# Baswich House Weeping Cross Stafford

















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### 1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this brief is to provide a clear guide for the redevelopment of the Baswich House site, currently occupied by the Staffordshire Police HQ. The extent of the 6.36 hectare site is identified on Plan 1. It is envisaged that the redevelopment of this site will supply a residential end use.

1.2 The brief provides an assessment of the site's context, in terms of relevant policy, as well as the constraints and attributes of the physical area. An analysis of the site, within the established context, is then given. This appraisal of site and context is used to support and identify some urban design principles, and provide guidance for overall design, layout, density, local distinctiveness and wider community benefit. The guidance is illustrated with an indicative layout plan, shown on Page 14.



Plan 1

# 2. Assessment of Site Context

### 2.1 Policy context

2.1.1 The principle of residential development on this site has been established with a resolution to grant permission in December 2009 for an outline (all matters reserved).

2.1.2 This development brief should be read in conjunction with the relevant national, regional and local policy framework as set out in Appendix 1. The Borough Council are currently formulating a Local Development Framework which is underpinned by a wide range of technical information, some of which will be relevant to this site (see Appendix 1).

2.1.3 **Open Space, Sport and Recreation:** This development site includes an area of 'Protected Open Space' as identified in 'saved' policy. This POS is situated towards the edge of the site fronting Cannock Road and has been used in connection with dog training and other police activities. Due to the position of this open space, it is not considered appropriate for youth and toddler play and it's retention in this form and location could compromise any comprehensive masterplan for the site.

2.1.4 In line with the Borough Council's PPG17 Assessment a minimum provision of  $34m^2$  per person of open space provision should be delivered on site. This should be no less than 0.94 hectares, in line with the current, protected open space.



2.1.5 *Housing Provision:* The development site is situated within the 'Stafford Town' housing market sector, as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007. The borough of Stafford operates across more than one housing market sector. The town, at the southern end of the borough is relatively self-contained and displays strong links to the Central Housing Market Area, in particular Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire.

2.1.6 There has been some strong price growth in recent years, primarily to the east of the town, to include Baswich. Affordability across the whole town is fairly similar with the ratio of mean house price to mean income ranging from 1:4 to 1:6, suggesting some pressures which again are being felt most keenly in the east of the town. Overall the relatively high incomes suggest less affordability issues than elsewhere in the North Housing Market Area.

2.1.7 The expected growth in one person households, such that they constitute one third of the borough by 2026, is an issue to be addressed in Stafford.

2.1.8 Overall in terms of balance there is:

- Reasonable balance of owner occupation, social housing and private rented housing
- In terms of house type, Stafford has a well balanced supply of different forms of stock, although there may be a slight oversupply of smaller terraces and apartments

2.1.9 It is considered that a mix of unit sizes would be appropriate for this site, incorporating large detached properties, and a range of smaller house types.

2.1.10 Stafford has the highest pressure for three bedroom affordable properties in the North Housing Market Area, but there is also a significant demand for one and two bed properties.

2.1.11 In line with 'Saved' Policy HOU17 of the Stafford Borough Local Plan 'an appropriate element of affordable housing' should be delivered as affordable. In this case 30% is considered appropriate with the following tenure split:

- 25% social rented
- 5% intermediate housing.

**2.1.12 Climate Change:** The Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 'Planning and Climate Change', sets out how planning should contribute to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change and take into account the unavoidable consequences. The policies within the PPS are capable of being

material planning considerations, and should therefore be given careful consideration.

2.1.13 The key planning objective of the PPS is to deliver sustainable development, making a full contribution to delivering the Government's Climate Change Programme and energy policies, and in doing so contribute to global sustainability. The further objectives include the following:

- secure the highest viable resource and energy efficiency and reduction in emissions;
- deliver patterns of urban growth that help secure the fullest possible use of sustainable transport;
- secure new development and shape places that minimise vulnerability, and provide resilience, to climate change in ways that are consistent with social cohesion and inclusion; and
- conserve and enhance biodiversity, recognising that the distribution of habitats and species will be affected by climate change.

