

# Stafford Borough Council Local Plan 2020-2040

## Potential Sites Consultation - February 2022

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet the needs of the population. The School Organisation Team (SOT) acts on behalf of the Local Authority to carry out this duty and to ensure that resources are used efficiently.

The Borough of Stafford is made up of two areas: 1) Stafford and the surrounding rural area and 2) Stone and the surrounding rural area.

Stafford Borough Council have asked SCC to consider the impact on education of sites identified in the SHELAA which includes 100 sites across Stafford totalling 17,523 dwellings, and 36 sites across Stone totalling 16,870 dwellings.

It is not possible to assess each site individually due to the number and range of sites, and the various combinations of sites that could be brought forward would have different education requirements. Once preferred options/sites have been identified more detail can be provided about the specific education requirements.

The information below gives an overview of the impact of residential development on a school place planning area basis to enable SBC to consider in conjunction with comments from other stakeholders to take an overall view on settlements/sites for the preferred options.

This document provides a summary of each school place planning area but does not include the impact or requirement for additional nursery or SEND provision.

The response is based on current demographics and the assumption that not all the housing is delivered at the same time. Given the period that the revision of the Local Plan covers, circumstances may change which could change education infrastructure requirements.

Where employment sites have been identified with a potential yield of dwellings these have been included in the summary of sites by school place planning area.

High level indicative studies have been undertaken to assess the expansion potential of some existing schools for the purposes of this report. These studies advise whether a school site is (on paper) large enough to accommodate a bigger school based on standard land requirements as stated in DfE guidance 'Area Guidelines for Mainstream Schools – Building Bulletin 103'. High level indicative studies do not take into account the configuration of the school buildings, use of outdoor spaces, capacity of coach parks, vehicular and/or pedestrian access, or the shape/contours/topography of the school site. To achieve the size of expansion required may necessitate partial or significant demolition of current building(s) or a full rebuild which may not be practical/viable.

## Supporting Information

In line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance the School Organisation Team plan school places on a planning area basis; groups of schools based on geographical location, local demographics and other factors such as pupil movement and school phases.

Stafford operates a 2-tier education system with primary phase schools (age 4-11 years) and Secondary phase schools (age 11-16/18 years) and has been split into 6 primary school planning areas and 1 secondary school planning area. Stone operates a 3-tier education system with first schools (age 4-8 years), middle (age 8-13 years) and high schools (age 13-16/18 years) and has been split into 4 first (including 2 rural planning areas with a single school), 1 middle and 1 high school planning area.

School sizes are referred to as Forms of Entry (FE), which are the number of classes of 30 per school year group. For example, a 2FE school would have 2 classes of 30 pupils in every year group (60 pupils per school year group).

Generally, 1,000 new homes equates to 1 FE of additional provision required which is 210 primary school places and 150 secondary school places and 30 post-16 places in a 2-tier system (or 150 first school places, 120 middle school places, 90 high school places and 30 post-16 places in a 3-tier system).

It is possible for schools to operate at half forms of entry for example 1.5FE is 45 children per school year group. Schools with half forms of entry normally operate with classes that are mixed across year groups.

From an educational perspective some schools and governing bodies believe that teaching children from two age groups in one class (mixed age teaching) is beneficial to pupils. However, many educators don't believe this is the most appropriate method to organise and teach pupils, as it can present challenges due to differences in ages and abilities which can affect learning outcomes.

Currently within Stafford Borough 34 of the 56 schools physically located in the area are Academies or Free Schools. This number is growing all the time as new schools open, or maintained schools convert to or become sponsored academies. Academies and Free Schools are independent from the local authority and the Department for Education/Secretary of State would be the decision maker for significant changes to an academy

Irrespective of school governance it is important that the views of schools, Trusts and governing bodies are considered when proposing expansions or new schools, especially where this would require a different class organisation than currently used. It is anticipated that any options that require a change to mixed age teaching may not be the preferred option by the majority of schools.

A development or a combination of small developments in an area of 750+ dwellings may trigger the need for a new primary school and a development or a combination of small developments of 5000+ dwellings for a new secondary school.

It should be made clear to prospective developers that large residential sites of 750+ dwellings (or combination of sites in an area) would be required to provide land for school site(s) in addition to education contributions to mitigate the development. We would seek assurance from SBC that where a number of proposed developments in one area totalled 750+ dwellings land would be safeguarded for education provision and that the developers contribute proportionally to the cost of buying the land.

