

Local Plan 2020-2040

Preferred Options consultation webinar held on Wednesday 9 November 2022

Question and Answer Paper

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Meecebrook

General

Can the Borough Council be clear about terminology. Is Meecebrook a Garden Village or a Garden Community?

Meecebrook is classified as a Garden Community, being a potential new settlement of 6,000 new homes including associated strategic infrastructure, services and facilities. The Government defines Garden Communities of being between 1,500 - 10,000 new homes.

Meecebrook is a significant development proposal leading to important needs for the community such as sewage infrastructure, drainage, flood protection, parking, bungalows etc... Could Meecebrook be separated from the new Local Plan?

The new Local Plan 2020-2040 sets out the strategic planning approach for the whole of Stafford Borough. Statutory legislation requires that local Councils should prepare 'development plans' (the Local Plan) to guide future planning decisions. Therefore, Meecebrook must be included in the new Local Plan, supported by an evidence base demonstrating that infrastructure, services and facilities can be delivered. It is important that all options for new development are considered collectively through the plan-making process, including implications for the Borough.

When will the Meecebrook Master Plan be available to examine?

Currently, the Vision, Development Charter and an indicative concept master plan have been made available. A more detailed Master Plan will be available as part of the Publication stage of the Local Plan ahead of Submission to the Planning Inspectorate due to take place at the end of 2023. The Meecebrook master planning work will be progressed during 2023 and include public consultation / engagement.

Concept Plans for Meecebrook don't show existing residential housing in plan 6. Are they included in the extension of commercial uses?

Yes, but existing residential housing will continue in that use rather than converted to commercial use.

Will any infrastructure for Meecebrook be constructed prior to the construction of the 3,000 houses?

Work on master planning and the associated infrastructure delivery programme will be progressed through 2023, with development of the site taking place on a phased basis. Not all infrastructure will be delivered in the first phase of development but be linked to other phases coming forward. As part of the Master planning process we will seek to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is made available when required, with certain services and facilities to be provided prior to new houses being

built in order to enable their delivery. In total 6,000 new homes will be built as part of Meecebrook, 3,000 in the new Plan period.

The new Local Plan takes us up to 2040, yet most of the Meecebrook development is set to be built beyond 2040. What if that development is no longer appropriate in 20 years time? What assurance can you provide us that we won't be left with a half-built construction site that fails to deliver everything you have promised?

As Local Planning Authority, the Borough Council is required to provide an up-to-date Local Plan, with the Meecebrook proposal included in the Plan period 2020-2040. Studies demonstrate that a minimum of 6,000 new homes are required to deliver a sustainable development of infrastructure, services and facilities. Whilst the Plan period 2020-2040 will deliver 3,000 new homes at Meecebrook, the remaining dwellings are proposed to come forward after 2040 and be part of the following plan period. Sufficient land has been made available to fulfil the Meecebrook proposals and the commitments made in the emerging Local Plan - if accepted - will allow the scheme to be built out

The Meecebrook site would provide surplus housing for the Borough. What research has been done about the types of people that would move there and where they would work etc..?

In terms of Meecebrook approximately 3,000 new homes will be provided, of which 2,000 new homes will be to provide for the requirements of another Council area in the region. This approach will enable economic growth to take place in Stafford Borough, continuing the approach in the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031.

The Housing and Employment Land Requirement Topic Paper (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/housing-and-employment-land-requirement-topic-paper>) summarises the evidence and explains the reasons for the selection of the Council's preferred housing and employment land requirements, with further detail through the Economic and Housing Development Needs Assessment 2020. This evidence will be updated following the Preferred Options consultation during 2023. The Council also has a legal requirement to engage in Duty to Co-operate matters on strategic cross-border issues.

Every Council area in the country must have enough land with planning permission to build houses for 5 years. This is called a 5-year housing supply. For our Borough we need to supply 500 new homes a year through our adopted Plan and propose 535 new homes per year in our new Local Plan 2020-2040.

Transport

What impact will there be if the Government decides to cancel the 2nd part of High Speed 2 (HS2)? There is no reference to the impact of HS2, nor any reference to the major Yarnfield Railhead, are these not considered significant?

