

Stafford Borough 2012 Strategic Housing Market Assessment

**Final Report for Stafford Borough Council
September 2012**

Main Contact: Michael Bullock

arc⁴ Ltd

T: 0191 386 0026

F: 07092 158 162

Email: michael.bullock@arc4.co.uk

Website: www.arc4.co.uk

Publishing Date: September 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction.....	8
Background and objectives.....	8
Definitions.....	8
SHMA Guidance.....	9
NPPF requirements	11
Geography.....	11
Research methodology.....	15
Report structure.....	15
2. Policy and strategic review.....	16
Introduction.....	16
National policy	16
Regional and Sub Regional Strategic Context	23
Concluding comments	23
3. Stafford Borough Housing Market Context.....	24
Introduction.....	24
House prices and trends.....	24
Relative affordability	27
Household migration and search behaviour.....	29
Travel to work trends	29
Concluding comments	32
4. Strategic Housing Market Assessment Core Outputs.....	33
Introduction.....	33
Core Output 1: Estimates of current dwellings in terms of size, type, condition, tenure	33
Core Output 2: Past and current housing market trends; balance between supply and demand; key drivers	39
Core Output 3: Future households	52
Core Output 4: Current households in need	52
Core Output 5: Future households requiring affordable housing.....	55
Core Output 6: Future households requiring market housing	55
Core Output 7: Size of affordable housing required.....	55
The new delivery model for affordable housing.....	58
Core Output 8: Estimates of household groups who have particular housing requirements	59
5. Conclusion: policy and strategic issues	64
Introduction to Technical Appendices	69
Technical Appendix A: Housing need calculations	70
Technical Appendix B: Monitoring and updating.....	82
Technical Appendix C: Statement of conformity to SHMA guidance	85

Executive Summary

Introduction

The 2012 Stafford Borough Strategic Housing Market Assessment is a major research study which will help to shape the future planning and housing policies of the area. The research will help inform the production of the Local Plan and Housing Strategies. This research provides an up-to-date analysis of the social, economic, housing and demographic situation across the District.

The study has been carried out by arc⁴ Ltd and has included:

- A review of existing data including housing waiting lists, emerging data from the 2011 census, house price trends and migration patterns; and
- Interviews with stakeholders.

The findings from the study will provide a robust and defensible evidence base for future policy development which conforms to the Government's Strategic Housing Market Assessment guidance.

Housing market context

House prices

Median house prices across Stafford Borough have increased from £65,625 in 2000 to £165,000 in 2011, an increase of 151.4%. Higher priced wards (where median prices in 2012 exceed £250,000) include Church Eaton, Milford and Milwich; lower priced wards (where median prices are less than £120,000) include Highfields and Western Downs, Common, Coton and Forebridge.

Dwelling stock

There are currently a total of 56,467 residential dwellings across Stafford Borough of which 54,437 (96.4%) are occupied, 1,898 (3.4%) are vacant and 132 (0.2%) are second homes. In terms of dwelling stock, 2011 Valuation Offices Agency reports that:

- 74.9% of properties are houses (29% detached, 27.5% semi-detached and 18.3% terraced), 10.9% are flats, 10.9% are bungalows and for 3.3% of dwellings, the type is not known;
- 6.9% have one bedroom, 22.7% have two bedrooms, 49.7% have three bedrooms, 17% have four or more bedrooms and for 3.7% of properties the number of bedrooms are not known;
- 12.9% of dwellings are social rented and 87.1% are private sector (owner occupied and private rented)¹;

¹ DCLC Table 100 Dwelling Stock Tenure and District 2011

- There are 1,898 vacant properties (3.4% of total dwelling stock) of whom 772 (1.4%) are classed as long-term empty, and there are 132 second homes located across the Borough.

Demographic drivers

The population of Stafford Borough is 130,800² with CLG 2010-based population projections suggesting an increase to 146,000 by 2035¹.

Over the next few decades, the age profile of residents in Stafford is expected to change dramatically. There will be a considerable 'demographic shift' with both the number and proportion of older people increasing. Overall, 2010-based population projections the number of people aged 65 and over are projected to increase by 45.5% (or by 15,800) by 2035; the number of 75+ residents is expected to increase by 101.7% (or by 11,700) by 2035.

