

Stafford Borough Council Landscape Sensitivity Study

October 2021



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1.0 Executive Summary

FPCR was commissioned in September 2020 by Stafford Borough Council to carry out the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment to inform Stafford Borough Council's new Local Plan 2020-2040.

Stafford Borough is a predominantly rural district, covering an area of 230 square miles together with the County Town of Stafford and the market towns of Stone and Eccleshall. The natural landscape of the borough is characterised by flat low lying land between the rivers Trent, Penk and Sow. Much of the area is intensively farmed agricultural land (including stock farming), interspersed with ancient and semi-natural woodland, and grasslands. The upland landscape in the south east of the borough is nationally recognised through its designation as part of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The landscape of Stafford Borough falls within four National Character Areas (NCAs) as defined by Natural England; NCA 61 'Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain', NCA 68 'Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands', NCA 67 Cannock Chase and Cank Wood and NCA 64 'Potteries and Churnet Valley'.

This landscape character information used within this Sensitivity Study is based on the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review, 2015¹ with updates as necessary to ensure the information is relevant at a borough level and based upon field observation. The assessment also takes into account the Cannock Chase AONB Views and Setting Guide, July 2020.

The judgement on the sensitivity of a particular site is based on a combination of factors considered. The final sensitivity rating is a professional judgement based on these factors.

There are a number of factors which result in a site being assessed as being of Higher sensitivity. For the small number of sites within the borough assessed as being of High sensitivity these include; a restricted relationship with the existing settlement, a high sensitive land use such as being heavily wooded, a high sensitive context such as inclusion within a conservation area or a combination of these factors. In the south east of the borough the relationship with the Cannock Chase AONB also influences the sensitivity of the sites.

The Lower sensitivity sites are those where development would have the least impact in terms of landscape. In general, the sites assessed as being of Low sensitivity have a strong influence of existing development sitting within settlements or adjacent to existing development, and the majority of Low sensitivity sites are either developed or brownfield sites with derelict buildings/features present. Where sites feature detracting factors such as derelict buildings there may be opportunities for improvement on the current situation through redevelopment.

Figure 6 shows the sensitivity of the Landscape Assessment Sites within the Borough. As the assessment is influenced by localised characteristics and context of the sites there is a distribution of sensitivities across the borough with settlements often containing sites with a range of different sensitivities.

A total of 140 Landscape Assessment Sites have been assessed as part of this sensitivity study, of which;

- 7 sites of High sensitivity;
- 42 sites of High/Medium sensitivity;
- 44 sites of Medium sensitivity;
- 36 sites of Medium/Low sensitivity; and,
- 11 sites of Low sensitivity;

¹ Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review, Staffordshire County Council, May 2015

2.0 Introduction and Background

Introduction

FPCR was commissioned in September 2020 by Stafford Borough Council to carry out the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment. This study provides the assessment of the potential development sites, in terms of landscape sensitivity, to inform Stafford Borough Council's new Local Plan 2020-2040. The aim of the landscape sensitivity assessment is to provide the council with the information necessary to understand the landscape and visual effects of the development for housing and other associated uses of the different site options.

The Natural England document "An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management." June 2019 defines landscape sensitivity and states: "Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value – such as changes to valued attributes of baseline landscape character and the visual resource. Landscape sensitivity assessment is a process that assesses the resilience / robustness of landscape character and the visual resource – and what we value - to a defined change, or changes. It can help decision makers to understand likely changes and the nature of change should particular courses of action - the development / land management scenarios – be taken forward."

The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment is different to a landscape and visual impact assessment for an individual project. The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment allows a more strategic assessment of landscape sensitivity, often across larger areas, about the principle of a particular type of change scenario, in this case residential and associated development. It does not take account of specific development proposals. It

is a strategic level assessment of the sensitivity of the potential sites, in the absence of specific development proposals. Where any draft detailed proposals may be available, these have not been considered, for consistency of approach with the other sites where there they are not available.

Background

Stafford Borough is a predominantly rural district, covering an area of 230 square miles together with the County Town of Stafford and the market towns of Stone and Eccleshall. The population of the borough was estimated in 2018 to be 135,880 people, of whom 71,517 live in Stafford and 16,650 in Stone. The remaining 35% of the population live in the borough's rural areas. It is the 238th most densely populated lower tier English local authority, of 317 such authorities.

The borough is crossed by major transport corridors, including the M6, West Coast Mainline rail and in future HS2.

The natural landscape of the borough is characterised by flat low lying land between the rivers Trent, Penk and Sow. Much of the area is intensively farmed agricultural land (including stock farming), interspersed with ancient and semi-natural woodland, and grasslands. The upland landscape in the south east of the borough is nationally recognised through its designation as part of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

There are two areas of Green Belt in the borough. Northern parts of the borough lie within the North Staffordshire Green Belt while the south-eastern area of the borough is designated as part of the West Midlands Green Belt.

Links to Other Studies

- **National Character Area Profiles**
- **Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review, May 2015**

This review provides an update on the landscape character assessment of the Planning for Change Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) adopted in May 2001. It sets out revised character areas / types based on desk-based study and field observation. As the most recent landscape character assessment for the county it is this assessment which forms the basis for the descriptions of the borough's landscape included later in this study.

- **Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Review of the AONB Landscape Character Framework, August 2017**

This document describes the landscape character of the AONB based on the typologies defined within the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review. It includes an assessment of the strength of character, condition and a vision statement for each of the landscape typologies within the AONB. It also includes management aims and Guidelines.

- **Cannock Chase Views and Setting Guide, July 2020**

This guide identifies views from high ground within the Cannock Chase AONB with the aim to ensure any new development is effectively integrated into the landscape and that the setting of AONB is 'managed and developed in a way that conserves and enhances the significance and special qualities of the AONB.'²

² Cannock Chase AONB Views and Setting Guide, Land Use Consultants, July 2020.

- **Cannock Chase Views and Setting Guide, July 2020**

The Plan sets out the management agenda for the AONB till 2024. The focus of the plan is on 'conserving and enhancing natural beauty, with considerations relating to wider environmental issues, the rural economy, communities and recreation dealt within the context of delivering this purpose'³. The Plan also describes the special qualities of the AONB to 'provide a character-based criterion to judge the impact on the AONB that may take place from development or other activities.'³

³ Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan, Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee, April 2019.

3.0 Methodology and Criteria

The Natural England Guidance sets two key principles for carrying out Landscape sensitivity Assessments

- **A Landscape sensitivity assessment should be as straightforward as possible** - assessments need to be clear, concise, proportionate, and transparent. Conclusions should be easily understood by anyone - there is no desire for over complex and tortuous approaches.
- **Landscape character, the visual resource, and value inform landscape sensitivity although differing circumstances will dictate the exact nature of the evidence gathered to inform the assessment – the approach is flexible to accommodate different situations**

The process of Landscape sensitivity assessment consists of four steps;

1. Define the Purpose and Scope of the Landscape sensitivity assessment and Prepare the Brief.
2. Gather Information to Inform the Landscape sensitivity assessment (desk study and field study).
3. Assess Landscape Sensitivity of the Assessment Sites (desk study and field study).
4. Reporting.

The purpose and scope of the assessment was defined at the outset and agreed with the Steering Group officers of Stafford Borough Council. The assessment covers potential residential and other associated uses put forward for inclusion in the new Local Plan. The methodology and criteria for the assessment were developed and agreed with the Steering Group. The Criteria for the different factors considered is set out at Appendix A.

Information was collected on the baseline landscape. This included GIS datasets provided by the Council covering matters including, Green Belt, AONB, Conservation Areas, and Listed Buildings. Information on the Staffordshire landscape character has been obtained from Staffordshire County Council, and this has been used and updated where relevant for this study. Note this does not comprise a full update of the Staffordshire Landscape Assessment work. A range of studies have been completed for the Cannock Chase AONB and these include the Cannock Chase Views and Setting Guide (July 2020), Review of the AONB Landscape Character Framework (August 2017) and the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. The findings from these studies have also been incorporated into the baseline for this assessment.

Following the compilation of baseline data field analysis was carried out, recording the findings using a tailored piece of software developed specifically for the purpose. This recorded the landscape and visual characteristics, and the susceptibility to change of the different landscape elements.