2.1.14 The above issues should be addressed through both an Energy Statement and Sustainability Checklist to indicate how the scheme will contribute to the key planning objectives of the PPS.



2.2.3 Due to the current nature of use on the development site, existing movement patterns, both pedestrian and vehicular, flow along the public boundaries of the site (see Plan 4). However, occasional pedestrian use, as a route to/ from school, has been allowed across the site, connecting Weeping Cross and Cannock Road.

### Physical context

2.2

2.2.1 This is considered to be one of the premium areas of Stafford town, in terms of physical environment and community/ service provision. The relevant constraints and possibilities of the surrounding area are mapped on Plan 3.

2.2.2 There are existing local facilities within 200-300 metres of the development site's boundaries, including local shops, a supermarket, a library, a health centre, schools and a public house. The development site is well served by local bus services, with stops and shelters located adjacent the site boundary, along Weeping Cross (A513) and Cannock Road (A34).



2.2.4 **Surrounding townscape:** The main routes bounding the site are characterised by original ribbon development dating from the early C20th, the majority of which comprising individually designed, detached properties, set within their own plot of land, the curtilages themselves bounded by semi-mature and mature planting and trees. The general perception is of 'green' edges, behind which the often substantial houses are discovered. The roadways are busy, and heavily trafficked at peak times during the day. The junction where Weeping Cross and Cannock Road meet Lichfield Road is a major traffic node en route in to/ out of Stafford town centre.

2.2.5 Behind these frontages, and opposite the site to the north west, there is a generally tighter grain of housing, typified by smaller, less individual, detached and semi-detached dwellings – effectively, infill estate housing dating from the late 1950s onwards, but particularly from during the 1960s and 1970s.











4. Existing vehicular access off Weeping Cross
5. Existing vehicular access off Cannock Road
6. Weeping Cross and mature Cedar trees create a landmark at the junction of A513 and A34



### 2.3 Site characteristics





2.3.2 The site sits at a prominent road junction, on the edge of the river valley side, and views of the cedar trees, in particular, are framed by the approach towards the Weeping Cross, along Lichfield Road.

2.3.1 **Trees and topography:** The dominant characteristic of the development site is the trees, and some of the more outstanding specimens are remnants of planting associated with the now demolished Baswich House. The whole site is covered by a tree preservation order which, in turn, dictates root protection areas and shade constraints. The trees have been categorised (see Appendix 2) and those worthy of retention have been identified (see Plan 6).



2.3.3 **Built form:** It has been established, and is accepted, that none of the existing Police HQ buildings need to be retained as part of any redevelopment. Other than the trees, the other dominant visual feature on site is the telecommunications mast, as shown on Plan 7. This is considered to be a significant constraint on future development, both perceptually and actually, and it is recommended that the mast be relocated off-site.

2.3.4 **Boundaries:** The boundaries of the site are particularly important, as this is where potentially new development interfaces with existing townscape. The southern and eastern boundaries are formed by existing side and rear garden fences, many of which are quite open and unsecured, relying on the current use to provide protection and security.

2.3.5 The northern and western edges of the site are bounded by public highways – Weeping Cross and Cannock Road respectively. Along both roads, the site boundary itself is formed by low walls; the northern boundary wall contains sections built of stone, which appear to be survivals from Baswich House, at least.

### Plan 7: Site Analysis



# 3. Analysis of Site within this Context

### 3.1 Site morphology

3.1.1 There are no obvious historical cues from the previous buildings on site that could guide a more intensive development, other than the apparent importance of the surviving planted areas. The mature trees remain as defining features on the site.





3.1.2 A simple tissue analysis of typical housing patterns in the vicinity of the development site (see Plan 8) reveals the reoccurrence of larger, detached houses along the main routes (at a net density equivalent to 10-15 dwellings per hectare), with closer grained, smaller detached and semi-detached houses (at a net density of 20+ dwellings per hectare) lying behind these more substantial houses and served by narrower, domestic scaled roads.