Decisions as regards future phases of HS2 are made at the national level by Government. In the Autumn Statement made on 17 November 2022 the Chancellor confirmed that HS2 would be constructed through to Crewe and Manchester, which includes the section relevant to Meecebrook. Whilst the new train station is a key feature of the Meecebrook proposals it is not the only form of transport infrastructure or means of travel being considered and evaluated

The Government has published separate plans, including an extensive evidence base addressing impacts and implications, for the HS2 rail scheme. The new Local Plan 2020-2040 will identify the HS2 route and its infrastructure through the updated Policy Map of the Borough, although the route is currently identified in the Key Diagram and draft Policy Map.

Within the background documents for Meecebrook a Transport Strategy has been produced (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/meecebrook-transport-strategy-full-report>) which sets out an appraisal of the number of trips / journeys people who will call Meecebrook their future home will generate. The main summary of the findings is that there would need to be mitigation solutions to increase the existing road network capacity. These could include, for example highway mitigation measures along existing corridors or new/changes to existing junctions to improve the highway capacity.

Alongside these measures, however, the study also recognises the need to promote alternative sustainable modes of transport to reduce car dependency

As part of the ongoing work concerning the Garden Community, further reports will be commissioned. If future phases of HS2 are cancelled or delayed these reports will take this into account.

Is Meecebrook dependent on the railway station being built?

No. Whilst the railway station is a key feature for the proposed development it is not required to make the development 'work'.

What happens if the railway station proves to not be viable?

During 2023 an Outline Business Case for a new railway station at Meecebrook will be completed, including the viability of the proposed scheme. If the proposed station at Meecebrook is deemed to be unviable this will be considered in the context of the master planning work to be progressed next year alongside other transport solutions to be identified through the evidence base. The lack of a railway station at Meecebrook will not automatically result in the proposal being removed from the Local Plan.

If the train station is viable, when will it be delivered? How many houses will be occupied by this point?

How will the residents access employment if not by car? Network Rail have said: "There are currently no Network Rail proposals for a station at Meecebrook and our planners have advised that they have not been consulted with directly by Stafford Borough Council or Staffordshire County Council on this subject. "

To date an initial Rail Feasibility Study has been completed (accessible through the web-link below) in terms of a new railway station on the West Coast Mainline associated with the proposed Meecebrook development. Subsequent master planning and infrastructure delivery programmes will provide more details about the phasing of new development and associated needs. Network Rail will be engaged as part of this more detailed work.

To date the following studies have been undertaken related to the railway:

- Rail Pre-Feasibility (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/meecebrook-rail-study-pre-feasibility-report>)
- Rail Feasibility (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/meecebrook-rail-study-feasibility-report>)

Has the transport analysis been done? Where is the evidence for the transport infrastructure enhancements?

Within the background documents for Meecebrook a Transport Strategy has been produced (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/meecebrook-transport-strategy-full-report>). This document sets out an appraisal of the number of trips / journeys people who will call Meecebrook their future home will generate. The main summary of the findings is that there would need to be mitigation solutions to increase the capacity of the local road network. These include highway mitigation measures along existing corridors or new/changes to existing junctions to improve the highway capacity.

Alongside these measures, the study also recognises the need to promote alternative sustainable modes of transport to reduce car dependency.

Meecebrook station is not a solution for people working in Stoke or Stafford due to the distance from stations to employment - Meecebrook residents will use cars to get to city and town edges. Should a transport analysis/ financial viability assessment be completed before a true sustainability assessment can be completed?

To date the following studies have been undertaken related to the railway:

- Rail Pre-Feasibility (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/meecebrook-rail-study-pre-feasibility-report>)
- Rail Feasibility (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/meecebrook-rail-study-feasibility-report>)

- Rail Feasibility Addendum (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/meecebrook-rail-study-feasibility-addendum>)

A detailed financial viability study, as part of an Outline Business Case, will be undertaken before the submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspector for consideration, including an updated Sustainability Appraisal report.

Consultation

If this is the first time Stafford Borough Council (SBC) is consulting on Meecebrook, why is Meecebrook being described as the preferred option?

Meecebrook was first introduced by the Borough Council at the Local Plan 2020-2040 Issues and Options consultation stage in February to April 2020 alongside a number of other Strategic Development Option Locations across the area. Having considered responses to the Issues and Options stage as well as updated evidence prepared for the Preferred Options document, Meecebrook is included for consultation. This consultation allows the public an opportunity to voice their opinions on this proposal.

Has the decision for Meecebrook already been decided?