Finally, each assessment site was assessed for its overall sensitivity to the potential change. The findings are set out in this report, with detailed assessment sheets for each site included at Appendix B.

Development Scenarios

The potential layout density and form of housing and other development such as a local centre or smaller scale employment or green space, on any potential site is not known at this stage. The assessment is therefore based on a number of assumptions;

- The housing will typically be 2-3 stories in height (typically up to 10m high, but more commonly 7-8m high), with gardens.
- Sites will include a proportion of Green Infrastructure (including blue infrastructure such as sustainable drainage).
- Larger sites are likely to incorporate other associated facilities such as local centres or smaller scale employment.

Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

Individual criteria have been developed for this project, based on the landscape characteristics and susceptibility of the Stafford Borough landscape. Professional judgement is used in the assessment against these criteria and no scoring is undertaken. The final judgement on sensitivity is reached following a consideration of all factors. Sometimes one element may be particularly important for the final judgement, but most often it is a result of the interaction of many factors. These factors apply to residential and employment land scenarios. The criteria for the assessment are set out in Appendix A.

A final judgement is made on each of the factors on a five point scale;

- High
- High/Medium
- Medium
- Medium/Low
- Low

Following the evaluation of the different factors an overall judgement is then reached on the individual land parcel. These are again based on a 5 point scale, and the overall sensitivity is defined as set out below:

- **High** – Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment site are very susceptible to change and / or its values are high or high / medium and it is unable to accommodate the relevant type of development without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very low.
- **High / Medium** – Landscape and /or visual characteristics of the assessment site are susceptible to change and / or its values are medium through to high. It may be able to accommodate the relevant type of development but only in limited situations without significant character change. Thresholds for significant change are low.

- **Medium** – Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment site are susceptible to change and / or its values are medium / low through to high / medium and / or it may have some potential to accommodate the relevant type of development in some defined situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are intermediate.
- **Medium / Low** – Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment site are resilient and of low susceptibility to change and / or its values are medium / low or low and it can accommodate the relevant type of development in many situations without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are high.
- **Low** – Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the assessment site are robust or degraded and are not susceptible to change and / or its values are low and it can accommodate the relevant type of development without significant character change or adverse effects. Thresholds for significant change are very high.

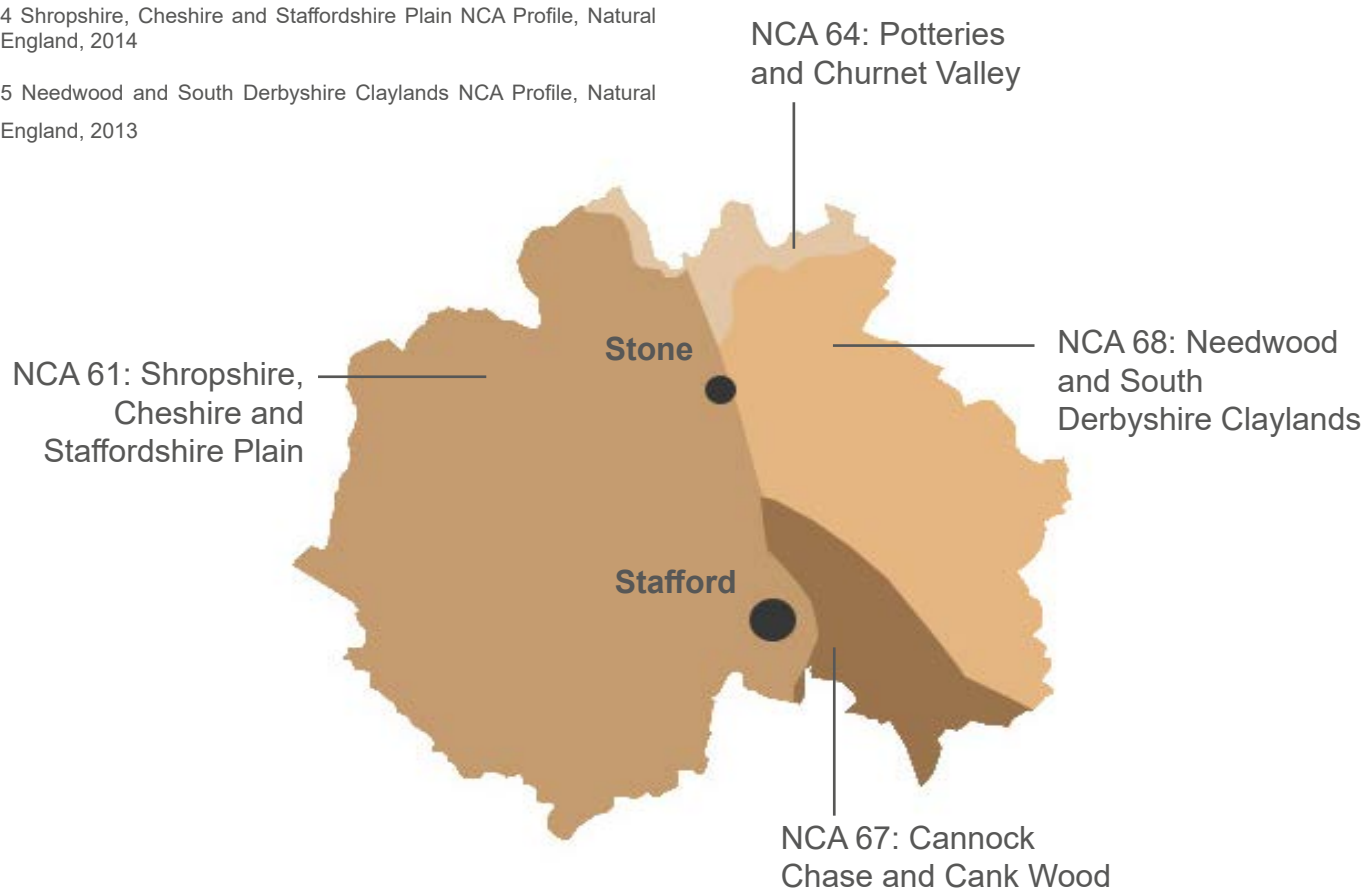
4.0 The Baseline Landscape

National Landscape Character

The landscape of Stafford Borough falls within four National Character Areas (NCAs) as defined by Natural England. The west of the borough and the majority of the town of Stafford are located within NCA61 'Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain', this NCA is described as *'an expanse of flat or gently undulating, lush, pastoral farmland'*⁴. Land in the east of the borough is covered by NCA 68 'Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands', defined as *'predominately a rolling plateau'*⁵ and land to the south east including Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) falls with NCA 67 Cannock Chase and Cank Wood. This NCA principally accords with the historical hunting forest of Cannock Chase. A small area in the north of the borough is located in NCA 64 'Potteries and Churnet Valley', this NCA covers the neighbouring district of Stoke-on-Trent.

4 Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA Profile, Natural England, 2014

5 Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands NCA Profile, Natural England, 2013



National Character Areas in Stafford Borough

Baseline Environment of Stafford Borough

The baseline environment of the borough including its characteristics, features and designated sites have been a fundamental consideration of this study. This has included consideration of the Cannock Chase AONB, an area of which is located in the south east of the Borough. The AONB, being the smallest mainland AONB in England, covers 69km centred around a former hunting ground.

Figures 1-5 show the key environmental features of the borough which are briefly described below.

Topography (Fig 1)

The majority of the landscape of the borough is relatively flat and low lying. It is crossed by gentle river valleys including those of the River Trent, the River Penk and the River Sow along with numerous tributaries. Higher land is located in the south east of the Borough within the Cannock Chase AONB and in the north and north west towards the borough's boundaries with Stoke-on-Trent and Shropshire. In the north east a ridge of higher land runs adjacent to the borough's boundary.

Water Courses (Fig 2)

The landscape of Stafford Borough is influenced by numerous watercourses. The principal rivers within the borough are; the River Trent which runs from Stoke-on-Trent in the north to Rugeley in the south east; the River Sow which runs from the north west of the borough through Stafford before joining the River Trent; and the River Penk which runs to the south of Stafford. Tributaries of these rivers also cross the landscape. The Trent & Mersey, and Staffordshire and Worcestershire canals run adjacent to the River Trent and the Rivers Penk and Sow respectively. The Shropshire Union canal crosses landscape in the west of the borough. The flood zones of watercourses within the borough are shown on Figure 2.