Whilst this is not an exhaustive list, a new school site would need to be of regular shape, level topography, without significant topographical features that would be considered incongruent with the site's use as a school, it would also need to be drained, free from contamination and other adverse ground conditions, fenced, serviced and suitable for the phase of education proposed.

There would need to be a vehicular access route from the adopted highway to the school site at least sufficient and suitable for construction vehicles and vehicles for the delivery of materials for the construction of the school on the school site until the school opens at which point the vehicular access needs to be of an adaptable nature. Other site requirements may be required, and these will be detailed and discussed when appropriate.

Where existing schools have insufficient land to expand on their current site consideration may be given to allocating additional land adjacent to the school to facilitate growth if this is achievable.

Additional land adjacent to any new school may also need to be safeguarded as education land to ensure future growth.

Consideration is also required of the implications of proposed housing developments on school transport. Children in villages and settlements without local schools may be entitled to home to school transport where the catchment or nearest school is over two miles walking distance at primary age or three miles at secondary age. There would be additional implications in terms of coach park capacity, transport costs, logistics and highway constraints around school sites in these circumstances. This could involve education contributions being sought towards additional school places, larger coach parks, transport costs and highway improvements such as crossing points.

Any proposed development where the catchment and nearest schools are all over the reasonable walking distance noted above may increase the cost to the public purse for school transport. Consideration must be given to the ongoing costs both to the developer and the public purse of transport costs for pupils living on such developments, and the sustainability and environmental impacts of the site(s). S106 contributions may be required to offset any additional costs related to new development. However, prior consideration needs to be given before to whether growth in such areas is sustainable as ultimately the public purse will pick up the cost of school transport when any developer subsidy ends.

New settlements and urban extensions should be expected to meet the full education requirement either through new schools, expansions or use of existing capacity.

Should it not be possible to increase or provide additional capacity to mitigate housing development it may be necessary to transport pupils to areas where there is capacity or the potential for it to be provided. In such circumstances it would be expected that the developer meets these additional transport costs, along with contributions sought towards additional school places, as the need would have arisen as a direct result of their housing development. Provision of additional to school transport in order to provide school places away from the local area impacts on the ability of pupils to use sustainable modes of travel to attend school. This could impact on the local highway infrastructure from the potential increase in vehicles and impacts negatively on proposals to reduce carbon emissions.

Education contributions will be sought towards mitigating the impact of new housing developments.



## Summary of Settlements within Stafford Borough and Associated School Place Planning Areas

The table below is a summary and should be read with the remainder of this document for detail on each planning area.

Comments for primary and secondary need to be read in conjunction with each other as it must be possible to mitigate development at all education phases.

Red – No mitigation possible on existing sites at all required education phases

Orange – mitigation possible at all education phases but only in specific school catchment area within the planning area and/or with new school(s)

Yellow – mitigation possible at all education phases with capacity increases or potential expansions

Green – mitigation possible at all education phases

High level indicative studies have been undertaken to assess the expansion potential of some existing schools for the purposes of this report. These studies advise whether a school site is (on paper) large enough to accommodate a larger school based on standard land requirements as stated in DfE guidance. High level indicative studies therefore do not take into account the configuration of the school buildings, use of outdoor spaces, capacity of coach parks, vehicular and/or pedestrian access. To achieve the size of expansion required may necessitate partial or significant demolition of current building(s) or a full rebuild which may not be practical/viable.

### **Stafford and Surrounding Rural Area – see full text for settlements covered and schools within planning areas**

#### **Stafford Secondary Planning Area**

6 Secondary Schools (will increase to 7)

Expected to be 2.5Fe available places across Stafford secondary planning area based on current pupil movement and modelling; this equates to around 2,500 new homes that could be mitigated across the town and surrounding rural area.

**Any available capacity is likely to be at schools in the South-west of the town including King Edward VI High School, Stafford Manor and Blessed William Howard.**

The new secondary school at Stafford North SDL does not have sufficient land to increase the size of school planned. Additional secondary school places have recently been delivered at Sir Graham Balfour and the school only has very limited potential remaining for further expansion. High level indicative studies suggest further expansion may not be practical or financially viable (read full report for Stafford Secondary planning area).  
Of the remaining five schools high level indicative studies suggest that on paper the sites are large enough to accommodate some expansion.

