

THE PLAN FOR STAFFORD BOROUGH

BOROUGH-WIDE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

The Stafford Borough area is facing a period of unprecedented change in terms of what our towns, villages and countryside will look like in the future, how land will be developed and used as well as making sure new services and facilities such as health, education and leisure activities are provided to the local community.

The Council needs your assistance to decide what the area will look like for future generations before work begins with other organisations to make the future plan for Stafford Borough a reality.

It's time to make some choices. This discussion paper does not have all the answers, which is why the Council needs your response to the following:-

- What do you want Stafford Borough to look like in 20 years time?
- How should places such as the County Town of Stafford, the market town of Stone and the rural areas change when new development takes place?
- Are there any areas of the Borough which should have less change because of their distinctive character?
- What issues and objectives do you have for the area?
- Where should new housing and employment development be built and what level of new services and facilities needs providing as community support?
- What land should be built on for housing and employment development?

The Council will use the responses to this discussion paper to prepare a vision for the area, set out local objectives to be met and make decisions about the locations and amounts of new development to occur in different parts of the Stafford Borough area, together with new transport infrastructure, local services and facilities.

This work will guide preparation of the new Development Plan for our area called the Stafford Borough Local Development Framework, which will replace the Stafford Borough Local Plan and guide decisions on planning applications.

Key Question 1: What do you want Stafford Borough to look like in 20 years time?

Key Question 2: How should places such as the County Town of Stafford, the market town of Stone and the rural areas change when new development takes place?

Key Question 3: Are there any areas of the Borough which should have less change because of their distinctive character?

These questions are all about your Vision for the future and how you would like Stafford Borough to change over the next 20 years.

All areas are subject to change and therefore it is always important to consider what types of changes should take place.

Issue 1: What are the positive and negative aspects of the Borough and or the area in which you live?

To help you think about a response to this question have a look at what other people in Stafford Borough have said about the Vision for the area, as set out in the Draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020. The new Development Plan has to bring this Vision into reality through proposals for future land uses.

Improving the quality of life for our communities by making the Borough a safer, healthier, cleaner and more sustainable place for all to live, learn, work and invest in.

By 2020 we want Stafford Borough to:

Promote Economic and Sustainable Development by

- Having a thriving economy, where all businesses are supported in their development and sustainability
- Promoting innovation, nurture enterprise so that new businesses are given every opportunity to develop and grow
- Being a place where the environment is protected and enhanced and a sustainable way of life is promoted, supported and delivered

Promote Health and Social Care by

- Being a community where all its members live longer, are healthier and live more contented lives through the promotion of healthy lifestyles and general wellbeing
- Being a place where we promote a strong sense of inclusion within the community, one that enhances the quality of life for all and enables everyone to actively participate in society

Promote Community Strategy by

- Being an area where all members of the community are safe and free from fear of crime in their homes, places of work or study, in the street, town centres and the countryside

Source: Stafford Borough Draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020 (Jan 2008)

(Continued on next page)

Improve outcomes for Children and Young People by

- Being an area where all children and young people are developed and can share in its prosperity, and have access to appropriate and affordable decent housing; educational and training opportunities and high quality leisure and cultural experiences

Source: Stafford Borough Draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020 (Jan 2008)

Issue 2: Should this Vision be used to guide future development of the area and if not what is your Vision and Key Objectives for the Stafford Borough area?

Different towns, villages and rural areas within Stafford Borough have various pressures, problems, characteristics worthy of protection and conservation as well as new opportunities which could be realised by new development or regeneration.

By way of example the County Town of Stafford is located on the national road and rail network and has the highest level of services and facilities in the Borough area, which means it will be under the greatest pressure for major new development.

The market town of Stone has a distinctive local character alongside the canal with quality restaurants and year round community activities supporting a vibrant local economy providing a very attractive place to live and visit.

Parts of the rural area have exceptionally high landscape and nature conservation designations with attractive villages making it an aspirational place to live. However these locations generally have fewer services and facilities. These issues make it more expensive for local residents who have to make a living to find rural housing.

It is important that the Council provides a locally specific Vision for the future of Stafford Borough and how the character of particular towns, villages and places in the area might change over time. Please provide your ideas about these changes. To get you started set out below is just one example of how a Vision of the Borough might be expressed:-

“By 2026 Stafford Borough will have retained and enhanced its unique character as a Borough made up of the County Town of Stafford, the market town of Stone and extensive rural area containing larger villages and historic settlements whilst providing new developments, to meet the local needs of all communities in the area.