Heritage (Fig 3)

Stafford Borough has a long history with the town of Stafford dating back to the first century AD. In more recent times the arrival of the canals and railways advanced the development of the town. The Borough has a numerous sites of heritage interest including Stafford's historic centre, Shugborough Hall, the site of the Battle of Hopton Heath, and Trentham Gardens. Settlements within the borough tend to have historic centres where listed features are focussed. Conservation Areas within Stafford Borough cover not only historic areas of settlements but also historic gardens, canals and valleys.

Wildlife (Fig 4)

Though the majority of the borough comprises agricultural land, the landscape of Stafford Borough provides a range of habitats including woodland, hedgerows and grassland. The most significant areas of woodland cover are located within the Cannock Chase AONB in the south east, Bishop's Wood in the north west and Swynnerton Old Park in the north. The rivers and canals within the borough provide valuable wildlife corridors with sections of these covered by ecological designations. Other ecological important areas within the borough are designated including three National Nature Reserves at Aqualate Mere, Motte Meadows and Chartley Moss alongside Special Areas of Conservation on Cannock Chase, at Cop Mere and Pasturefields salt marsh.

Stafford Borough's Landscape Character

This landscape character information used within this Sensitivity Study is based on the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review, 2015⁶ with updates as necessary to ensure the information is relevant at a borough level and based upon field observation. Within the review the landscape of Stafford Borough is divided into four regional character areas which are broadly in line with the National Character Areas 61, 64, 67 and 68. A description of each of these regional character areas are provided below:

Staffordshire Plain Regional Character Area

The Staffordshire Plain is a lowland agricultural region in the west of the Borough that forms part of the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain National Character Area. For the most part, this region comprises a rolling lowland plain, with only gentle changes in elevation. The plain is not entirely homogenous, however, as a number of discrete sandstone hills rise above the clay lowlands, forming a series of prominent landscapes within the wider lowland setting of the National Character Area.

Potteries and Churnet Valley Regional Character Area

A small area in the north of the borough falls within the Potteries and Churnet Valley. This is a wooded, agricultural region where there has been a long history of industrial development and consolidation. It marks a zone of transition between the lowlands and the uplands.

Cannock Chase and Cankwood Regional Character Area

Cannock Chase and Cankwood Regional Character Area located in the south east of the borough forms part of the National Character Area of the same name. It is a region with a varied landscape character, comprising a mixture of heathland, forest and farmland. Cannock Chase formed the core of the Bishop of Lichfield's private hunting chase created out of Cannock Forest in the 13th century. The north-eastern and eastern boundaries are sharply defined by the Trent valley, while the western boundary roughly follows the River Penk. Significant remnants of ecologically important open heath survive within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and are also designated as part of the Special Area of Conservation within the AONB.

Needwood Claylands Regional Character Area

The Needwood region forms part of the Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands National Character Area and is located in the east of the borough. This region is entirely underlain by Permo-Triassic rocks, mainly comprising Mercia Mudstone, much of which is covered by a substantial layer of glacial drift. The drift forms a series of gently rolling, low plateaux, while the Mercia Mudstone tends to have a more dissected, rolling/undulating topography.

⁶ Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review, Staffordshire County Council, May 2015

The landscape of the borough is further divided into ten Landscape Character Types (LCTs). A description of each of these LCTs are provided below. These are shown on Figure 5. Please refer to the associated document published with this study to provide more details about the specific Landscape Character Type profiles:

Ancient Clay Farmlands LCT

A gently rolling lowland pastoral landscape characterised by a well defined, irregular field pattern bounded by ancient hedgerows, with scattered oak trees. There is a high density of dispersed farmsteads and wayside dwellings throughout this landscape, with scattered villages. Historically, the major land use has been dairying, dictated by the heavy, often poorly drained soils derived from the underlying boulder clay.

Ancient Settled Farmlands LCT

The Ancient Settled Farmlands is a well-defined cultural landscape with a varied pattern of small to medium sized hedged fields, many of which are of medieval origin. These are set within an irregular pattern of ancient winding lanes as well as more modern routes in places that link a clustered settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, groups of roadside dwellings and occasional villages. The underlying Triassic mudstones have produced fertile Brown soils where dairying/mixed farming is the dominant land use, with a scatter of small ancient woods and secondary plantations. Where this LCT occurs in the south and east of the borough the rounded and rolling landform is characterised in places by a more undulating topography with occasional steeper slopes. Adjacent to the AONB in the south this LCT is a well treed landscape with large numbers of hedgerow oaks.

Ancient Redlands LCT

A productive agricultural landscape with an upstanding, in places undulating landform, characterised by deep red soils derived from the underlying Upper Palaeozoic mudstones. Mixed farming, with a good scatter of small, mostly ancient woodlands, is the predominant land use, within an irregular pattern of medium sized, hedged fields. The settlement pattern is clustered, with scattered farmsteads, hamlets, and small rural villages. A small area in the north of the borough including part of the Trentham Estate falls within this LCT.

Coalfield Farmlands LCT

A varied industrial/urban fringe landscape comprising former mining villages, areas of disturbed ground and pockets of ancient pastoral farmland. Larger areas of farmland are characterised by small to medium sized hedged fields, defined by irregular, mixed species hedgerows. Other areas, used mainly for stock rearing, are in many places surrounded by urban settlement. The mixed rocks of the coal measures form an upstanding/undulating topography and give rise to heavy, in places impoverished soils.

Forest Heathlands LCT

An unenclosed, heavily wooded landscape with a varied, dissected topography. This landscape is characterised by semi-natural oak and birch woodlands, conifer plantations, and areas of open heathland. The association with heathland is a recurring visual and ecological theme throughout this landscape, even in the most heavily wooded parts of the Chase. In places tracts of open heath create a strong impression of spaciousness and a sense of wildness. Much of the AONB in the south of the borough falls within this LCT.

River Meadowlands LCT

A narrow, meandering river corridor landscape associated with a flat, generally well-defined alluvial floodplain. The river corridor is normally defined by strong hedgelines along the edge of the floodplain but in places it is framed by steeply rising river banks. Overall, this is a secluded pastoral landscape, characterised by meandering, tree-lined watercourses, flanked by alluvial meadows with grazing animals.

Sandstone Estatelands LCT

An open, gently rolling, arable landscape associated with the light, sandy soils that overlie a belt of Permo-Triassic sandstones. The woodlands and parklands of traditional rural estates characterise this rolling lowland landscape. The major land use is arable cropping in large hedged, or open fields of a regular pattern. The settlement pattern is sparse, principally comprising expanded hamlets, with a scatter of wayside cottages and large estate farms.

Sandstone Hills and Heaths LCT

This landscape type is restricted to areas where Triassic sandstones are not obscured by drift and where sandy acid soils predominate. The landscape has an undulating and in places steep sided landform. The settlement pattern is generally dispersed.

Where this LCT occurs in the north of the borough there is now little remaining heathland due to its conversion to farmland for stock rearing, although this landscape is nonetheless still characterised by heathy woodland/scrub and patches of bracken/gorse.

Where it occurs in centre and south of the borough it is a well wooded landscape. Patches of heathland vegetation still remain in places, but more often they have been planted with coniferous woodland. Much of the former heathland, however, has been converted to farmland used for intensive arable cultivation, or stock rearing. Fields are large, usually enclosed by hedgerows and often lie within a matrix of ancient woodlands and more recent conifer plantations.