Economic drivers

Across Stafford, lower quartile earnings³ are £18,432 (compared with £17,430 regionally) and median earnings are £26,603 (compared with £24,466 regionally)

68.2% of people in employment work within Stafford⁴. Of the 31.8% who work outside the Borough, 8.5% work in Stoke-on-Trent, 19.2% work elsewhere in the West Midlands and 4.2% work outside the West Midlands.

Market areas

The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) suggests that a housing market is self-contained if upwards of 70% of moves (migration and travel to work) take place within a defined area.

An analysis of 2001 census data indicates that 3,504 households had moved in the year preceding the census and of these households 62.9% had moved from outside Stafford Borough, suggesting that the Borough is not self-contained in terms of migration. More recent data on migration clearly demonstrates strong linkages with neighbouring Stoke on Trent and Cannock Chase, suggesting that Stafford is part of a larger housing market area.

In terms of travel to work, 2001 census data reported that 68.2% of residents lived and worked in Stafford Borough and a further 27.6% worked elsewhere in the West Midlands (notably Stoke on Trent) and there Stafford is part of a broader functional market which extends sub-regionally into Stoke on Trent.

² 2011 Census

³ 2011 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings via NOMIS

⁴ 2001 Census

Housing need and affordable housing

Housing need is defined as ‘the quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance’. A key element of the study is to explore the scale of housing need and the extent to which additional affordable housing is needed.

Affordable housing is defined as either social/affordable rented or intermediate housing which is provided and made available to eligible households (i.e. those who lack their own housing or live in unsuitable housing) who cannot afford to meet their needs through the market. Intermediate affordable housing is housing at prices and rents above those of social rents, but below market prices or rents.

The scale of affordable requirements has been assessed by taking into account the annual need from existing and newly-forming households within Stafford Borough using the Homesfirst choice-based lettings dataset and comparing this with the supply of affordable (social/affordable rent and intermediate tenure dwellings). The overall net shortfall is **210 affordable dwellings** across Stafford Borough each year over the Plan Period to 2031. This figure is a measure of the extent to which the requirement for affordable housing is greater than the current supply. Table ES1 provides a summary of annual affordable shortfalls by delivery area which suggests a particular shortfall in smaller dwellings. Housing Waiting List figures from the 2011 CLG Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix suggests that 90.9% of need is for smaller one and two bedroom dwellings and 9.1% from properties with three or more bedrooms. Both sources of evidence indicate the priority to delivery smaller affordable dwellings across Stafford Borough.

Table ES1 Annual affordable housing requirements by property size and designation (general needs/older person) over the Plan Period to 2031

Locality	Designation and Bedroom size			
	General Needs		Older	Total
	Smaller 1/2 Bed	Larger 3+ Bed	All Sizes	
Stafford Town	125	-5	29	149
Stone Town	15	-3	9	21
Other Areas	32	-9	17	40
Stafford Borough Total	172	-17	55	210

Market demand

Household projection indicate that the total number of households across Stafford Borough is set to increase at a rate of around 500 each year which equates with the target for new housing delivery. Based on a policy of 30% affordable and 70% open market delivery, a total of 350 new open market dwellings could be built each year. Analysis of the dwellings built over the period 2010 to 2012 indicates that:

- 42.5% of new building has taken place in Stafford Town, 14.2% in Stone and 43.2% elsewhere in the Borough;
- 68.5% of new dwellings have been houses, 29.6% flats and 1.6% bungalows;

- 21.3% have been one bedroom, 22.9% two bedrooms, 32.7% three bedrooms and 23% four or more bedrooms.

Dwellings built in urban areas have tended to be smaller, with 56.7% of new dwellings in Stafford Town having one or two bedrooms along with 46.9% in Stone compared with 31.2% elsewhere. Across Stafford District 32.7% of new dwellings have three bedrooms and this proportion does not vary considerably by sub-area. However, the proportion of larger 4 or more bedroom dwellings was highest in the area outside Stafford and Stone (33.1%). In terms of future provision, a greater balance in favour of larger family homes and appropriately priced homes for first-time buyers is suggested based on discussions with estate agents.

Older people and adaptations

Addressing the accommodation requirements of older people is going to become a major strategic challenge for the Council over the next few decades, with the number of residents aged 65 or over expected to increase dramatically.