**All of the primary planning areas below fall within the Stafford Secondary Planning Area.**

**Stafford Primary Planning Areas**

Primary Planning Area	Primary Capacity	Primary Additional Notes / Associated Secondary Planning Area
<p>Stafford North</p> <p>6 primary schools (will increase to 8)</p>	<p>Expected to be no available places across Stafford North planning area based on current pupil movement and modelling.</p> <p>High level indicative studies suggest that on paper primary school sites in this area are not large enough to accommodate expansion.</p> <p>The only exception is currently there may be potential for a small increase in capacity within in existing accommodation which would equate to around 400 new homes; however this would require a school to go from 1FE to 1.5FE and would require mixed aged teaching which may not be practical and/or achievable.</p>	<p>Whilst there may be some limited potential to increase primary school places at existing school(s) in this planning area to mitigate up to 400 new homes, the associated school(s) fall within the secondary school catchment area of Sir Graham Balfour and is close to the new secondary school site at Stafford North SDL. Therefore whilst 400 new homes may be mitigated at primary phase, it may not be possible to mitigate these homes at secondary phase.</p> <p>Part of this planning area falls into the catchment area of Weston Road Academy (which may have limited potential for expansion based on high level indicative studies – read full report for Stafford Secondary planning area). There is no potential to mitigate the impact on primary provision at existing schools in this catchment and any development proposed would need to be sufficient to deliver a new primary school on-site (750+ dwellings).</p>

Primary Planning Area	Primary Capacity	Primary Additional Notes / Associated Secondary Planning Area
<p>Stafford Town</p> <p>9 primary schools</p>	<p>Expected to be 0.5Fe available places across Stafford Town planning area based on current pupil movement and modelling; this equates to around 500 new homes that could be mitigated.</p> <p>High level indicative studies suggest that on paper there are sufficient options to provide additional primary school places in this area.</p> <p>New school provision would only be required should large scale development be proposed.</p>	<p>Any available capacity is likely to be at primary schools in the South-west mirroring the area of expected availability at secondary schools.</p>
Primary Planning Area	Primary Capacity	Primary Additional Notes / Associated Secondary Planning Area
<p>Stafford South</p> <p>6 primary schools</p>	<p>Expected to be no available places across Stafford South planning area based on current pupil movement and modelling.</p> <p>High level indicative studies suggest that on paper primary school sites in this area are not large enough to accommodate expansion.</p>	<p>Primary schools in the planning area are located within the catchment area of Walton High School which may have limited potential for expansion based on high level indicative studies (read full report for Stafford Secondary planning area).</p> <p>As high-level indicative studies suggest there is no potential to mitigate the impact on primary provision at existing schools in this planning area, any development proposed would need to be sufficient to deliver a new primary school on-site (750+ dwellings).</p>

Primary Planning Area	Primary Capacity	Primary Additional Notes / Associated Secondary Planning Area
<p>Stafford West</p> <p>2 primary schools (will increase to 3)</p>	<p>Expected to be sufficient options in the planning area to mitigate up to 1,000 new homes, either by a limited number of available places and/or increase in capacity/expansions to school(s) based on current pupil movement and modelling.</p> <p>Any available capacity is likely to be at Doxey Primary School as the school has accommodation available for a 0.5FE PAN increase.</p> <p>There is no potential to expand Cooper Perry Primary School on its current site.</p>	<p>Doxey Primary and the location of the proposed new school at Stafford West SDL are both located within the catchment area of King Edward VI High School for secondary provision (read full report for Stafford Secondary planning area).</p>
Primary Planning Area	Primary Capacity	Primary Additional Notes / Associated Secondary Planning Area
<p>Stafford Rural 1</p> <p>6 primary schools</p>	<p>The schools in this planning area each serve individual rural settlements/ villages.</p> <p>There are expected to be no available places across Stafford Rural 1 based on current pupil movement and modelling.</p> <p>High level indicative studies suggest expansion may be possible at Gnosall St. Lawrence CofE Primary Academy and Woodseaves CE Primary Academy.</p> <p>Bishop Lonsdale has recently been expanded and it is not possible to mitigate further new housing in the catchment area of the school.</p>	<p>The schools in this primary planning area predominantly fall into the catchment area of King Edward VI High School (read full report for Stafford Secondary planning area).</p> <p>Bishop Lonsdale falls within the catchment area of Sir Graham Balfour.</p> <p>Due to the rural location of this planning area, new development may require transport to secondary school provision which would have additional implications in terms of transport costs, logistics and highway constraints around school sites. This could involve education contributions being sought towards additional school places, transport costs, highway improvements such as crossing points, and enlargement of the school coach park.</p>