Settled Plateau Farmlands LCT

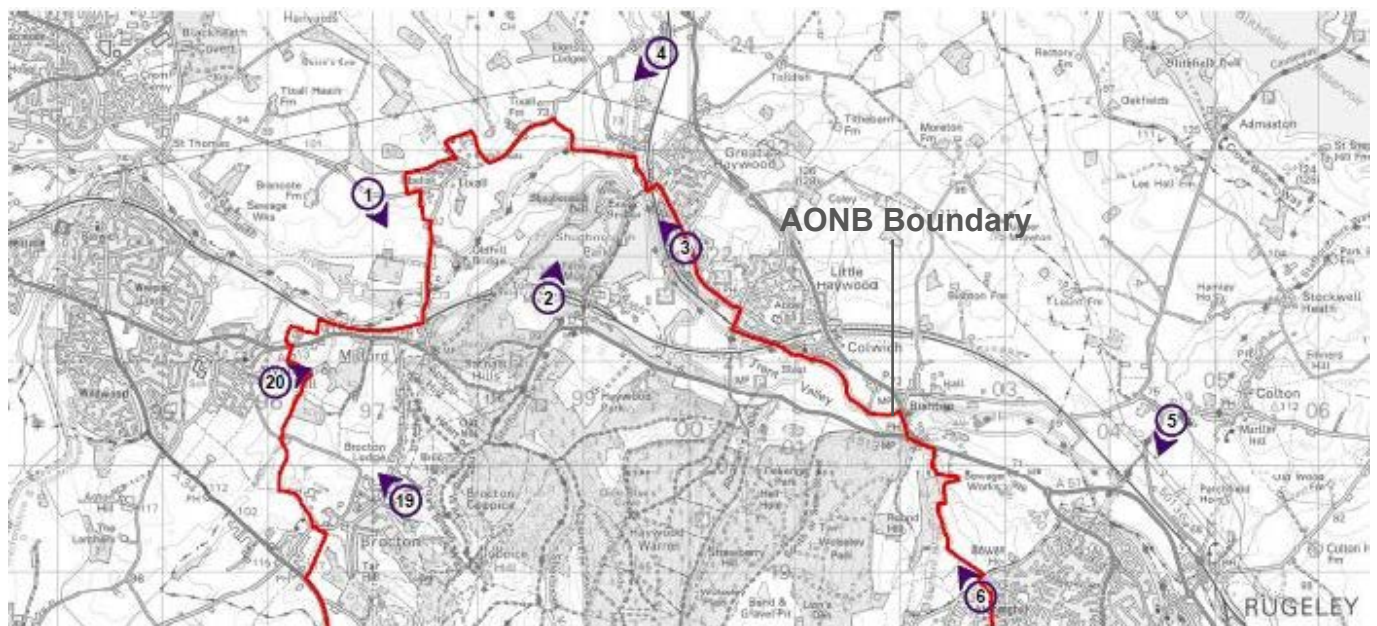
The Settled Plateau Farmlands is an older farmed landscape associated with low glacial plateau summits within the Needwood region. Although similar to the surrounding Ancient Settled Farmlands, in that it has a well defined pattern of small to medium sized hedged fields, many of medieval origin, this landscape is also characterised by patches of relic common, each with a planned enclosure pattern of regular fields, straight roads and wayside dwellings. The heavy, poorly drained, loamy soils support dairying with some mixed farming. More recent plantations reflect the localised heathland character with their dominance of birch and stunted oak.

Wooded Hills and Farmlands LCT

A well wooded, agricultural landscape with an upstanding, in places steep sided, undulating topography. This landscape is characterised by intensive arable and pastoral farming in hedged fields, with significant clusters of ancient, including at Swynnerton Old Park and Bishops Wood, and secondary woodlands of varying sizes. The settlement pattern is clustered, with a mix of small villages, hamlets, scattered roadside dwellings and farmsteads, connected by a network of winding lanes.

Cannock Chase AONB Views and Setting Guide, July 2020

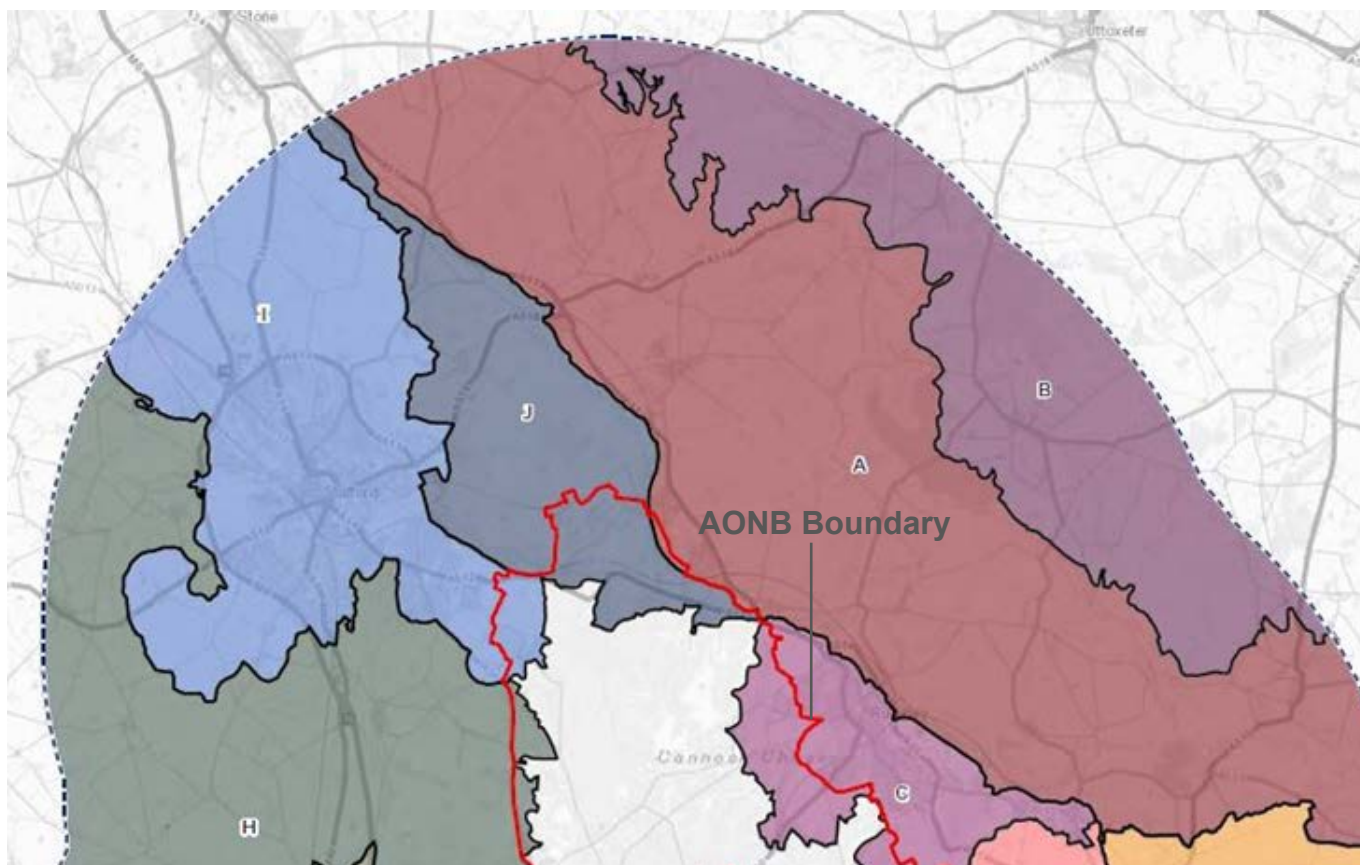
This guide identifies twenty representative viewpoints. These views have been selected as they illustrate the special character and qualities of the AONB; are sequential views such as those from long distance footpaths or scenic roads; or are views focussed on specific features. Of these twenty representative views approximately eight are views to/from Stafford Borough (views 1,2,3,4,5,6, 19, 20). The guide notes the identified views are *'by no means an exhaustive list of the important views within the Setting of the AONB but have been used to demonstrate how the guide may be applied to specific views within the landscape.'*



Extract of Representative Viewpoint Location Plan from the Cannock Chase AONB Views and Setting Guide

The guide also identifies ten 'setting zones' surrounding the AONB. There are Landscape Assessment Sites located within setting zones A, H, I and J.

A 'spatial guide' for each of the setting zones is included within the document, this sets out the contribution of the setting area to the AONB, issues/threats, views towards the AONB from the setting zone and management guidelines. A summary of the management guidelines for the relevant setting zones are included on the following pages. Where an assessment site lies within a setting zone these have been noted on the site assessment sheets included at Appendix B.