The County Town of Stafford will have a strengthened economy based on specialist industries by retaining the high quality skills delivered by further education facilities and bolstered by significant inward investment supported by quality housing and exceptional levels of community services and facilities.

The market town of Stone will have

The larger villages such as Haughton / Weston / Barlaston will

The rural areas will

(Sentences deliberately not completed in order for you to provide responses and visionary statements)

Key Question 4: What issues and objectives do you have for the area?

The Stafford Borough area is like nowhere else. It is locally distinctive in terms of its character, landscape and natural resources. The area is home to over 120,000 people. Over 60% of the population live in the County Town of Stafford and the market town of Stone whilst the remainder live in the rural area where there are a number of larger villages such as Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon, Barlaston, Great Haywood, Little Haywood and Colwich as well as smaller villages and hamlets. Stafford Borough is well connected to the national transport network through the M6 motorway and rail services being attractive to residents, businesses and visitors to the area but issues of accessibility remain in some rural areas. Stafford Borough is a very diverse area with a range of urban and rural issues.

Issue 3: Over the next 20 years what should the area be aiming to achieve both in terms of what we have now as well as new resources and opportunities for the future?

Issue 4: What changes would you like to make?

Are there any issues, problems or opportunities either Borough-wide or in your particular area which you would like to draw to our attention? For example, affordable housing, lack of services and facilities, transport provision, new tourism or leisure opportunities.

The Scale of New Development

In the last few months Stafford Borough Council has been presented with new development figures to be provided in the area from the West Midlands regional plan called the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. However the figures set out below may change and will not be confirmed until 2009.

For the period 2006 – 2026 the following new development needs to be built in the area although these figures, particularly for housing, could increase:

- 10,300 new houses in Stafford Borough (an annual rate of 515) of which 7,000 new houses to be the County Town of Stafford (an annual rate of 350) from 2006 - 2026
- 120 hectares of new employment land by 2021 with a continuous five year supply being available of 40 hectares (annual rate = 8 hectares)
- 30,000 square metres of new retail space by 2021 with a further 20,000 square metres beyond 2021, the majority being in the County Town
- 40,000 square metres of new offices in the County Town of Stafford

This level of new development is substantial for the Stafford Borough area. For example 10,300 new houses is considerably more than the number of homes in the market town of Stone. Furthermore as an example there are 400 houses on the Castlefields estate near Stafford Castle. Therefore more than this number of new homes need to be built every year in the Borough until 2026.

Last year 450 new houses were completed and planning permission exists for over 3,270 new homes across the Borough of which approximately 1,600 are in Stafford, 550 are in Stone and 1,120 are in the rural areas. The Council is currently completing a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which identifies further areas of land within existing residential areas where new houses might be built in the future. New housing with planning permission built in existing areas will reduce the amount of Greenfield sites required.

Key Question 5: Where should new housing and employment development be built and what level of new services and facilities needs providing as community support?

Borough-wide Strategic Options

Although in theory development could take place anywhere within Stafford Borough, in reality national and regional policy restrictions need to be considered at the Borough-wide strategic level.

In Stafford Borough there are two areas of Green Belt; around the North Staffordshire conurbation as well as in the south east area of Stafford Borough also including the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (please refer to the attached map). Furthermore the West Midlands Regional Plan does not provide for a new settlement to be built in Stafford Borough at this moment in time.

If there were no national and regional policy restrictions, as set out above, the following options would need to be considered for where new development could be built in Stafford Borough.

- 1 New development could be focussed in one place as a new settlement
- 2 New development could be built as extensions to the Borough's existing settlements including land within the Green Belt areas
- 3 A proportion of the new development could be built as a new settlement and the rest could be built as extensions to existing areas, including land within the Green Belt

Alternative Development Strategies for Stafford Borough

Based on the current national and regional policy context described above the following alternative development strategies give a range of choices for guiding where new development may be provided in Stafford Borough's area:-

- A New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford only
- B New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford and the market town of Stone only
- C New Development focused on the County Town of Stafford, the market town of Stone and either one or more of the principal settlements
- D New Development at Stafford and one or more of the principal settlements but not at the market town of Stone
- E New Development distributed to a selected number of settlements within the Stafford Borough area, as listed below
- F New Development distributed widely across the Borough to each of the principal settlements, cross border settlements and other identified settlements across the Borough area (listed below) as well as at Stafford and the market town of Stone