No, no decision has been made. The Preferred Options consultation is the first time the local planning authority of Stafford Borough Council have put forward the Meecebrook proposal as part of its future development strategy, providing all interested parties an opportunity to comment on it.

Why weren't the parishes affected consulted before this consultation?

Representatives from the Borough Council did make contact with the relevant Parish Council prior to the Local Plan Preferred Options consultation stage being launched and explained the proposals for Meecebrook and background. All stakeholders, including Parish Councils, now have until 12 noon on Monday 12 December 2022 to respond.

Can there be consultation meetings with the parishes affected to discuss Meecebrook?

It is agreed that following the public exhibitions held across the Borough during early to mid-November 2022 and with the high level of interest in Meecebrook it would be appropriate to meet with representatives of Chebsey, Eccleshall and Yarnfield Parish Councils through a joint briefing. This is in the process of being arranged.

Location of Meecebrook

The Meecebrook outline has changed since the Issues and Options and is also different since the Ministry of Defence (MOD) dropped out. Has this been adequately re-assessed?

The Issues and Options stage in February to April 2020 was a key consultation in respect of the Local Plan 2020-2040. It provided an opportunity for the Council to put forward the concept of Strategic Development Option Locations, including the Meecebrook Garden Community, through a range of options. These options however were intended to show broad locations not exact boundaries.

During the period between the Issues and Options consultation and the Preferred Options consultation the Ministry of Defence (MOD) withdrew land previously put forward at RAF Swynnerton and as such we cannot proceed with this part of the Meecebrook Garden Community at this stage.

The Preferred Options consultation is the first time the local planning authority of Stafford Borough Council has put forward the Meecebrook proposal as part of the proposed development strategy.. This is the public's opportunity to comment on the Plan as a whole including Meecebrook.

The Meecebrook site was reviewed in terms of its new boundary as part of the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report and assessed against the other options.

You can access the Sustainability Appraisal report's Non-Technical Summary here: <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/interim-sustainability-appraisal-non-technical-summary>

And the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report here: <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/interim-sustainability-appraisal-report>

Meecebrook is being built on greenfield land rather than brownfield land. What is the justification for this, especially when the land is used for growing food for the local communities?

Within Stafford Borough there is not enough brownfield land nor enough in sustainable locations to meet our housing requirement. Therefore, the Council must consider and propose for allocation the most appropriate greenfield sites based on the evidence available. Whilst it is recognised that this agricultural land has a variety of uses, the food consumed by local residents and communities is not solely sourced from Stafford Borough.

Why is Meecebrook still the preferred option if it is all greenfield?

Within the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report this site was assessed against other identified options which could deliver the housing and employment growth needed by the Borough, including:

- Beacon Hill, Stafford
- Hixon Airfield
- Gnosall South

Meecebrook was identified as generally being the most sustainable location for large scale growth in terms of its location, scale, accessibility and overall sustainability at this stage, based on the available evidence.

Can the other options that use brownfield land be revisited?

The Borough Council uses land put forward by landowners and developers in order to establish the proposed allocations in the Local Plan 2020-2040. Whilst a number of brownfield sites have been identified, there is insufficient land available within the Borough to meet our housing and employment needs. It should also be noted that not all brownfield sites are in sustainable locations / existing settlements

The Council has made a commitment to "Improve and protect the Borough's habitats resilience to climate change, providing natural solutions to reduce carbon and manage flood risk, and sustaining vital ecosystems." A greenfield development goes against all of this.

The development of a greenfield site versus a brownfield site needs to consider a range of factors. For example, many brownfield sites are rich biodiversity areas that provide vital ecosystems in our more populated areas.

In relation to flooding a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/evidence-base-strategic-flood-risk-assessment-level-1>) has been undertaken together with a Water Cycle Study, which were both published in February 2020. Further updates will occur following the Preferred Options consultation stage.

What is the justification for building on Green Belt land?

No land has been identified for development within the Green Belt designation.

Have landowners been approached to compile the site? Is there an agreement in place to deliver the scheme?

Linked to its planning responsibilities yes, the major landowners have been approached by the Council to determine the extent of land available at Meecebrook capable of accommodating 6,000 new homes alongside associated employment and infrastructure. The availability of land is a key part of plan making and is linked to deliverability. The Council needs to be certain that any proposals it puts forward for consultation can be implemented.

How is the promotion of Meecebrook being funded?