Similar SHMA studies indicate that the majority of older people want to continue to live in their current home with support when needed although there is also interest in a variety of options including renting from Registered Providers, renting sheltered accommodation, extra care provision and buying on the open market. This suggests a need to continue to diversify the range of older persons' housing provision. Additionally, providing a wider range of older persons' accommodation has the potential to free-up larger family accommodation.

1. Introduction

Background and objectives

- 1.1 arc⁴ Limited was commissioned in May 2012 to carry out a comprehensive Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for Stafford Borough.
- 1.2 This research conforms to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) Strategic Housing Market Assessment Guidance and provides a robust and defensible evidence base for future policy development. The research focuses on four core areas: a review of housing markets; an assessment of housing need and affordable requirements; a review of general market requirements; and provides policy recommendations.

Definitions

- 1.3 A series of terms are used in work of this nature. To avoid ambiguities, these terms are clearly defined as follows:

Housing demand is the quantity of housing that households are willing and able to buy or rent.

Housing need is the quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance.

Housing markets are geographical areas defined by household demand and preferences for housing. They reflect the key functional linkages between places where people live and work.

Housing requirement is the combination of both housing need and housing demand.

- 1.4 Definitions relating to affordable housing have been revised in the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012):

Affordable housing: Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing. Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning

SHMA Guidance

- 1.5 In August 2007, the CLG published Strategic Housing Market Assessments: Practice Guidance Version 2. This is the frame of reference for this report. The guidance brings together and builds upon the key elements of existing guidance on housing market and housing needs assessments and replaces the following Government guidance:
- Local Housing Needs Assessment: A Guide to Good Practice (DETR, 2000);
 - Housing Market Assessment Manual (ODPM, 2004).
- 1.6 The CLG states that the guidance should be read in conjunction with the ‘Identifying Sub-Regional Market areas Advice Note’ (CLG, 2007).
- 1.7 Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) are particularly valuable in assisting policy development, decision making and resource allocation, in particular by:
- Thinking regionally and long-term about housing need and demand;
 - Providing robust evidence to inform policy debate, particularly around the provision of both market and affordable housing, including type, size and tenure mix;
 - Understanding the drivers and trajectories of housing markets.
- 1.8 SHMAs are considered robust and credible if, as a minimum, they provide all of the core outputs and meet the requirements of the process criteria presented in the SHMA Guidance. Table 1.1 summarises the core outputs which are required through the SHMA guidance. Table 1.2 presents the process checklist which needs to be adhered to in SHMA research. Appendix C comments on how each aspect of the process checklist has been adhered to in this research.

Table 1.1 Strategic Housing Market Assessment core outputs

Strategic Housing Market Assessment core outputs	
1	Estimate of current dwellings in terms of size, type, condition, tenure.
2	Analysis of past and current housing market trends, including balance between supply and demand in different housing sectors and price/affordability. Description of key drivers underpinning the housing market.
3	Estimate of total future number of households, broken down by age and type where possible.
4	Estimate of current number of households in housing need.
5	Estimate of future households that will require affordable housing.
6	Estimate of future households requiring market housing.
7	Estimate of the size of affordable housing required.
8	Estimate of household groups who have particular housing requirements including: families, older people, key workers, black and minority ethnic groups, disabled people, young people, Gypsies and Travellers.

Table 1.2 Strategic Housing Market Assessment process checklist

Strategic Housing Market Assessment process checklist	
1	Approach to identifying Market area(s) is consistent with other approaches to identifying Market areas within the region.
2	Housing market conditions are assessed within the context of the Market area.
3	Involves key stakeholders, including house builders.
4	Contains a full technical justification of the methods employed, with any limitations noted.
5	Assumptions, judgements and findings are fully justified and presented in an open and transparent manner.
6	Uses and reports upon effective quality control mechanisms.
7	Explains how the assessment findings have been monitored and updated (where appropriate) since it was originally undertaken.