Extract of Setting Zone Boundaries Plan from the Cannock Chase AONB Views and Setting Guide

Setting Zone A – Needwood Farmlands

Management Guidelines (relating to views in and out of Cannock Chase AONB)

- *‘Conserve the function of the area as a predominantly rural uncluttered backdrop by retaining views to the patchwork field pattern in views from the AONB...’*
- *‘Monitor development proposals with the overall objective of maintaining the existing small scale settlement pattern at Great Haywood and Little Haywood in views from the AONB. The strong estate character of the villages due to the associations with the Shugborough Estate should also be conserved. Ensure that proposed developments do not disrupt views towards the background view, including views to the wider wooded ridge line of Needwood Claylands... Landscape schemes associated with development proposals should also consider opportunities for the mitigation of view interruption as well as the creation of framed vistas where possible.’*
- *‘Seek to retain views and provide a visual link from the AONB to the undeveloped ridge line occupying the remnants of Needwood Forest (Setting Zone B).’*

Setting Zone H – Staffordshire Plain

Management Guidelines (relating to views in and out of Cannock Chase AONB)

- *‘Ensure proposed built developments do not appear prominent within the wider landscape, maintain the largely undeveloped rural character of the skyline in views from the AONB. A clear uninterrupted view to the silhouette of the Wrekin should be retained. New development should avoid rising above the wooded skyline or appearing overly dominant across the Staffordshire Plain by virtue of scale, height, massing or detailed design.’*
- *‘Conserve the views to the wider Staffordshire and Shropshire Plain from the AONB; including Preston Vale, Little Heath and Beacon Hill. Note that development of tall or bulky structures in this area, especially parallel the corridor of the M6, would change the perception of the scale of the low-lying Staffordshire Plain...’*
- *‘Maintain the open character of the landscape and availability of long distance views from the western extent of the AONB, with framed views to wooded edges in the Staffordshire Plain...’*
- *‘Ensure that built development is integrated into its landscape context through the retention and protection of woodlands and parklands which form defined natural boundaries. Manage and restore hedgerows to soften stark edges to development, conserving the characteristic small to medium scale field pattern of the landscape of Staffordshire Plain.’*

Setting Zone I – Stafford Centre and Farmland Fringe

Management Guidelines (relating to views in and out of Cannock Chase AONB)

- *‘Retain the existing settlement pattern of Brocton, with existing built form largely contained in views from the AONB by the nature of the localised topography. Development proposals located on the rising topography immediately east of Brocton should be monitored to ensure that built form does not disrupt views from the AONB.’*
- *‘Ensure that development proposals enhance the arrangement of interspersed vegetation around Brocton, avoiding the creation of a stark settlement edge and disruption to the setting of the AONB. Ensure that Brocton maintains its wooded approaches which generally constrain the view of the settlement extents from the AONB.’*
- *‘Retain the existing settlement patterns of Walton-on-the Hill and Milford in order to limit the encroachment of suburban influences within the AONB.’*
- *‘Monitor small scale incremental changes in land use which could be incongruous in views from the AONB, particularly around Brocton, Walton-on-the Hill and Weeping Cross which would lead to the suburbanisation of the immediate setting of the AONB boundary.’*
- *‘Consider the adoption of vernacular building styles / materials when considering new development proposals, where appropriate. Avoid the creation of additional visual clutter at the AONB boundary by carefully considering the positioning and design of development within Brocton (reference should be made to the analysis and ‘special characteristics’ of the Formal / Cluster Settlement Type as detailed within the Cannock Chase AONB Design Guide when considering development proposals within Brocton and Milford).’*
- *‘Retain visual links and ensure the availability of long distance views towards the south easterly settlement fringes of Stafford from the AONB.’*

Setting Zone J – Stafford Centre and Farmland Fringe

Management Guidelines (relating to views in and out of Cannock Chase AONB)

- *‘Ensure that proposed developments are not able to compete for dominance with Shugborough Hall in views, maintaining the rich cultural setting and sense of time depth in views from the AONB. Recognise the importance and conserve the distinctive estate features within views from the AONB...’*
- *‘Retain the largely uninterrupted rural view from the parkland at the Shugborough Estate, forming a key feature of the northern extent of the AONB. Ensure that any built development is integrated into the landscape context through the protection of the intact estate character of the area...’*
- *‘Ensure that the floodplains are protected from inappropriate urban development, conserving views from the AONB...’*
- *‘Conserve the rural character of the river valleys, limiting encroachment of suburban influences from Little Haywood and Great Haywood into views from the AONB. Special attention is required where large scale structures and movement are proposed within this tranquil landscape setting.’*

5.0 Sensitivity Assessment

A total of 140 Landscape Assessment Sites have been assessed as part of this sensitivity study, a summary of the results is provided in Table 1 on the following pages. The sensitivity of the sites ranges from Low to High with the large majority falling within the Medium/Low to Medium/High range.

Generally the judgement on the sensitivity of a particular site is based on a combination of factors considered. The final sensitivity rating is however a professional judgement, and in some cases one factor may weigh heavily in the final judgement. As an example a site may be in a relatively poor landscape condition, but may play an important role in the setting or identity of a settlement. The sensitivity rating may be increased for these factors.

There are a number of factors which result in a site being assessed as being of Higher sensitivity. For the small number of sites within the borough assessed as being of High sensitivity these include; a restricted relationship with the existing settlement, a high sensitive land use such as being heavily wooded, a high sensitive context such as inclusion within a conservation area or a combination of these factors.

The Lower sensitivity sites are those where development would have the least impact in terms of landscape. In general, the sites assessed as being of Low sensitivity have a strong influence of existing development sitting within settlements or adjacent to existing development and the majority of Low sensitivity sites are either developed or brownfield sites with derelict buildings/features present. Where sites feature detracting factors such as derelict buildings there may be opportunities for improvement on the current situation through redevelopment.

Figure 6 shows the sensitivity of the Landscape Assessment Sites within the borough. As the assessment is influenced by localised characteristics and context of the sites there is a distribution of sensitivities across the borough with settlements often containing sites with a range of different sensitivities. More sensitive sites include those which are elevated, are judged to have a higher landscape value and/or less connection with the existing settlement. Less sensitive sites tend to be less visually prominent, have a stronger relationship with the existing settlement and feature some detracting factors such as a strong influence of development.

In the south east of the borough the relationship with the Cannock Chase AONB also influences the sensitivity of the sites. The nearest sites to the AONB are those located at Little Haywood to the north and Brocton to the west as well as north of Walton-on-the-Hill south of Stafford town. From the sites at Brocton there is limited inter-visibility with the AONB, however from Little Haywood there is a greater influence with the majority of sites sharing inter-visibility with rising land within the AONB, this is reflected in sensitivity assessments for these sites. These sites are assessed as being of High/Medium sensitivity.

The majority of the sites included within this assessment are intended as additions to existing settlements though there are some exceptions which form a proposed Garden Village and Strategic Development Sites and are intended to establish new settlements. These are discussed further in Section 6.0.