The Borough Council has been able to access funding from central government to progress with initial feasibility and evidence-based studies to inform the plan-making process and test the concept of a Garden Community at Meecebrook. If the principle of development is accepted through the Local Plan process future work will focus on how the project would be delivered through a master planning programme including funding.

The Meecebrook transport strategy identifies within it that most transport from the proposed site would be to Stoke (23%) and Stafford (19%). Should the houses required therefore be built in these two areas where people will be working?

The proposed Local Plan Development Strategy includes new housing and employment at Stafford town. Meecebrook provides the opportunity for a new sustainable Garden Community to support Stafford and other existing settlements in the future. Housing requirements and locations within the City of Stoke-on-Trent area are separate matters to be addressed in the Local Plan prepared by the City of Stoke on Trent Council.

Further work will take place next year in terms of travel to work patterns and future movements, which will be incorporated into the master planning programme for Meecebrook. The Council is aware that some of our residents do work outside the Borough

Swynnerton Training Camp is a busy army training camp with an active demolition range where the engineers regularly set off large explosives. Will people want to live by this? Will the training camp be forced to close in the future due to noise complaints?

The Concept Masterplan (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/meecebrook-concept-masterplan>) has a large green corridor that separates the training camp from the main residential parcels proposed for Meecebrook. Whilst this concept masterplan is very strategic at this stage, further work on a more detailed Masterplan will take place next year including the delivery of these areas using all relevant evidence.

The Meecebrook site contains land that was used extensively as a proving ground and testing of a wide range of ordnance including shells containing depleted uranium. Are you proposing to excavate these areas with the potential of exposing depleted Uranium into the wider environment and live ordnance?

The Ministry of Defence site is no longer included within the proposed site boundary for Meecebrook and therefore ground contamination is not a directly relevant consideration. The implications for RAF Swynnerton of the Meecebrook proposals and for Meecebrook given the proximity of the MOD site will be taken into account in the aforementioned masterplanning exercise.

Detailed ground works for the allocated site will be progressed at the appropriate stage.

Chebsey is a conservation village and the parish has approximately 250 homes. The Meecebrook site will give an additional 3,000-6,000 homes. How do we reconcile this?

The new Local Plan 2020-2040 sets out the strategic planning approach for the whole of Stafford Borough. Statutory legislation requires that local Councils should

prepared development plans (the Local Plan) to guide future planning decisions. Meecebrook is included in the new Local Plan as a Preferred Option, supported by an evidence base demonstrating that infrastructure, services and facilities can be delivered. It is important that all options for new development are considered collectively through the plan-making process, including implications for the Borough such as heritage and environmental factors shown through the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report.

Impact on other towns / villages

How would Meecebrook be a distinct town separate from Eccleshall, Yarnfield and Stone?

Detailed masterplanning will seek to identify how future development will relate to the adjoining countryside and existing settlements. The intention is that Meecebrook will be distinct and separate as a community able to meet its own needs and not impact on the character and appearance of other settlements. Please view the indicative masterplan for further details, including the landscaping approach on the boundaries of this proposal.

Meecebrook is being developed to be sustainable through the delivery of strategic infrastructure, services and facilities including access to shops, education provision, leisure facilities, employment etc. By making these facilities available as part of the development plans those that live and work in Meecebrook will be able to access facilities on their doorstep, and not have to access or rely upon facilities of this nature elsewhere.

The preferred options document refers to the Meecebrook 'New Town Centre'. How will you ensure that this new development will not impact the existing town centres in Stone or Eccleshall which are highly important to the current communities? Has the new location of Meecebrook taken into consideration the impact the site will have on the character and amenity of the surrounding market towns and villages?

The Borough Council published a Town Centre Capacity Assessment in February 2020 alongside the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation stage. Following the Preferred Options consultation an updated version of the Town Centre Capacity Assessment will be produced, including evidence concerning the Meecebrook new Town Centre and its impact on vitality and viability of existing town centres.

Detailed masterplanning will seek to identify how future development will relate to the adjoining countryside and settlements. The intention is that Meecebrook will be distinct and separate as a community able to meet its own needs and not impact on the character and appearance of other settlements. Please view the indicative masterplan for further details, including the landscaping approach on the boundaries of this proposal.