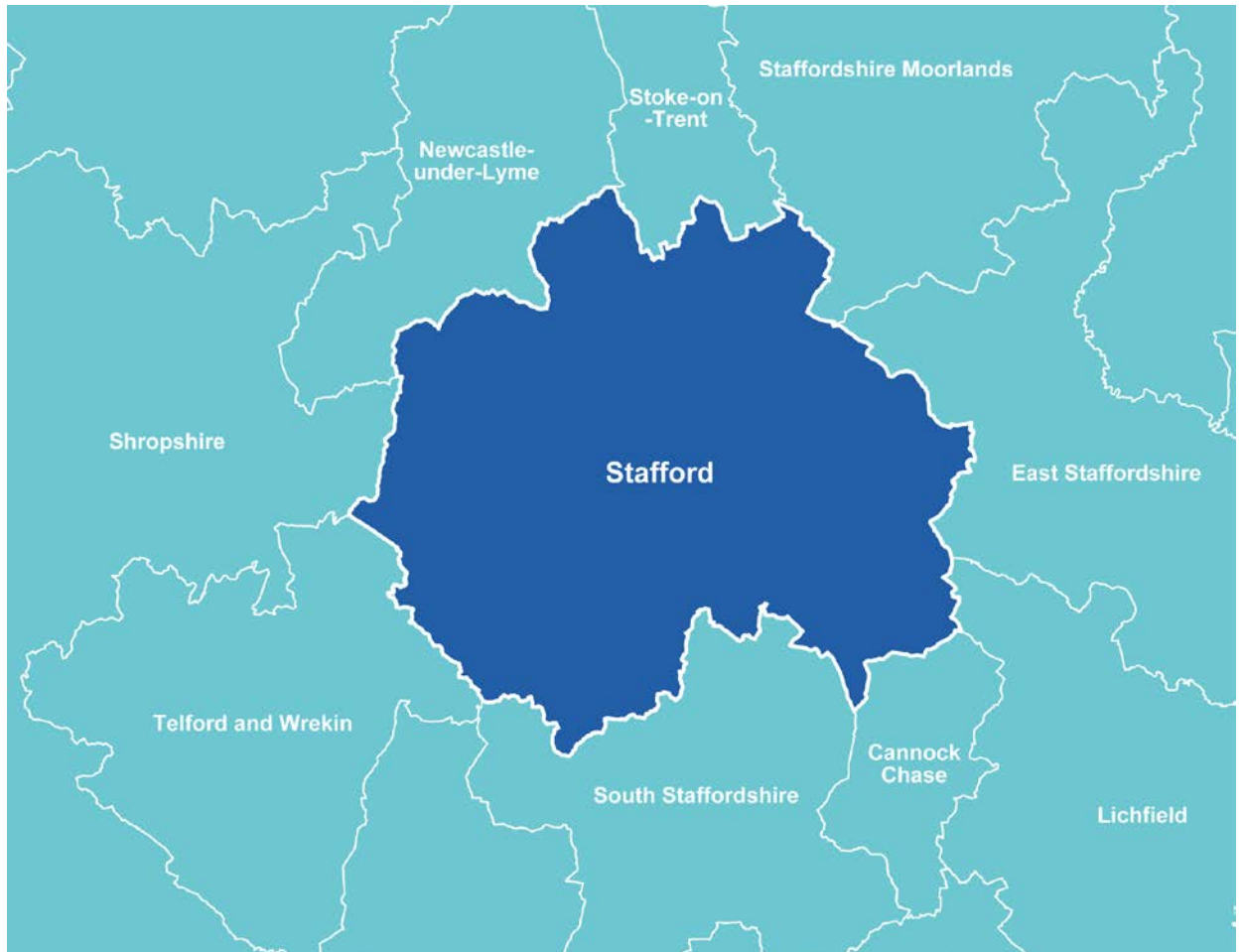
NPPF requirements

- 1.9 Local planning policies need to be grounded in robust and transparent evidence and key components of the evidence base include: a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The SHMA should assess and identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures the local population is likely to need over the Local Plan period which:
- Meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change;
 - Addresses the need for all types of housing, including affordable housing and the needs of different groups in the community (such as families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes); and
 - Caters for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand.
- 1.10 This report provides the first key piece of evidence to underpin planning policy, namely a SHMA which delivers the core outputs required through CLG SHMA guidance. Specifically, this research provides:
- Evidence for local authorities to help them plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);
 - Identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and
 - Identified affordable housing requirements.

Geography

- 1.11 Map 1.1 presents the geographical context of Stafford Borough. Map 1.2 presents the wards of the Borough. Map 1.3 presents the Parishes of the Borough.