The landscape sensitivity of Land Assessment Sites to residential development is summarised in table one on the following pages. The Full details for each assessment site are set out in Appendix B. In total there are;

- 7 sites of High sensitivity;
- 42 sites of High/Medium sensitivity;
- 44 sites of Medium sensitivity;
- 36 sites of Medium/Low sensitivity; and,
- 11 sites of Low sensitivity;

Table 1 - Landscape Sensitivity Summary Table

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT SITE	SETTLEMENT	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY
BER02	Stafford	High/Medium
BER04	Stafford	High/Medium
BRA01	Bradley	High/Medium
BRO03	Brocton	Medium
BRO04	Brocton	Medium
BRO05	Brocton	Medium/Low
CHE01	Norton Bridge	Medium/Low
CHE03	Cold Meece	High/Medium
CHE04	Cold Meece	High/Medium
CHE05	Cold Meece	High/Medium
CHU01 (a)	Church Eaton	High/Medium
CHU01 (b)	Church Eaton	High/Medium
CHU02	Church Eaton	High
COL02 & COL05	Little Haywood	High
COL04	Little Haywood	High/Medium
COL06	Great Haywood	High/Medium
COL08	Great Haywood	Medium
COL10	Little Haywood / Great Haywood	High/Medium
COL13	Little Haywood	High
COL14	Little Haywood	High
COL17	Great Haywood	Medium
CRE01 & CRE03	Stafford	Medium
CRE02	Stafford	High/Medium
CRE04	Creswell	High/Medium
CRE05	Creswell	High
DOX01	Doxey, Stafford	Medium/Low
ECC01	Eccleshall	Medium/Low
ECC02	Eccleshall	Medium
ECC03	Eccleshall	Medium
ECC06	Eccleshall	High/Medium
ECC07	Eccleshall	High/Medium
ECC09	Eccleshall	High/Medium
ECC10	Cold Meece	Medium/Low
ECC11	Cold Meece	Medium/Low
ECC12	Eccleshall	Medium
ECC14	Eccleshall	High
ECC15	Cold Meece	Medium/Low
ECC16	Eccleshall	Low
ECC18	Eccleshall	Medium
ECC20	Cold Meece	Low

GNO02	Gnosall	Medium/Low
GNO03	Gnosall	High/Medium
GNO04	Gnosall	Medium
GNO05	Gnosall	Medium
GNO06	Gnosall	High/Medium
GNO09	Gnosall	High/Medium
GNO11	Gnosall	Medium
HAU03	Haughton	High/Medium
HAU04	Haughton	High/Medium
HAU05	Haughton	Medium
HAU06	Haughton	Medium
HIG05	Woodseaves	High/Medium
HIG07	Woodseaves	Low
HIG08	Woodseaves	Medium
HIG09	Woodseaves	High/Medium
HIG10	Woodseaves	Medium
HIG11	Woodseaves	Medium/Low
HIG13	Woodseaves	Medium
SITE 6A	Woodseaves	Medium/Low
SITE 07	Woodseaves	Medium/Low
SITE 11	Woodseaves	Medium
HIX01	Hixon	Medium/Low
HIX03	Hixon	Medium
HIX04	Hixon	Medium
HIX05	Hixon	Medium
HIX07	Hixon	Medium/Low
HIX08	Hixon	Medium/Low
HIX09	Hixon	Medium/Low
HIX10	Hixon	Medium/Low
HIX12	Hixon	Medium
HIX13	Hixon	Medium/Low
HIX14	Hixon	Medium/Low
HIX15	Hixon	Medium/Low
HIX16	Hixon	Medium
HIX17	Hixon	Low
HIX18	Hixon	Medium/Low
HOP02	Stafford	Medium
HOP03	Stafford	Low
HOP04	Stafford	High/Medium
HOP05	Stafford	High
HOP07	Hopton	Medium
HOP08	Stafford	Medium/Low
HOP09	Stafford	Medium/Low

HOP10	Hopton	High/Medium
MIL02	Milwich	High/Medium
MIL04	Milwich	High/Medium
SAL01	Salt	Medium
SEI01	Ladfordfields	Medium
SEI03	Seighford	Medium
SEI04	Great Bridgeford	High/Medium
SEI05	Great Bridgeford	High/Medium
SEI08	Great Bridgeford	High/Medium
SEI09	Great Bridgeford	Medium
SEI10	Seighford	Medium
SEI11	Seighford	Medium
SEI12	Seighford	Medium
SEI14	Derrington	High/Medium
SRUR01	Oulton	Medium/Low
SRUR02	Aston by Stone	Medium/Low
SRUR03	Between Meaford and Tittensor	Medium/Low
SRUR04	Stone	Medium
SRUR06	Stone	Medium
SRUR10	Stone	Medium
SRUR11	Stone	Medium
SRUR12	Aston-by-Stone	Medium
SRUR14	Aston-by-Stone	Medium/Low
STAFMB01	Stafford	High/Medium
STAFMB03	Stafford	Medium/Low
STAFMB07	Stafford	Medium/Low
STAFMB09	Stafford	High/Medium
STAFMB12	Stafford	Low
STAFMB13	Stafford	Medium/Low
STAFMB18	Stafford	Medium/Low
STAFMB19	Stafford	Medium/Low
STAFMB20	Stafford	Low
STAFMB21	Stafford	Medium/Low
STAN01	Cotes Heath	High/Medium
STO03	Stone	High/Medium
STO04	Walton/Stone	High/Medium
STO05	Stone	Low
STO06	Stone	Medium
STO07	Stone	Medium/Low
STO08 & STO10	Stone	Medium
STO09	Stone	Low
STO12	Stone	High/Medium

STO13	Stone	Medium
STO14	Walton/Stone	Medium
STO15	Stone	Medium/Low
STO16	Stone	Medium
SWY01	Tittensor	Low
SWY04	Yarnfield	Low
SWY10	Yarnfield	Medium/Low
SWY14	Cold Meece	Medium
SWY20	Cold Meece	Medium/Low
TIX01	Stafford	Medium/Low
TIX02	Stafford	High/Medium
WES02	Weston	High/Medium
WES03	Weston	Medium
WHI01 & MAR01	Whitgreave	High/Medium
WHI02	Whitgreave	High/Medium

6.0 Garden Village and Strategic Development Sites

Three potential Strategic Development locations have been identified within the borough, these are located at Hixon, Redhill and land between Gnosall and Haughton. In addition, a potential location for a Garden Village has been identified at Meecebrook. The following section provides an overview of the landscape sensitivity of the landscape located within these locations. Further details for the Landscape Assessment Sites can be found within Appendix B - Site Assessment Sheets.

Hixon

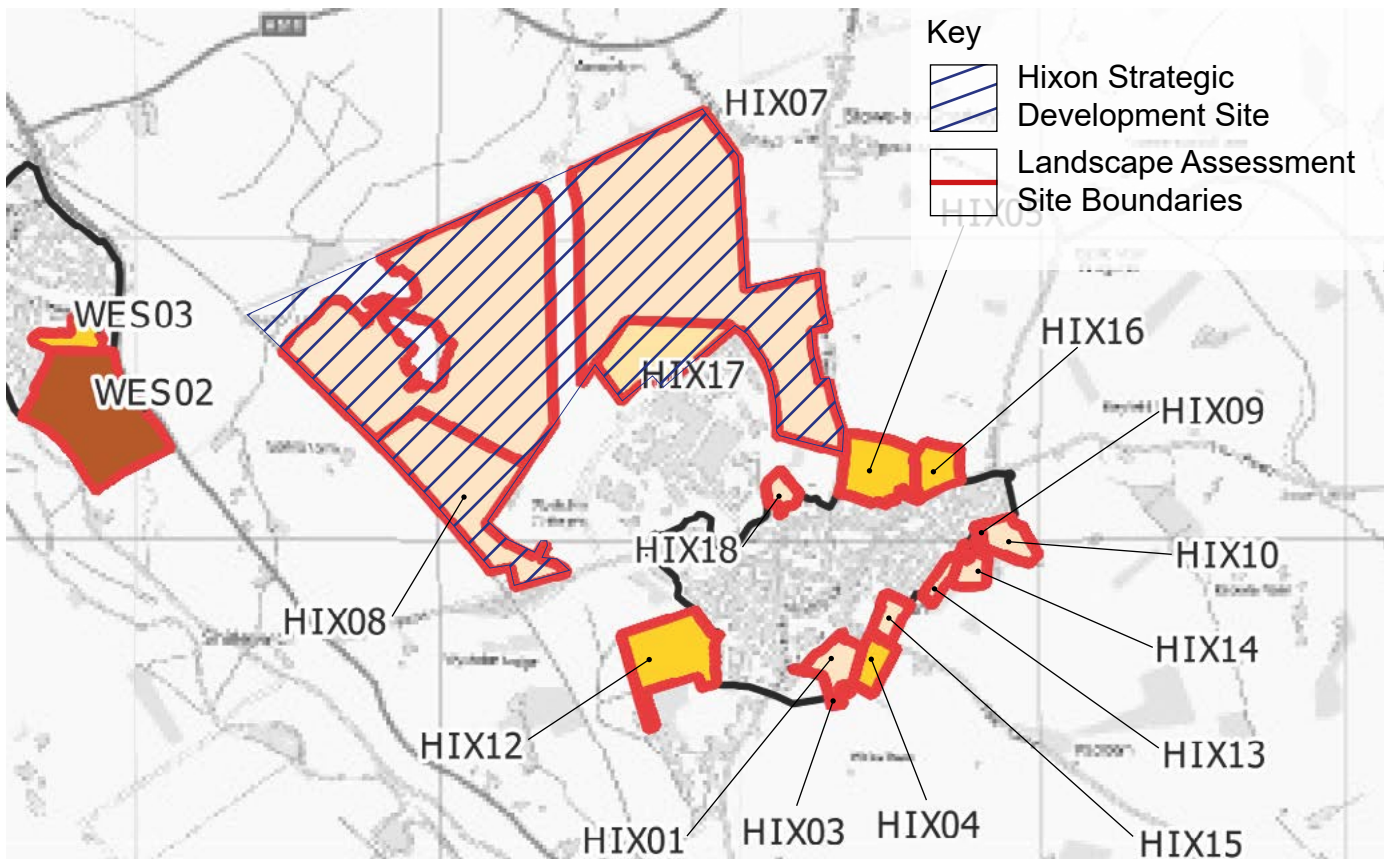
The potential Strategic Development Site identified at Hixon is centred around the former airfield north of the existing settlement and consists of the Landscape Assessment Sites;