Meecebrook is being developed to be sustainable through the delivery of strategic infrastructure, services and facilities including access to shops, education provision,

leisure facilities, employment etc. By having these facilities available those that live and work in Meecebrook will be able to access facilities on their doorstep, and therefore Meecebrook will be a separate community from other towns / villages.

Should a development as large as Stone be built at such a short distance from Stone?

The new Local Plan 2020-2040 sets out the strategic planning approach for the whole of Stafford Borough. Statutory legislation requires that local Councils should prepared development plans (the Local Plan) to guide future planning decisions. Meecebrook is included in the new Local Plan Preferred Options document, supported by an evidence base demonstrating that infrastructure, services and facilities can be delivered, summarised through the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report. It is important that all options for new development are considered collectively through the plan-making process, including implications for the wider Borough

The proposed Meecebrook garden community is located relatively near an existing waste site. What are you going to do to ensure that this new community does not encroach on this site?

The red line shows the limits of the Meecebrook site as it is currently proposed. There is clear guidance from government in terms of what must be considered when developing near a landfill site (The Landfill Regulations 2002, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2002/0110395905>). The existing waste site is some distance from the edge of the Meecebrook proposed boundary. To date no concerns have been raised by Staffordshire County Council concerning this site. This issue will continue to be monitored and addressed as the master planning programme progresses next year.

Environment

Meecebrook represents a lot of loss of countryside and needs to be offset. What evidence document demonstrates how the new Local Plan will have a net gain of biodiversity including all the proposed / allowed development?

Meecebrook's proposals will need to deliver requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain in accordance with the Environment Act 2021 and relevant Planning legislation. The details will be part of the technical work progressed during 2023 and shown through the master planning consultation process.

Has any study reviewed the impact of light pollution created by the building of homes in greenfield sites - especially the 3,000 at Meecebrook? Also the impact on wildlife in the area. This is especially important given that policy 47 states that wildlife corridors and protection is a key objective.

At this stage it is not possible to consider the impact of light pollution caused by the development as we do not have detailed plans. Nevertheless, these issues will need to be addressed as part of the ongoing evidence base through appropriate studies.

What about Meece landfill? How are you going to avoid complaints about that from your housing development - how will you ensure sufficient proximity from this?

There is clear guidance from government in terms of what must be considered when developing near a landfill site (The Landfill Regulations 2002, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2002/0110395905>). The existing waste site is some distance from the edge of the Meecebrook proposed boundary. At this stage no concerns have been raised by Staffordshire County Council concerning this site. This issue will continue to be monitored as the master planning programme progresses next year.

Stafford Station Gateway

We need to protect our access to green spaces, and maintain and grow our wildlife corridors. I cannot see provision for this in the Gateway Hub plan. Is directing footfall away from the town centre not going to be a further blow to an already struggling town centre?

During August and September 2022, the Borough Council consulted on a draft Strategic Regeneration Framework for the Stafford Gateway proposals. At this stage the evidence base demonstrates that this scheme complements other developments in the general locality, including Stafford town centre. The Stafford Borough Town Centre Capacity Assessment was published in February 2020, which will be updated following the Preferred Options consultation to take account of the latest proposals.

What are the mental and physical health impacts, and loss of biodiversity as a result of the approximately 1,000 new houses planned in the Gateway development?

As part of the ongoing planning process for the Stafford Station Gateway proposals further studies on biodiversity impacts will be investigated, including the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain, Furthermore the health and well-being considerations will also be assessed and taken into account.

Why is such a high density of development required in this area?

As a council we must provide new housing and one of the most sustainable locations for these developments to occur is within Stafford.

With Stafford Town being our most urban area, the density of house building is higher than elsewhere in the Borough. As a standard the urban infill rate is 41 houses per hectare within Stafford. For greenfield sites on the edge of Stafford the density is lowered at 35 houses per hectare.

The Gateway site is close to the centre of town and as such development in line with the higher density threshold is considered acceptable and would be in character with its surroundings

Borough-wide location specific

Why was the High Offley Neighbourhood parish plan not included in the list?

The High Offley Neighbourhood Plan was withdrawn from the plan-making process before it could be 'made' following the Parish Council's consideration of the Examiner's Neighbourhood Plan report. To date the Parish Council has not progressed with any other work associated with their Neighbourhood Plan.

Why isn't Stafford town centre a strategic development zone?

In line with national planning policy Stafford town centre is identified with a boundary on the Stafford town inset map, as well as a primary shopping area boundary. Therefore, there is no need to identify the town centre as a strategic development zone.