### 3.2 Type of development

3.2.1 An assessment of the location of the development site within the wider area, and the potential for permeability across the site, confirms that it is well connected with existing shops and services, and that the site could be developed for housing only, without the need to provide additional local facilities – other than the associated requirement for open space and play equipment.

### 3.3 Trees/ landscape led approach

3.3.1 Given the importance and visual dominance of the trees on site, it is recommended that those worthy of retention are used to structure and define the possible developable areas. The main groupings of trees are along the western and northern boundaries, and include some large cedars, oaks and sweet chestnuts. The north-western corner of the site, in particular, is dominated – and therefore constrained – by large trees. There are large, open grown oak and sweet chestnut trees towards the centre of the site, and the tree survey recommends that these should be retained within open areas.

### 3.4 Treatment of edges

3.4.1 Where gardens abut the development site, along the eastern and southern boundaries, the amenities of existing residents need to be safeguarded and protected.

3.4.2 Clearly, a degree of additional overlooking, between new and existing properties, may be inevitable, but existing private amenity space should be 'matched' by side/ rear gardens as part of any new development. 3.4.3 The extant low boundary walls along the northern and western edges of the site can be used to perpetuate definition and provide 'implied' separation – that is, limited physical, not visual, separation – between the public realm (the footpath/ pavement and road beyond) and the new development. Furthermore, there is added value in continuing a layering of history and maintaining an association with the former use(s) of the site.

### 3.5 Provision of open space

3.5.1 There is ample opportunity and justification for providing open space as a setting for the necessarily retained trees on site. In keeping with the ambiance of the area, and with reference to the areas of retained trees, this should be relatively informal, in terms of structure and layout. Indeed, there is little precedent for formality, other than the later imposed parking and garden area in front of the Police HQ main building.

3.5.2 The open space should be multifunctional, accommodating the required play equipment and used to support the provision of a pedestrian link across the site, promoting direct routes towards the existing local shops, health centre and library at Weeping Cross shopping centre and the supermarket. The space should promote improved linkages to the other nearby areas of public open space (Dawlish Avenue and Yelverton Avenue) and the strategic green network which offers wider recreational opportunities, to include access to the countryside and sports provision.

#### 4. **Urban Design Principles: a brief for development**

#### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The principles for development, outlined below, are borne out 4.2.2 As a consequence, the multifunctional open space provision of, and justified by, the preceding analysis. They should be considered alongside Stafford Borough Council's Draft Urban Design Guidance, in particular Section 4 of the guidance.

#### 4.2 Landscape character and public realm

4.2.1 The layout of future development should be led by the necessary retention of identified trees, which lie along the northern and western margins and extend into the centre of the site. In order to maximise their public benefit and safeguard their future management, the vast majority of the trees should fall within public open spaces. Therefore, the spatial disposition of the trees should be used to provide a structure, between and around which the landscape planting and open space can flow across the site. Weight should be given to maintaining a sustained canopy cover by the implementation of a tree strategy for the site. This would secure a percentage of canopy cover (to be agreed) for the site in perpetuity, by structuring the planting within the open spaces.



Natural play, set within a green space

will be informal in character. The play area/ equipment, to include a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP), shall be provided as part of the communal open space, within the site.



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### 4.3 Permeability and ease of movement

4.3.1 Wherever possible, existing access points should be used, thus retaining, in situ, the low boundary walls. The main vehicular access/ egress point shall remain off Cannock Road, but it is possible and acceptable to allow a limited number of secondary access points (for example, communal private drives each serving a small number of dwellings) off the Weeping Cross and Cannock Road frontages.



4.3.2 The indicative layout, as shown on Plan 11 proposes the use of existing access points, but does not create a vehicular through route. New or improved crossing points on Weeping Cross and Cannock Road would provide greater permeability and improved access to local facilities and the network of green spaces.

### 4.4 Legibility of existing/ proposed movement pattern(s)

4.4.1 It is not desirable to promote vehicular movement across the site, linking Weeping Cross and Cannock Road, and this should be apparent to drivers. The site will need to be penetrated by one or more vehicular culs-de-sac, although it is important for pedestrian permeability to be maintained throughout the site – where necessary, with pathways leading out of and connecting the road and driveways.