- HIX07
- HIX08
- HIX17

The flat nature of the former airfield and the influence of industrial uses upon the landscape results in a lower landscape sensitivity at these sites. It is considered the overall sensitivity of the landscape identified within the Hixon Strategic Development site is Medium/Low.

The sensitivities of these sites are summarised below;

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT SITE	STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITE	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY
HIX07	HIXON	MEDIUM/LOW
HIX08	HIXON	MEDIUM/LOW
HIX17	HIXON	LOW



Hixon Strategic Development Site

Redhill

To the north of Stafford lies the area identified for the potential Redhill Strategic Development Site. This land extends northwards from the existing settlement and covers an extensive area consisting of the following Landscape Assessment sites;

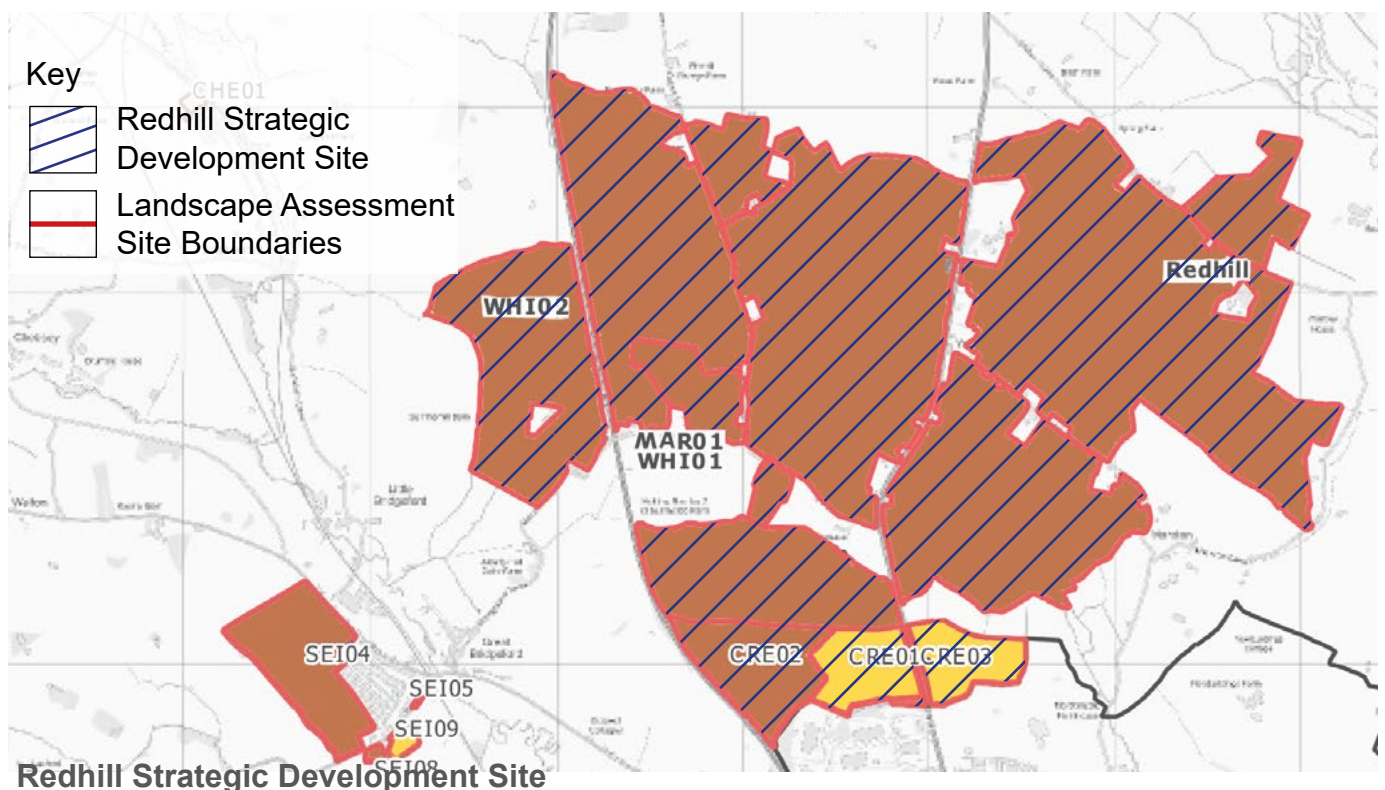
- CRE01/CRE03
- CRE02
- WHI01 & MAR01
- WHI02

The sensitivities of these sites are summarised below;

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT SITE	STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITE	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY
CRE01/03	REDHILL	MEDIUM
CRE02	REDHILL	HIGH/MEDIUM
WHI01 & MAR01	REDHILL	HIGH/MEDIUM
WHI02	REDHILL	HIGH/MEDIUM

The Redhill Strategic Development Site covers an expansive area of land. Site CRE01/03 is considered the least sensitive site within the Strategic Development Site boundary owing in part to its relationship with the existing settlement edge. The remaining sites have a more limited relationship with the existing settlement with sites WHI01 & MAR01 and WHI02 also having a greater relationship with the wider landscape and a greater scenic quality. WHI01 & MAR01 in particular exhibits wide views across the surrounding landscape. The overall landscape sensitivity of the Redhill Strategic Development Site is considered to be High/Medium.

Any masterplan for a Strategic Development Site within this landscape should consider the varying landscape sensitivities within the Strategic Development Site boundary and individual sites to minimise potential effects upon the landscape.



Land between Gnosall and Haughton

Land between Gnosall and Haughton has been identified as a potential Strategic Development Site. The potential site covers agricultural land on either side of the A518 and consists of the Landscape Assessment Sites;