Primary settlement County Town of Stafford (population approx 60,000)

Secondary settlement Market Town of Stone (population approx 14,500)

Principal settlements Gnosall Eccleshall Hixon Barlaston*
Great Haywood Little Haywood and Colwich
(population for each over 1,500 respectively)

Cross border settlements Blythe Bridge* (population approximately 1,600)
Meir Heath and Rough Close* (population 2,700)

Other identified settlements in the existing Development Plan, the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001, with Residential Development Boundaries. (i.e.

boundaries around settlements within which housing development will generally be permitted.) Population for each under 1,500

Adbaston	Aston by Stone	Barlaston Park*	Bradley
Brocton*	Brocton A34*	Church Eaton	Clayton*
Cotes Heath*	Creswell	Croxton	Derrington
Fulford*	Great Bridgeford	Haughton	Hilderstone*
Hopton	Hyde Lea	Milford*	Milwich
Norbury	Oulton*	Ranton	Salt
Seighford	Swynnerton*	Tittensor*	Trentham/Dairyfields*
Weston	Woodseaves	Yarnfield*	

* These settlements are either located within or adjacent to the Green Belt. Options for development of peripheral expansion may be limited by national planning policies on Green Belt designations.

Issue 6: Are there any strategy alternatives which the Council should be considering?

Please give your views on which of the above Alternative Development Strategies would best support your Vision for the future of Stafford Borough.

The level of growth required by the Regional Plan will put pressure on existing transport, social and community infrastructure.

Issue 7: What particular pressures do you anticipate?

Issue 8: What levels and types of new services and facilities, including roads and public transport provision, do you consider are necessary to support your preferred or suggested strategy?

Settlements and Locations within the Borough

At this point in time the West Midlands Regional Plan has identified 70% of new development to Stafford which could mean 30% to be located across the rest of the Borough. However these proportions and the more detailed figures listed earlier in this paper are subject to change before being agreed in 2009.

Furthermore the West Midlands Regional Plan also makes reference to cross border issues with the suggestion that land in South Staffordshire District should be considered to provide for the requirements of Stafford town. In addition there may be the possibility of land in Stafford Borough being used to provide for new development in Rugeley, which is located in Cannock Chase District Council's area.

In terms of new development a figure of 10% identified to a particular settlement or location could mean up to 1,000 new houses. A figure of 25% identified for new

employment land could mean up to 30 hectares to a particular settlement or location. These figures are based on provisions in the emerging West Midland Regional Plan.

Please use the choice of alternative development strategies listed above and refer to the attached map with associated illustrations to help you identify the amount of new development which you think should be proposed in the different areas of Stafford Borough. It is not necessary to provide a figure against every settlement or location and it is not necessary to provide a figure for both new housing and employment.

Type of Settlement	Percentage of New Development	
	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Employment</i>
Primary - Stafford		
Secondary - Stone		
Principal Settlement (please specify)		
Cross border Settlement (please specify)		
Other identified settlement (please specify)		
Other location in the Borough (please specify)		
Other cross border location related to the Borough, e.g. edge of Rugeley (please specify)		

In the existing Development Plan the settlements listed above are considered to be more significant settlements which are defined by Residential Development Boundaries. Outside of these boundaries there is a presumption against new development other than to meet specific local needs.

Issue 9: Do you consider any smaller settlements without Residential Development Boundaries to be suitable for new development in the future?

Issue 10: Do you consider any of the settlements listed with Residential Development Boundaries should not be considered for new development in the future?

Key Question 6: What land should be built on for housing and employment development?

Now that you have suggested the proportions of new development for different areas of Stafford Borough can you describe any broad locations or sites which could be used for future housing and employment uses. These sites could be previously developed land (known as Brownfield sites) or Greenfield sites.