Primary Planning Area	Primary Capacity	Primary Additional Notes / Associated Secondary Planning Area
<p>Stafford Rural 2</p> <p>5 primary schools</p>	<p>The schools in this planning area each serve individual rural settlements/ villages.</p> <p>There are expected to be extremely limited available places across the Stafford Rural 2 planning area based on current pupil movement and modelling. Some schools may be able to mitigate small scale residential developments within existing capacity, but this would need to be assessed on a site by site basis.</p>	<p>Primary schools in this planning area predominantly fall into the catchment area of Weston Road Academy which may have limited potential for expansion based on high level indicative studies (read full report for Stafford Secondary planning area).</p> <p>Due to the rural location of this planning area, new development may require transport to secondary school provision which would have additional implications in terms of transport costs, logistics and highway constraints around school sites. This could involve education contributions being sought towards additional school places, transport costs, highway improvements such as crossing points, and enlargement of the school coach park.</p>

**Stone and Surrounding Rural Area – see full text for settlements covered and schools within the planning areas****Stone High Planning Area**

1 High School

Expected to be no available places across Stone High planning area based on current pupil movement and modelling.

Additional high school places have recently been delivered at Alleyne's Academy to mitigate the impact of housing identified in the current adopted Local Plan. This school is split across 2 sites and high-level indicative studies suggest that on paper the high school site(s) are not large enough to accommodate any further expansion.

**All of the below first and middle planning areas below fall within the Stone High planning area.**

**It is not possible to mitigate the impact of any further housing development in Stone High planning area and therefore development cannot be mitigated across all phases (First, Middle and High) for the areas below.**

**Stone Middle Planning Area**

2 Middle Schools

Expected to be no available places across Stone Middle planning area based on current pupil movement and modelling.

Projects have recently been completed at both of the middle schools in this planning area which has allowed a small increase in capacity. High level indicative studies suggest that on paper there may be potential for limited further expansion at one of the schools, however this may not be practical or financially viable.

Whilst there may be some limited potential to increase middle school places in this planning area, the associated school(s) fall within the high school planning area of Stone High (Alleyne's Academy); **it is not possible to mitigate new homes at high phase.**

**All of the below first and middle planning areas below fall within the Stone High planning area.**

<b>Stone First and Middle Planning Areas</b>		
First Planning Area	First School Capacity	First School Additional Notes / Associated High Planning Area
<b>Stone Town</b>  (7 First Schools)	<p>Expected up to 1 FE available places across Stone Town First planning area schools based on current pupil movement and modelling.</p> <p>High level indicative studies suggest some school sites may be large enough to accommodate limited expansion.</p>	<p>Whilst there may be some available first places in the planning area, the associated school(s) fall within the high school planning area of Stone High (Alleyne's Academy); <b>it is not possible to mitigate new homes at high phase.</b></p>
<b>Stone Rural 1</b>  (2 First Schools)	<p>Expected no available places across Stone Rural 1 based on current pupil movement and modelling.</p> <p>High level indicative studies suggest that on paper the sites may be large enough to accommodate some expansion.</p>	<p>Whilst high level indicative studies suggest there may be some potential to increase First school places in the planning area, the associated school(s) fall within the high school planning area of Stone High (Alleyne's Academy); <b>it is not possible to mitigate new homes at high phase.</b></p>
<b>Standon and Milwich Rural Settlements</b>  (2 schools)	<p>The 2 schools that serve these rural settlements are expected to have no available places.</p> <p>May be possible to mitigate the impact of small windfall site(s) at first schools in the settlements but this would need to be assessed on a site-by-site basis.</p>	<p>Whilst it may be possible to mitigate small numbers of windfall dwellings at first school phase, the associated school(s) fall within the high school planning area of Stone High (Alleyne's Academy); <b>it is not possible to mitigate new homes at high phase.</b></p> <p>Due to the rural location of the area, new development may require transport to high school provision and have implications such as transport costs, logistics and highway constraints around school sites. This could involve contributions being sought towards additional school places, transport, highway improvements such as crossing points, and enlargement of a school coach park.</p>