4.4.2 The layout should promote pedestrian links across the site; in particular, the footpath network should serve a strong pedestrian desire line that links the main access point off Cannock Road and Lynton Avenue which, in turn, leads to the local shops.

4.4.3 The retention of mature trees and planting, and the requirement for succession planting, will give any new development ready acceptability into the existing, surrounding townscape. The northern and western edges of the site shall remain characterised by the existing mature trees, with the large cedar trees continuing to mark the junction of Weeping Cross/ Cannock Road/ Lichfield Road. The new pedestrian routeway through the site will also be signified by mature trees (T189 and T190), bolstered by new planting.



### 4.5 Developable blocks, providing continuity and enclosure

4.5.1 The trees and open space provision, with the proposed movement networks, create a number of developable blocks across the site. As a matter of principle, the amenities of existing residents bordering the site must be fully considered. Where rear/ side gardens bound the site, these should be matched with private amenity spaces in the new development – thus creating clearly defined areas of public and private realm.

4.5.2 New dwellings should front on to public streets and shared driveways, and overlook areas of communal planting, public walkways and open space, thus creating natural surveillance of these open areas. By definition, therefore, new dwellings along the northern and western edges of the site should front on to Weeping Cross and Cannock Road.

4.5.3 Providing a central spine of open space through the centre of the site provides greater opportunities for natural surveillance than retaining the protected open space as defined by the 'saved' local plan allocation.







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### 4.6 Character and local distinctiveness

4.6.1 Respecting the existing character of the area, the site should accommodate two storey detached and semi-detached properties. There may be opportunity to increase to 2.5 storey along the outer margins of the site (fronting Weeping Cross and Cannock Road), but dwellings within the site should be to a maximum of 2 storeys in height.

4.6.2 The footprint of the majority of dwellings shall be rectilinear, and not square. Rectangular plans provide a more effective form and footprint when constructing townscape patterns.

4.6.3 There should be substantial, detached properties along northern and western edges of the site. This frontage development should equate to a density of approximately 10-15 dwellings per hectare (net). Whilst it will be difficult to replicate the incremental individuality of the, often bespoke, house designs that line Weeping Cross and Cannock Road under a single development contract, the built forms of these properties should be as distinctive and individual as possible – and not repetitions of a limited number of larger scaled house types from a standard portfolio.





4.6.4 Within the site, again in line with the character of the surrounding area, there is opportunity to tighten the grain of built form with more repetitive designs, and increase the density up to 25-30 dwellings per hectare (net), through the provision of smaller, detached and semi-detached dwellings. However, the internal layout, and the mass of houses within the site, should not negate the impression of substantial detached properties when viewed from outside the site, along Weeping Cross and Cannock Road.

4.6.5 The public realm defined and created by the new houses should not be dominated by car parking. Curtilage parking is typical in this part of Stafford, and parking should be provided on plot, rather than in communal areas.

4.6.6 Whilst it is the patterns of built form that will broadly define the character of any future development, materials will also be important. The site is surrounded by an eclectic mixture of housing forms and types but, taking cues from this surrounding area, the houses should be brick faced, with the use of render for accentuation, and tile roofed.

4.6.7 Affordable housing should be provided on site in small clusters throughout the development and be tenure blind.

## 5. Wider Community Benefit

5.1 The following, directly related, community benefits should be delivered by any proposed development on this site. These requirements, to be secured through a Section 106 agreement, would include the following elements:

- Affordable Housing
- Management Plan for Trees
- Education contribution
- On-site open space provision
- Travel Plan
- A contribution of £160,000 in compensation for the loss of the existing bowling green
- Off-site open space provision commuted sum













4. Larger detached houses viewed through mature trees, across a green open frontage 5. Well proportioned 3 house terrace

6. Larger detached houses viewed through mature trees



# Appendix A

### Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) / Planning Policy Statements (PPS)