Further Information

The following documentation is available providing background information relating to this paper as set out below:-

- West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision can be viewed on the West Midlands Regional Assembly web-site at www.wmra.gov.uk
- The Housing Monitor, Employment Land Review and other relevant evidence on the Local Development Framework can be viewed on the Stafford Borough Council website at www.staffordbc.gov.uk/forwardplanning

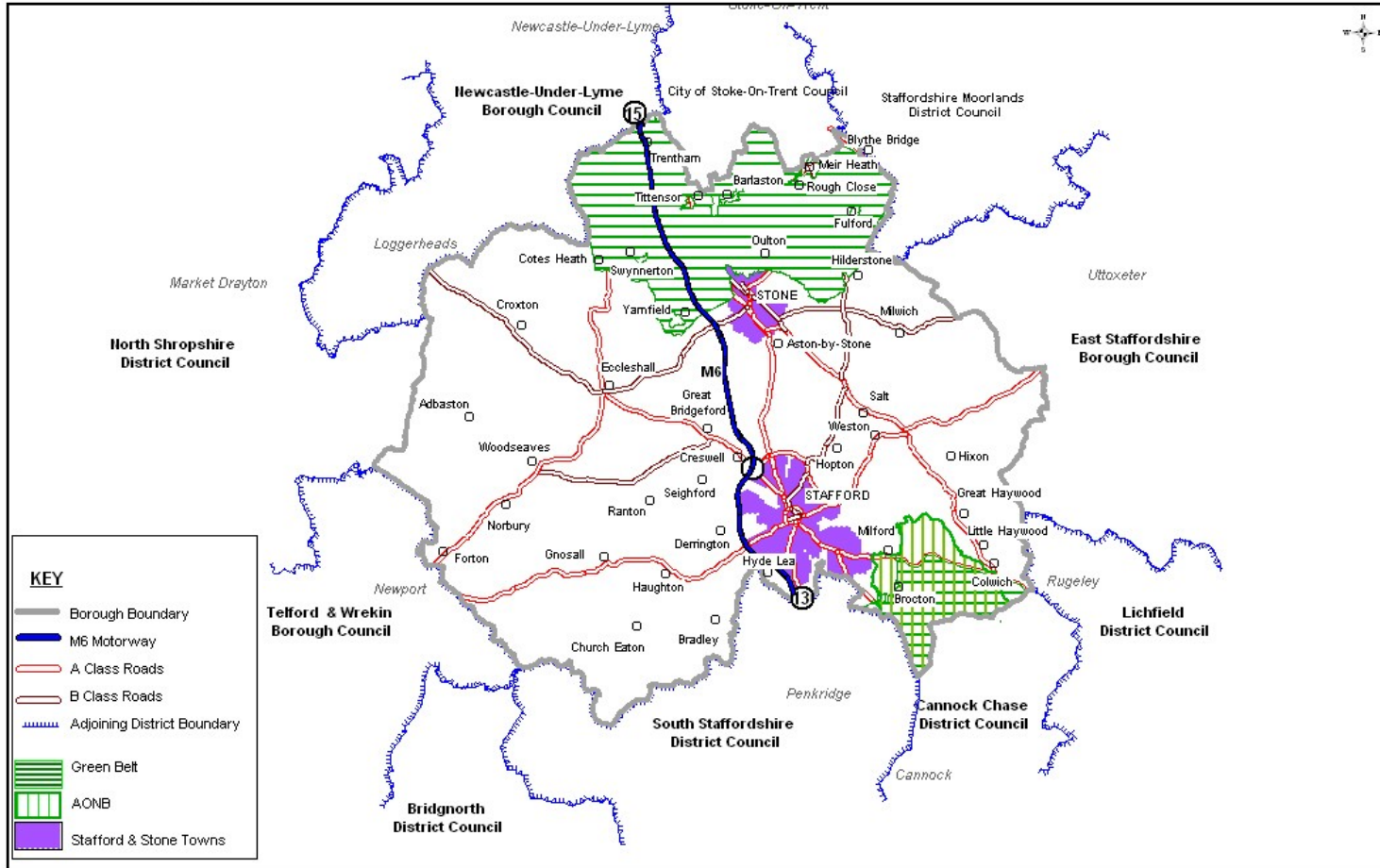
If you wish to discuss this paper in more detail please contact the Forward Planning Team on 01785 619536 or 619538.

Next Steps

Please provide your responses to the Borough Council by **12 noon on Friday 22nd February 2008** so that this information can be used in the next stage of the decision-making process. A more detailed development strategy for the Borough Council area will be consulted upon in April and May 2008.

MAP OF STAFFORD BOROUGH AREA

Stafford Borough Council



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Not To Scale

STAFFORD BOROUGH AREA - ILLUSTRATIONS OF ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

