehousing and distribution sectors (Class B uses) between 1996 and 2011. Beyond 2011 provision for employment land will be made in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy. Employment land provision will be reviewed by the Council on a regular basis.

In allocating sites for employment and considering applications for economic development, where appropriate the Council will have regard to:

- (a) The ability to reuse previously developed land and buildings;
- (b) The nature and characteristics of the existing businesses and industries;
- (c) The availability of existing sites;
- (d) Access to the strategic highway and rail networks for the distribution of goods and services;
- (e) The presence of a nearby potential workforce;
- (f) The capability of being served by public transport;
- (g) The availability of motor car, pedestrian and cycle links between the site and residential areas;
- (h) The capability of existing services being able to be extended or improved to allow for future site expansion, when and if appropriate;
- (i) Avoiding the sterilisation of mineral reserves;
- (j) Viability and market demand, feasibility for implementation and capability for development;
- (k) Protecting the natural floodplain and utilising Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to control flooding and maintain water quality; and
- (l) Establishing and maintaining a portfolio of sustainably located employment sites by ensuring an adequate range and number of sites.

Development which would lead to the loss of business or general industrial land considered to be necessary to meet market requirements and provide a diverse local portfolio of employment opportunities, will be resisted.

The purpose of this policy is to meet the residential requirements for the Borough.

PREFERRED POLICY OPTION

Provision is made for a maximum of 5,600 dwellings to be completed within Stafford Borough between 1996 and 2011. However this figure and the provision between 2011 and 2021 will be subject to review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

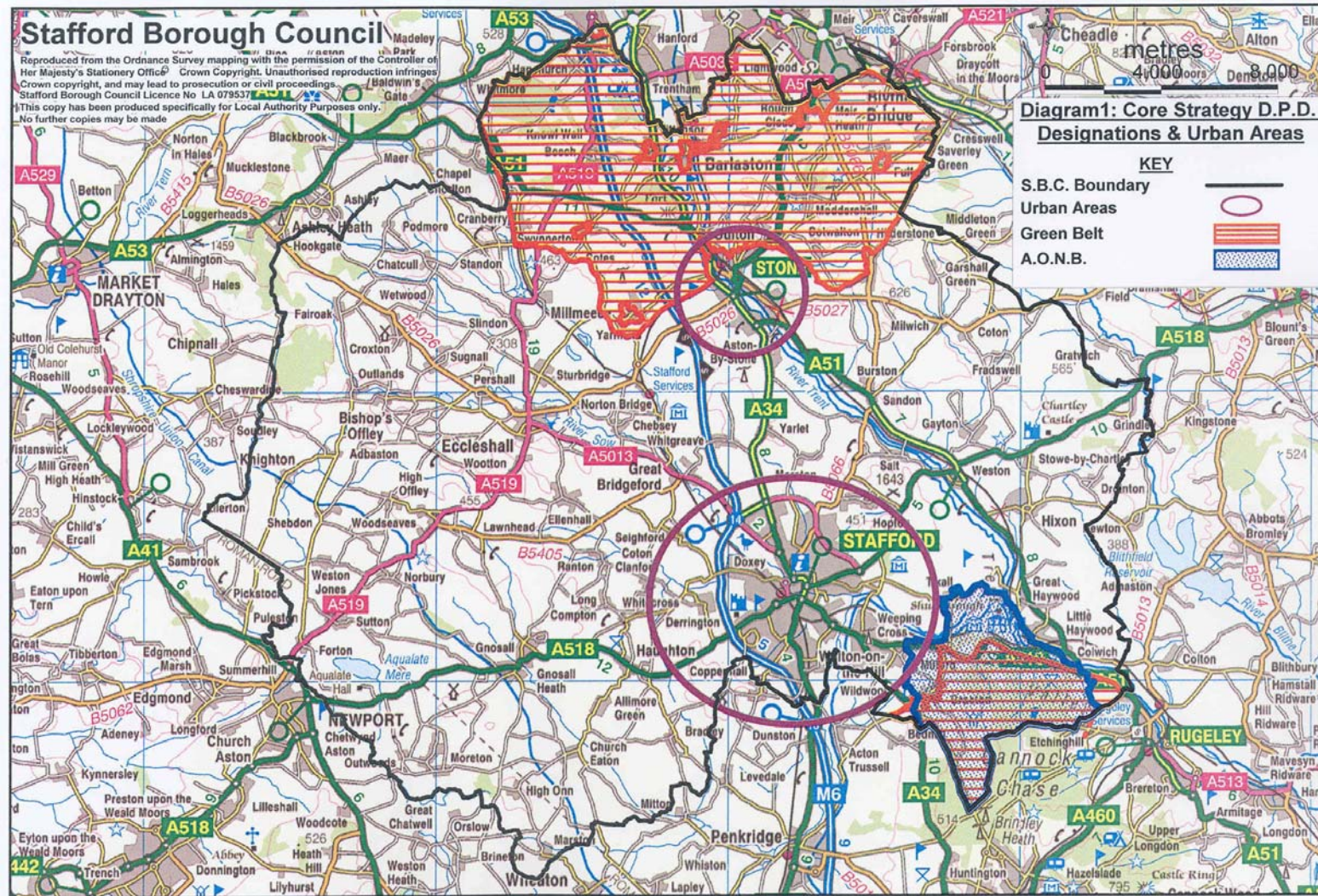
In allocating sites for housing and considering applications for residential development, where appropriate the Council will have regard to:

- (a) The capability of being served by public transport;
- (b) The availability of pedestrian and cycle links;
- (c) Access to the strategic highway network;
- (d) The capacity of existing health, education services and provision of additional (or improvements to existing) community facilities arising from increased demand;
- (e) The availability of utility services;
- (f) Avoiding the sterilisation of mineral reserves;
- (g) The ability to reuse previously developed land and buildings;
- (h) Viability, feasibility for implementation and capability for development;
- (i) Achieving acceptable densities; and
- (j) Protecting the natural floodplain and utilising Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to control flooding and maintain water quality.

Developments should be consistent with the creation of attractive and safe living environments, be in keeping with their surroundings and must not take valuable amenity space. Providing a range of housing types and tenures is an essential part of establishing choice for the whole community.

Strategic Diagram: Designations, the urban areas of Stafford and the Market Town of Stone (Not to Scale)

(Exact boundaries to be defined during preparation and adoption of subsequent Development Plan Documents)



6.0 Policy Context

6.1 *In identifying the proposed spatial vision, objectives and preferred policy options for the Core Strategy Development Plan Document in this Preferred Options Report the Borough Council has taken account of national and regional policy compliance, deliverability, and local acceptability.*

6.2 National Policy

The Government sets out national policy in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs), which are currently being replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The Government also produces Circulars and Best Practice Guides in order to provide advice to local planning authorities, to encourage a consistent approach to planning across the country.

For more information please refer to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister website at www.odpm.gov.uk

6.3 Regional Policy

Regional planning policy for the West Midlands is set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS provides the regional spatial framework within which Local Development Documents of the Local Development Framework (LDF) will be prepared. The RSS forms part of the statutory development plan alongside the Development Plan Documents of the LDF. The West Midland Economic Strategy is a delivery vehicle for many aspects of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

For more information please refer to the Government Office for the West Midlands website at www.go-wm.gov.uk

6.4 County Policy

The County Council is required to produce a Mineral and Waste Development Framework for the whole County area, of which the proposals covering Stafford Borough's area will be indicated on the Proposals Map where relevant.

For more information please refer to the Staffordshire County Council website at www.staffordshire.gov.uk

6.5 Local Policy

Currently the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 makes up the adopted Development Plan for the area. However this Development Plan now needs to be reviewed and updated. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that existing Development Plans be replaced by Development Plan Documents within Local Development Frameworks. The new Development Plan for Stafford Borough will be made up of the Regional Spatial Strategy and Development Plan Documents within the Local Development Framework, which will provide the spatial framework for the Borough.

For more information please refer to the Stafford Borough Council website at www.staffordbc.gov.uk

7.0 Background Context to the Vision and Spatial Objectives

7.1 This section sets out the general context for the proposed vision and spatial objectives for the Stafford Borough Local Development Framework. The proposed vision and objectives are underpinned by the principles of sustainable development.

7.2 The new Local Development Framework (LDF) should be based on a clear vision for the area and should take account of other policies and strategies affecting Stafford Borough.

7.3 The Council's Corporate Vision and Priorities

On 30 September 2003, the Borough Council agreed a vision for the area, together with four key priorities. In finalising the Council's priorities for 2003-2007 Members considered responses from a consultation exercise designed to feed into the Council meeting.

The Borough Council's vision is to **"lead a community and Borough which is prosperous, safe, healthy, clean and green."**

In order to achieve this vision, four key priorities were identified:

- **Prosperity** – Working to ensure good employment opportunities and a flourishing economy, retail, leisure and tourism services.
- **Community Safety** – Working to ensure that people are safe in their home and in their neighbourhood.
- **Management of Public Spaces** – Working to ensure clean, tidy and attractive public spaces.
- **Waste Management** – Working to ensure recycling targets for household waste are met.

The corresponding key commitments in the Council's Corporate Vision and Priorities that are relevant to the LDF are set out below:

Prosperity

P1 Work with the business community to support the local economy and secure competitive advantage for our Borough.

P2 Ensure that the development of the Borough as a destination for inward investment is supported by provision and encouragement of services, choice within the housing market, leisure opportunities and an environment that also improves the quality of life for residents.

P3 Ensure the new Local Development Framework (Local Plan) identifies and brings forward new employment sites for the next 10 years.

P4 Pursue a "fast track" approach to key planning applications, adopt a more proactive stance to pre-application advice prior to submission of planning applications and ensure that recent improvements in the Planning Service are sustained.