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development PPS3 Housing PPS 9 Biodiversity & Geological Conservation PPG13 Transport PPS15 Planning for the Historic Environment PPG 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation PPS22 Renewable Energy PPS 23 Planning & Pollution Control PPG 24 Planning & Noise PPS 25 Development & Flood Risk

### West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy 2008

UR1: Implementing Urban Renaissance – the MUA's
UR2: Towns & Cities outside Major Urban Areas
UR3: Enhancing the role of City, Town & District Centres
RR3: Market Towns
CF1: Housing within the Major Urban Areas
CF2: Housing beyond the Major Urban Areas
CF4: The reuse of Land & Buildings for Housing
CF5: Delivering Affordable Housing & Mixed Communities
QE2: Restoring Degraded Area and Managing & creating High Quality New Environments
QE3: Creating a High Quality Built Environment for All
T2: Reducing the Need to Travel
T7: Car Parking Standards & Management

### Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 'Saved Policies'

D1: Sustainable Forms of Development

D2: The Design & Environmental Quality of Development

D3: Urban Regeneration

D8: Providing Infrastructure Services, Facilities and/or Mitigating Measures

Associate with Development

T1A: Sustainable Location

- T1B: An Integrated Transport Strategy
- NC14: Sites of Archaeological Importance

### Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 'Saved Policies'

INT1: Planning Obligations E&D1: General Requirements E&D2: Consideration of Landscape & Townscape

E&D4: Sewage, Effluent and Surface Water E&D5: Noise Attenuation Requirements E&D26: Protected Open Space E&D34: Archaeological Evaluations E&D36: Nature Conservation (General Requirements in Consideration of Planning Applications) E&D42: Tree Preservation Orders E&D44: Development Affecting Trees & Hedgerows E&D50: Land Drainage & Flooding Considerations E&D54: Re-Use of Vacant Land & Buildings E&D55: Development on Contaminated Land HOU1: Development in Existing Residential Areas HOU2: Development within Residential Development Boundaries HOU5: Residential Development (Layout & Design) HOU7: Public Open Space Requirements for New Residential Development HOU9: Commuted Sums for Open Space Provision HOU17: Provision for Affordable Housing MV10: Land Development Requirements MV12: Parking Requirements in Other Locations

### **Other Relevant Documents**

Draft SBC Urban Design Guide

Strategic Housing Market Assessment April 2008: <u>http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/live/Documents/Forward%20Planning/LDF/Housing-Market-Area-Report.pdf</u>

PPG17 Assessment and Open Space, Sports & Recreation Strategy: http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/live/images/cme\_resources/Public/Forward%20Planni ng/LDF/Evidence%20Base/PPG17%20Assessment/PPG17-Final-Report.pdf

Water Cycle Study & Surface Water Management Plan

Staffordshire County-wide Renewable/Low Carbon Energy Study

# Appendix **B**

The most recent tree survey covering this site was carried out by BEA in 2004, in accordance with the, now obsolete, BS5837 1991. It appears to contain some discrepancies and now inaccurate information. Therefore, the constraints plan produced from this data cannot be claimed to be wholly accurate and it is recommended (prior to detailed planning) that a new tree survey, to BS5837 2005, be carried out by a reputable and suitably qualified arboricultural consultant. The Arboricultural Association maintains a list of registered consultants at www.trees.org.uk

Plan 9 has been colour-coded so that the categories and status of trees can be easily identified.

Green: 'A' category trees -Retention most desirable. Blue: 'B' Category trees -Retention desirable Grey 'C' category trees- Trees which could be retained Red: 'R' category trees- Trees for removal

The information within the BEA report has been used to develop the constraints plan. However, it would appear that certain trees are missing from the survey and these have been added and mapped as accurately as possible, based on a visual assessment. In addition some of the height measurements from the BEA report appear to have been estimated and, as a consequence, either over or under estimate the height of trees.