Specific questions relating to Eccleshall: How will Eccleshall High Street be protected? As the third biggest economy in the borough, how would things like parking and traffic be managed?

The Preferred Options consultation document includes a policy relating to town and local centres, including Eccleshall, together with a parking policy. The local policies have been prepared in the context of national planning policy.

Why hasn't the Yarnfield development boundary been updated to the account of the Yarnfield Park development?

Yarnfield Park is situated within the designated North Staffordshire Green Belt and was previously identified as a Major Developed Site prior to the housing now in situ being delivered. Therefore, it is not necessary to identify a settlement boundary for this part of Yarnfield.

For the consultation to be meaningful - a more 'honest' map is needed to show all of Eccleshall, Yarnfield and the 'paved over / tarmaced' area in between.

The Borough Council have published a number of maps alongside the Preferred Options consultation document to identify proposals and designations including settlement boundaries.

Re small villages - Slindon has a road traffic safety problem – acknowledged by the County Highways department – which could easily be solved by allowing permission for one self-build house which the entire community supports along with a car park which would be secured by a s106 agreement. While the site has been submitted via the planning process / call for small sites AND endorsed by the Eccleshall Parish Council in its submission – this request from local people has been entirely ignored by those officers drafting the plan – even though the Council has a policy to encourage self-build / custom build homes. Q: How can the residents of a small village like Slindon ensure their views are taken into account via the local plan?

The Preferred Options consultation document supports self-build / custom build homes in appropriate locations. Slindon does not have a settlement boundary as there are less than 50 houses at this location, so it is considered part of the open countryside. All responses to the Preferred Options consultation will be considered in the process of preparing the Publication version of the Local Plan 2020-2040.

The Council's video says that new homes need to be in the right place. What is the logic behind selecting Woodseaves as a location for new homes?

Based on the services and facilities available at Woodseaves, together with an extensive evidence-based approach set out through the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report, an appropriate level of proposed new housing development has been identified at this settlement through the Preferred Options consultation.

Drake Hall prison will be losing a car park as part of the proposal, we have not been consulted on this?

The current Preferred Options consultation is the opportunity for stakeholders and members of the public to respond to the draft proposals and policies. The deadline for responses is 12 noon on Monday 12 December 2022.

Woodseaves HiG13 proposal assumes development on a previous illegal landfill site. Is this considered a good idea? And what about the lack of infrastructure in Woodseaves?

The Borough Council will consult with the Environment Agency's records to determine the environmental health status of the HiG13 proposed site in Woodseaves.

General

When issuing the updated plan will you also identify the points raised in the feedback you have received and your responses to them?

Yes, the Publication version of the Plan will be made available alongside a summary of responses received to the Preferred Options consultation.

Does the plan include a robust health impact assessment?

The full range of sustainability factors, including health and well-being matters, are included in the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report alongside the Preferred Options document.

Could you explain the dotted red line more please?

This line shows the extent of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 15 km Zone of Influence across Stafford Borough within which £290.58 is charged on each new dwellings to contribute to mitigation measures for the SAC.

Will we have a record of all these questions and your responses to them please?

The purpose of this Question and Answer paper is to collect all the issues following the Borough Council's webinar on the Preferred Options consultation and detail a response.

How have the Preferred Options been prepared based on a clear line to capital investment needed to secure delivery of the infrastructure?

The Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options document is supported by the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to set out future capital projects necessary to deliver the new development strategy.

Can you please provide detail on the 'significant highway infrastructure upgrades' previously mentioned?

Further investigation into the mitigation measures required as part of the transport requirements is still to be investigated. This work is ongoing and will be made available when completed. The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 provides details of the significant highway infrastructure upgrades associated with the Strategic Development Locations at north and west of Stafford town.

Where is the policy to show where self-build / custom build projects can happen (beyond maintaining a list)

Policy 31: Housing mix and density seeks to secure opportunities for self and custom build homes in the appropriate locations. Nevertheless, flexibility enables plots to be

developed for non-self and custom build homes on proposed allocations if they are not delivered over a certain time period.

Which authorities have asked Stafford Borough to accommodate 2000 migrant households - see your paragraph 1.3

The Association of Black Country Authorities representing Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell requested that 2,000 houses are delivered at Stafford Borough to accommodate their identified shortfall, through a response provided to the Issues and Options consultation held between February and April 2020.