Prosperity (continued)

- P5** *Work with the Local Strategic Partnership to support the development of the whole Borough as a destination for visitors for retail, culture and tourism purposes.*
- P8** *Support the rural economy through the Market Towns Initiatives and other measures.*
- P9** *Maintain an active role in the North and Southern Staffordshire Partnerships to ensure that Stafford Borough benefits from sub-regional strategies and encourage Advantage West Midlands to invest in the area.*

Community Safety

- CS1** *Play our role within the Stafford Borough Community Safety Partnership to fully support the Police, Fire Service and Ambulance Service in their community safety role, together with other appropriate agencies in reducing crime and the fear of crime.*
- CS2** *Use our planning responsibilities to guide and support physical development which discourages unlawful activity.*

The Management of Public Space

- PS 1** *Work with the Staffordshire County Council and encourage them to invest in highways, transportation and public space to the advantage of our local communities.*
- PS4** *Pay particular attention to our role in partnerships with others in maintaining quality town centres.*
- PS5** *Ensure our green spaces are protected and enhanced using the Local Development Framework and other strategies.*

Waste Management

- WM5** *Remain committed to environmental protection and the pursuit of sustainability, where practical.*

7.4 Stafford Borough Community Plan 2003 - 2006

*In September 2003 the **Stafford Borough Community Plan 2003-06** (described in Government guidance as the Community Strategy) was published by the Local Strategic Partnership, known as the Stafford Partnership, as a joint plan setting out aspirations and proposals from over 300 key local partner organisations and individuals to ensure the economic, environmental and social well-being of the community.*

The Community Plan aims to improve the quality of life in Stafford Borough over the next three years and beyond through the following vision:

“To create a Borough in which people and organisations can face the 21st Century with confidence, a place that is prosperous with a community that cares.”

The Community Plan 2003-06 sets out the strategic direction, by identifying a number of priorities for improving the quality of life in Stafford Borough, centred around nine key themes, which each have a set of objectives:

- Planning for the Future
- Employment Opportunities
- Attracting Resources
- Youth and Community
- Community Safety
- Health and Lifestyle
- Waste Minimisation, Recycling and the Efficient Use of Resources
- Protecting and Enhancing the Environment
- Transportation

7.5 The Community Strategy for Staffordshire

In November 2002 'A Community Strategy for Staffordshire' was prepared by the Staffordshire Conference, a partnership of 50 organisations working across the County area. The Community Strategy concentrates on issues that are important to the whole county and supports the strategies produced at district and borough levels.

The aim of the strategy is to improve the quality of life for local communities within Staffordshire, and to contribute to achieving sustainable development by improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of the county and those who live in it.

The community strategy for Staffordshire is built on six areas. These relate to the following:

Community safety - reducing crime and the fear of crime arising from burglary, drug abuse and vandalism, and promoting public safety.

Environment - Conserving and enhancing a distinctive and sustainable natural and built environment.

Health, social care and housing - Improving people's health and well-being and the health and care services they receive, and providing housing for local need.

Lifelong learning and culture - producing better opportunities for education and lifelong learning, and promoting community development (including cultural facilities).

Prosperity - developing the local economy, building on local distinctiveness and assets.

Transport - providing transport facilities and encouraging environmentally friendly means of getting about.

7.6 Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands

The vision in Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands states that:

"The overall vision for the West Midlands is one of an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable Region, which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life for future generations."

Regional Spatial Strategy has the following set of spatial objectives for the region:

- To make the Major Urban Areas of the West Midlands increasingly attractive places where people want to live, work and invest;
- To secure the regeneration of the rural areas of the Region;

- To create a joined-up multi-centred Regional structure where all areas / centres have distinct roles to play;
- To retain the Green Belt, but to allow an adjustment of boundaries where this is necessary to support urban regeneration;
- To support the cities and towns of the Region to meet their local and sub-regional development needs;
- To support the diversification and modernisation of the Region's economy while ensuring that opportunities for growth are linked to meeting needs and reducing social exclusion;
- To ensure the quality of the environment is conserved and enhanced across all parts of the Region;
- To improve significantly the Region's transport systems;
- To promote the development of a network of strategic centres across the Region; and
- To promote Birmingham as a world city.

7.7 The Sustainable Development Strategy for the UK

The Government's Sustainable Development Strategy for the UK (1999) provides four broad objectives:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection of the environment;
- Prudent use of natural resources; and
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

A number of principles are contained within the UK Strategy for Sustainable Development which are directly relevant to spatial development and land use planning system. These principles have been used to guide preparation of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives as well as other Development Plan Documents.

7.8 Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future

The Government's Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future (2003) sets out several key requirements for the creation of sustainable communities to be facilitated by the Local Development Framework process including:

- A flourishing local economy to provide jobs and wealth;
- A safe and healthy local environment with well designed public and green space;
- Good public transport and other transport infrastructure both with the community and linking it to urban, rural and regional centres;
- A well integrated mix of decent homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes; and
- Good quality local public services, including education and training opportunities, health care and community facilities, especially for leisure.