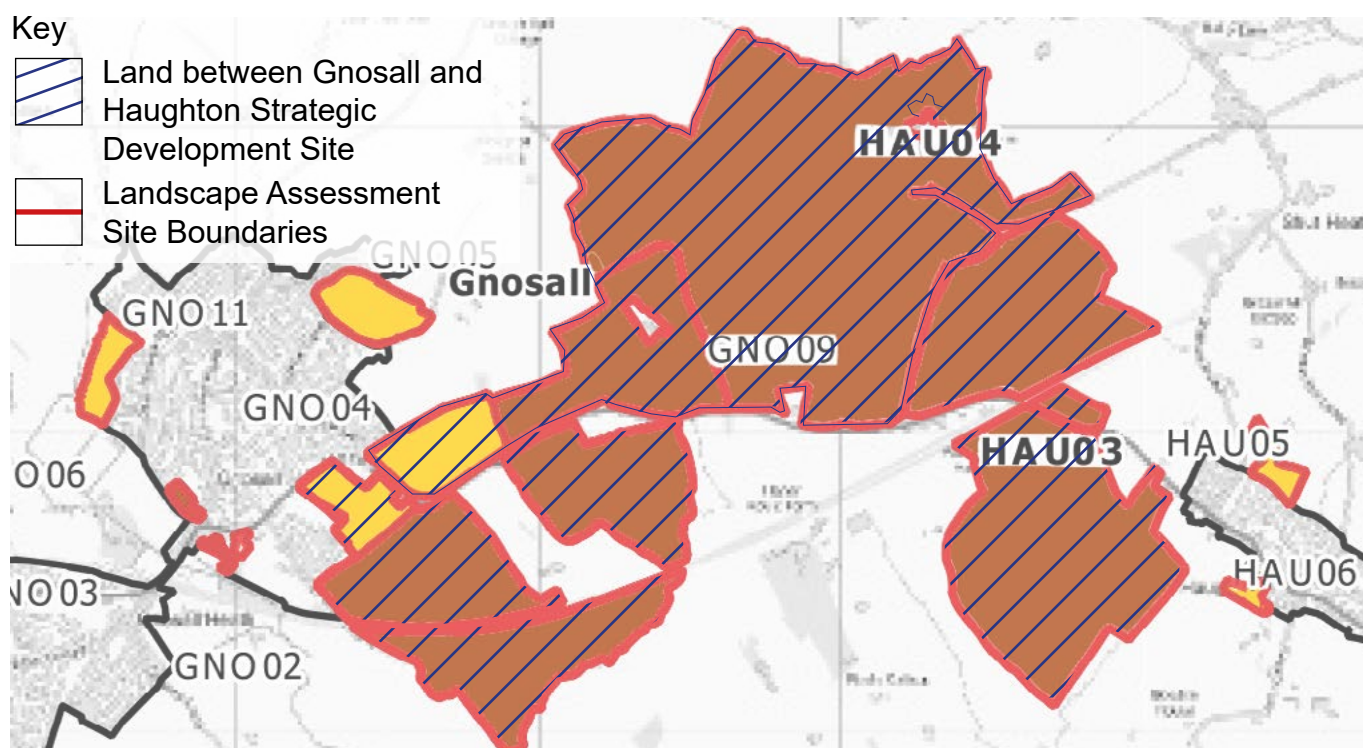
- GNO04
- GNO09
- HAU03
- HAU04

The sensitivities of these sites are summarised below;

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT SITE	STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITE	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY
GNO04	GNOSALL AND HAUGHTON	MEDIUM
GNO09	GNOSALL AND HAUGHTON	HIGH/MEDIUM
HAU03	GNOSALL AND HAUGHTON	HIGH/MEDIUM
HAU04	GNOSALL AND HAUGHTON	HIGH/MEDIUM

The sites within this Strategic Development Site are considered to be of Medium and High/Medium landscape sensitivity. While GNO04, GNO09 and HAU03 have some relationship with existing settlements, the landscape within the Strategic Development Site is mainly located on agricultural land with more limited influence of existing development. The A518 runs through the sites, a detracting factor within a relatively scenic landscape. Overall, the landscape sensitivity of this Strategic Development Site is considered to be High/Medium.

Any masterplan for the Strategic Development Site should consider the specific sensitivities of each site and any designations identified within/adjacent to the sites.



Land between Gnosall and Haughton Strategic Development Site

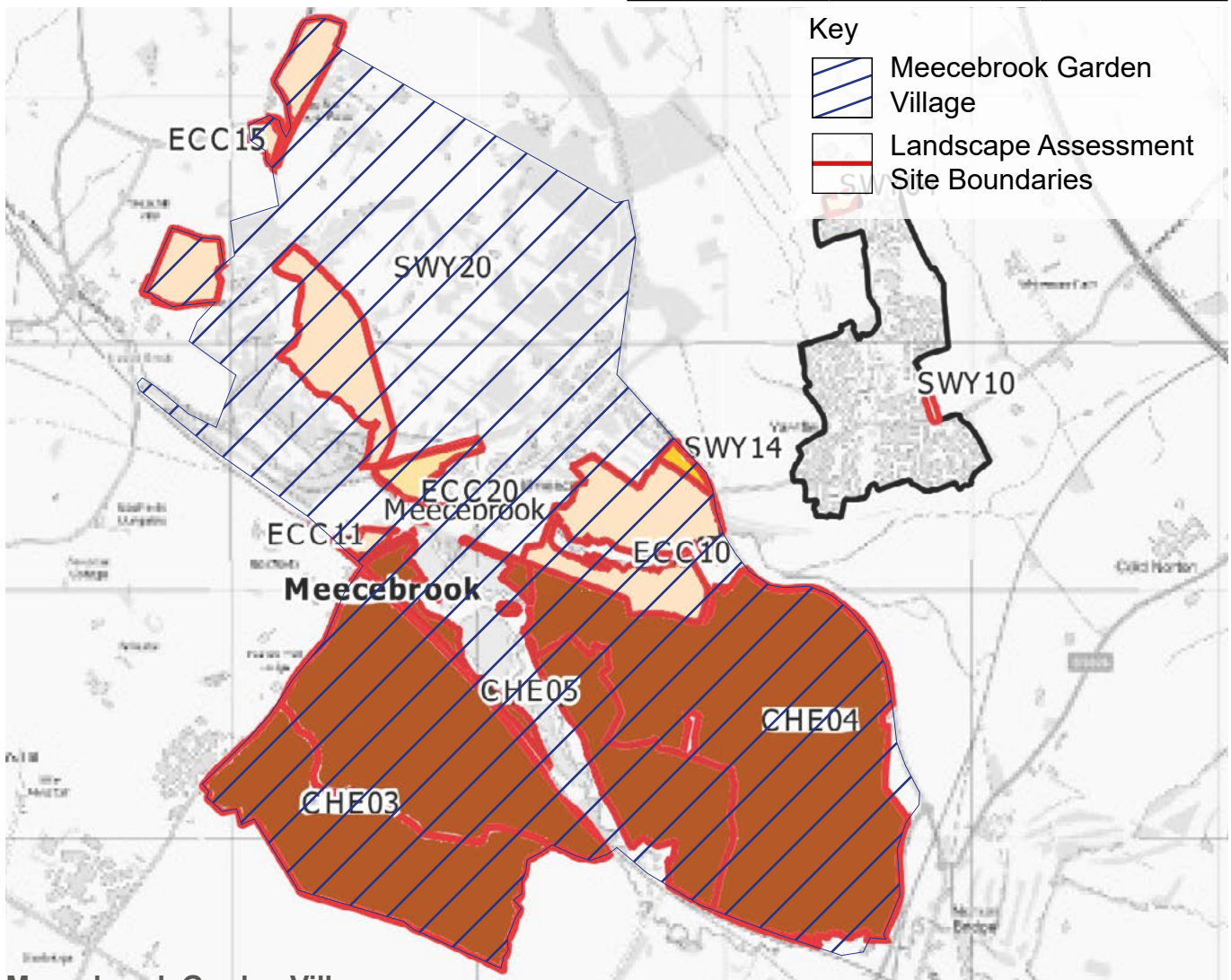
Meecebrook

The potential Meecebrook Garden Village covers a large area of land around Cold Meece including part of the Swynnerton Training Camp. The Garden Village consists of the following Landscape Assessment Sites;

- ECC10
- ECC11
- ECC15
- ECC20
- CHE03
- CHE04
- CHE05
- SWY14
- SWY20

The sensitivities of these sites are summarised below;

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT SITE	GARDEN VILLAGE	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY
ECC10	MEECEBROOK	MEDIUM/LOW
ECC11	MEECEBROOK	MEDIUM/LOW
ECC15	MEECEBROOK	MEDIUM/LOW
ECC20	MEECEBROOK	LOW
CHE03	MEECEBROOK	HIGH/MEDIUM
CHE04	MEECEBROOK	HIGH/MEDIUM
CHE05	MEECEBROOK	HIGH/MEDIUM
SWY14	MEECEBROOK	MEDIUM
SWY20	MEECEBROOK	MEDIUM/LOW



Meecebrook Garden Village

The Meecebrook Garden Village covers an expansive area of varied landscapes and as such contains sites of varying landscape sensitivities. Lower sensitivity sites identified within the Garden Village tend to have a greater influence of existing development such as the Swynnerton Training Camp and industrial units along Swynnerton Road. Sites of higher sensitivity have a greater relationship with the wider landscape. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape within the Garden Village is considered to be Medium.