Can we have more detail so that we can analyse the plans in detail and provide more detailed feedback?

At this stage all of the information held by the Borough Council on proposed allocated sites has been made available. Sites that are currently allocated and are still being built e.g. those located in Stafford and Stone have detailed plans presented through the planning decision making process.

Environment

The evidence base for flood risk does not incorporate any information relating to the last 4 flood events which badly affected Eccleshall (in 2019, 2020 and 2021) and Stafford. Q1: How can you ensure this evidence is taken into account before the plan is finalised?

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/evidence-base-strategic-flood-risk-assessment-level-1>) has been undertaken alongside a Water Cycle Study for the new Local Plan 2020-2040 published in February 2020. The Council will update this evidence base during 2023 following the Preferred Options consultation exercise including utilising the latest information available from the Environment Agency.

The current plans do not correspond with your 2009 green infrastructure plan. Why is this?

The 2009 Green Infrastructure Plan contains important information and is used to support the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough. Following changes in legislation the Council has undertaken a Nature Recovery Network Mapping study, which can be accessed here: <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/evidence-base-nature-recovery-network-mapping>.

This evidenced based work informs the Local Plan 2020-2040 alongside other corporate projects.

Within the Preferred Options several policies are included which seek to protect the natural environment. Furthermore Policy 46: Green and blue infrastructure network specifically seeks to protect, enhance and extend the green / blue infrastructure network. In addition, the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network has been identified on the policies map together with the Stafford and Stone Countryside Enhancement Areas.

Current Gateway plan does not include biodiversity, nor carbon neutral construction. Why is this?

Following consultation on the draft Stafford Station Gateway Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) document these elements will be addressed in the final version of the document.

It's very hard to ask questions by this method (a webinar). How can we do this in a better way if we are not able to attend a live meeting?

The Borough Council has established a variety of community engagement and involvement events as part of the Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options consultation including in person exhibitions as well as a webinar, to be as inclusive as possible. Please note that responses can also be submitted through the Borough Council's webpage via the online consultation form by 12 noon on Monday 12 December 2022.

Policies 46 and 47 emphasise the need for green corridors and sustainable transport corridors, yet policy 52 does not specify where these need to connect from / to / between, and nowhere does the Local Plan recommend how to achieve this - for example the need to connect Meecebrook to Stone, Eccleshall, Stafford, or for example the use of the canal network to enhance cycle connectivity. Will you be able to include more definitive plans in this field to guide housing and employment development?

The new Local Plan will be supported by additional transport evidence ahead of Publication, including an updated Borough-wide Integrated Transport Strategy produced by Staffordshire County Council and linked to the Local Transport Plan. The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 contains transport evidence for this Plan period including the current Integrated Transport Strategy.

Why no countryside enhancement to the Doxey Marshes?

Doxey Marshes is recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) so whilst it has not been included within the proposed Stafford Countryside Enhancement Area this location will benefit from future enhancements. Doxey Marshes is included as proposed strategic green infrastructure.

Where are the locations for wind power detailed in the plan?

You can access the mapping for potential wind farm locations via this link <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/stafford-borough-policy-map>

The visions and objectives state "high quality design". Where in the Local Plan does it state that carbon-neutral materials (including alternatives to cement / concrete) be used in construction?

The Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options document draft Policy 4: Climate change development requirements states:

“Proposals must demonstrate that all resources are used efficiently, as part of the construction and operation of a building. All major development should set out how embodied emissions have been taken into consideration through the production of an embodied carbon assessment.”

By having this policy requirement, it is considered that alternative resources will be considered based on the lower embodied carbon assessment. Additionally, the policy requires all development to have a net zero energy approach.

What will you be doing to make the community have as little of an impact on climate change as possible? How are you ensuring these houses are equipped for future net zero goals?

The Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options document draft Policy 4: Climate change development requirements are set out below:

- Ensure that all new development operates on net zero energy.

- That renewable energy schemes should be implemented onsite where feasible and where not an offsite solution should be found.
- That water efficiency be implemented to ensure a maximum water usage of 110 litres per person per day.
- Follow the principles of the energy hierarchy.
- Supply an energy statement or a design and access statement demonstrating sustainable design features e.g. rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling, green roofs etc.

As part of the Local Plan evidence base Stafford Borough Council took part in the Staffordshire Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation study published in October 2020.