When mapping shade constraints, in some cases adjustments have been made in order to more accurately reflect the perceived constraint. Constraints imposed by shade are not an absolute, but it must be taken into account when positioning dwellings and fixing their orientation and fenestration. In addition, the positioning of a house in full shade for much of the year is undesirable both for the enjoyment and well being of the residents and for the overall sustainability of the dwelling. The shading issues within the Baswich House site are relatively few due to the siting of the majority of the trees around the western and northern boundaries of the site. The root protection and shade constraints have been plotted for the trees recommended for retention, and are shaded green on the plan.

There are few trees within the main body of the site which pose a material constraint to development. Trees 175-185 form a group which appears to be a remnant hedge. These trees are not significant or particularly suitable for retention within any overall scheme and would, more than likely, be obscured by development from public benefit. Therefore it is recommended that they are not retained.

Similarly, there are a number of trees within the eastern portion of the site, particularly on the rear boundaries and within the rear gardens of the former police houses (principally trees 116-166), which are not considered significant and it is recommended that they do not pose a constraint on development.

A group of Birch (in the main), trees 78-92, form a small incursion into the site, adjacent to the old access road. Their shade paths cover an area which has been previously developed and is mainly rear garden. Birch cast a light shade and therefore this can be dealt with and ameliorated through detailed design.

Trees 189 & 190 do not feature in the BEA survey report. However, these are a large open grown Oak and a Sweet Chestnut respectively. These trees are important features of the site and should be retained within open areas. Tree 190 is within the compound adjacent to the telecommunications mast and the removal of equipment and buildings will need to be tightly controlled in order for this near veteran to survive.

The principal constraints to development are the group of trees along the western boundary (trees 3-51) and those along the northern boundary (trees 52-107). These include some very large Cedars, Oaks and Sweet Chestnuts. The north western corner of the site is heavily constrained by both the root protection areas of these trees, their shade and the likelihood that any adjacent, future property owners would have concerns regarding the trees overbearing nature. Therefore, development within these areas must be very carefully considered to avoid sustainability issues, such as permanent shade on dwellings, leaf deposition in gutters and drains, root ingress into services etc. In addition, properties should not be sited so that conflict arises on first occupation and applications are immediately made to prune trees that are 'too close'.

Clearly there is a balance to be struck between the commercial aspirations of any potential purchaser and the successful retention of the structural trees. However much of the aesthetic value of the site is borne out of its mature landscaping and the grandeur of the mature trees. Development should respond sensitively to this key asset.

It is understood that all trees within and on the boundaries of the site are currently the subject of Preservation Orders. It is recommended that, prior to development, <u>these orders are reviewed</u> to ensure accuracy and compliance with all relevant protocols.

A strategy for the sustainable continuation of the structural tree planting on the site is critical in terms of it's long term aesthetic appeal. This should be based on the premise that large 'structural' trees are planted to replace those lost through natural wastage. The planting of trees that have a smaller mature size is undesirable and would lead to a dilution of the sites value. In addition large tree species should be planted in the 'green space' of the site to provide a better age-class distribution of trees and provide some degree of succession as the population of trees is skewed towards the mature and over-mature classes.

	Α	В	С	R
	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW	REMOVE
	Trees whose retention is most desirable	Trees whose retention is desirable	Trees which could be retained	Trees which should be removed
1	Vigorous healthy trees, of good form, and in harmony with proposed space and structures	Trees that might be included with the high category, but because of their numbers or slightly impaired condition, are downgraded in favour of the best individuals	Trees in adequate condition, or which can be retained with minimal tree surgery, but are not worthy for inclusion in the high or moderate categories	Dead, or structurally dangerous trees
2	Healthy young trees of good form, potentially in harmony with the proposed development	Immature trees with potential to develop into the high category	Immature trees or trees of no particular merit	Unstable trees
3	Trees for screening or softening the effect of existing structures in the near vicinity, or of particular visual importance to the locality			Trees with significant fungal decay at the base or on the main bole
4	Trees of particular historical, commemorative or other value, or good specimens of rare or unusual species			Trees with a cavity or cavities of significance to safety
5				Trees that will become dangerous after removal of other trees for reasons given in 1- 4





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