One of the main community facilities is our local green space. what are the plans for protecting this? The Stafford Station gateway hub plan seeks to remove a much used and needed green space.

A number of proposed Local Green Spaces are identified within the Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options document, with the general public having the opportunity to submit further land for consideration through the consultation process. The draft Strategic Regeneration Framework identifies the Stafford Station Gateway site as being an extension of development close to the existing Stafford town centre, and linking the town centre with growth that has occurred to the west of Stafford.

Can you address biodiversity and environmental issues please?

The Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options document includes a dedicated chapter on the environment, including biodiversity. The Council has prepared the Nature Recovery Network Mapping, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/evidence-base-nature-recovery-network-mapping> as part of the evidence base, which can also inform corporate projects being delivered by the Council.

Within the Preferred Option several policies are included which seek to protect the natural environment, with Policy 46: Green and blue infrastructure network specifically seeking to protect, enhance and extend the green / blue infrastructure network. The Preferred Options document also identifies land through the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network as well as the Stafford and Stone Countryside Enhancement Areas on the policies map.

In terms of flooding reference is made in the Staffordshire County Council Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy about a 25% increase in once-every-two-year events in the future. What evidence has been produced to consider this issue, especially the Environment Agency 'main rivers' of Meece Brook eg Drake Hall flooding, the River Sow and the River Trent?

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/evidence-base-strategic-flood-risk-assessment-level-1>) has been undertaken alongside a Water Cycle Study for the new Local Plan 2020-2040 published in February 2020. The

Council will update this evidence base during 2023 following the Preferred Options consultation exercise including using the latest information available from the Environment Agency.

Specifically, for the Meecebrook proposals further detailed work will be progressed during 2023 including community engagement through the master planning programme.

"Nutrient neutrality" seems to be a recent concern for housing developments near rivers. Has a review of this been done for all the proposed development sites to confirm suitability?

There are a number of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites within Stafford Borough. Following engagement with Natural England, as set out through the latest Habitat Regulations Assessment report alongside the Preferred Options document, at this stage there is no specific issues with water quality. Nevertheless, these sites also need to be assessed for air quality from traffic movements and agricultural practices. Since September 2020 the Borough Council has been undertaking monthly monitoring of air quality for these sites, in terms of Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) and Ammonia. Further information will be made available during 2023 following the Preferred Options consultation and any mitigation requirements set out in policy through the Publication version of the Local Plan 2020-2040.

In terms of green infrastructure, please reassure the equestrian community that they will be included in this. The off-road network is fragmented and Staffordshire is below the national average with only 16.4% of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) being bridleways and byways. There are 3,762 horses registered in the Stafford and Stone postcode areas which equates to an economic contribution of £20,871,576 therefore they are significant stakeholders in terms of any proposed developments.

Staffordshire County Council has responsibility for Public Rights of Way and has an officer resource to consider these issues. As part of the Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options consultation please raise specific concerns / comments the online consultation form through the webpage <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/Strategic-Planning-and-Placemaking-consultations>. These will be forwarded to the relevant parties for a response following the consultation period.

Waste

How will you ensure that housing development and other infrastructure are not affected by the Meece Landfill Site in Yarnfield?

There is clear guidance from government in terms of what must be considered when developing near a landfill site (The Landfill Regulations 2002, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2002/0110395905>). The existing waste site is some distance from the edge of the Meecebrook proposed boundary. At this stage no concerns have been raised by Staffordshire County Council concerning this site, nor any other environmental health specialist. This issue will be part of the technical work progressed during 2023, to be considered. At this stage the landfill site near Yarnfield is not within the Meecebrook red line boundary.

Sewage is only mentioned once in regard to Stone (p29) and yet sewage frequently has to be tankered out of the Eccleshall Sewage works.

Engagement with Severn Trent is ongoing although information provided to date confirms that sufficient clean water and sewerage capacity is available.

Are you aware that sewage is being pumped into The Sow for 24 hours EVERY WEEK (according to the RiversTrist.Org)? Q2: What plans to you have to ensure that this situation is not aggravated by additional developments increasing the strain on Eccleshall Sewage Works?

Engagement with Severn Trent is ongoing. To raise specific concerns / comments the online consultation form should be filled out (<https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/Strategic-Planning-and-Placemaking-consultations>) This information will be shared with Severn Trent Water in due course for a response.