Map 1.1 Stafford Borough in its geographical context



Map 1.2 Stafford Borough wards



Map 1.3 Stafford Borough Parishes



Research methodology

- 1.12 The Stafford Borough SHMA has been overseen by a Housing Market Partnership comprising Council housing and planning officers. There has been engagement with a range of stakeholders throughout the research process including developers/builders, Registered Provider representatives, Estate Agents and Private Lettings Agents.
- 1.13 To deliver the SHMA, a multi-method approach was adopted, which comprised:
- Stakeholders consultation through an on-line survey to help ascertain their views on the current housing market and the key strategic housing issues for Stafford Borough. Some telephone interviews and face-to-face discussions have also been carried out. Engagement with key stakeholders including Local Housing and Planning Authority representatives, Registered Providers, Estate Agents, Lettings Agents, Developers, Supporting People representatives has taken place;
 - A review of relevant secondary data including the 2001 and 2011 census, house price trends, CORE lettings data, Housing Register information and population and household projections.

Report structure

- 1.14 The Stafford Borough 2012 SHMA report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 2 reviews the national and regional **policy context** within which the research needs to be positioned;
 - Chapter 3 considers the Stafford **housing market context**, in particular linkages with neighbouring authorities. This is achieved by reviewing migration and travel to work patterns and house price trends;
 - Chapter 4 presents **SHMA core outputs** and summarises more detailed information presented in technical appendices accompanying this report;
 - Chapter 5 reviews **general market demand**; and
 - Chapter 6 **concludes** the report with a view on the current and future housing market and strategic issues.
- 1.15 A set of technical appendices accompanies this report:
- Housing need (Appendix A);
 - Monitoring and updating (Appendix B); and
 - Statement of conformity to SHMA guidance (Appendix C).

2. Policy and strategic review

Introduction

- 2.1 Since May 2010 the coalition Government has embarked upon a radical and sustained programme of reform and change of both housing and planning. Set within the context of national austerity measures outlined in the Budget and Comprehensive Spending Review, at a time of significant reductions in public sector spending.
- 2.2 Removal of the regional tier of government and its related strategies⁵, structures and funding mechanisms, has created a policy vacuum which local strategists and planners need to respond to within the context of the Government's planning and social housing reform agenda. With an ambitious programme of policy reform well underway, this is a time of significant change for local strategic housing and planning, both in terms of policy and practice. This section of the report briefly summarises some of the key changes underway within the national and regional/sub-regional policy contexts, upon which this research has a bearing.

National policy

- 2.3 The Department for Communities and Local Government has outlined what the Government wants to achieve in terms of housing as:
- Increase the number of houses available to buy and rent, including affordable housing;
 - Improve the flexibility of social housing (increasing mobility and choice) and promote homeownership;
 - Protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged by tackling homelessness and support people to stay in their homes; and
 - Make sure that homes are of high quality and sustainable.
- 2.4 What follows is a brief summary of some of the key elements of the Government's national policy agenda, including:
- Comprehensive Spending Review headlines;
 - The Local Growth White Paper;
 - The Welfare Reform Bill and housing benefit reform;
 - Social housing reform;
 - Reform of council housing finance;

⁵ Regional Spatial Strategies have not yet formally been revoked but this is the Government's intention

- The new Affordable Rent model;
- The National Planning Policy Framework;
- The Localism Act; and
- The National Housing Strategy.

Comprehensive Spending Review

- 2.5 Investment plans for the period April 2011 to March 2015 were outlined in the Comprehensive Spending Review of 20th October 2010.
- 2.6 Investment in new affordable housing is to be met through capital investment (of up to £2.5bn) with the balance raised through new Affordable Rent tenancies offered to new social rented tenants at 80% of market rents.
- 2.7 Where this combination of higher rent and lower grant is insufficient to make new schemes viable, Registered Providers (RPs) will be expected to convert existing social rent tenancies to affordable rent (or intermediate tenure for sale) when properties are vacated to cross-subsidise new provision.

Local Growth White Paper

- 2.8 The Local Growth White Paper sets out the Government's approach to local economic growth and new ways of achieving it. Housing needs should be seen within this context.
- 2.9 Regional Development Agencies have been replaced with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and a Regional Growth Fund of £1.4bn has been introduced to create jobs and growth in places currently heavily dependent on the public sector.
- 2.10 The role of councils in supporting growth is specified, with the need to support growth through a responsive supply of land, use of land assets to lever in private investment, and the need to support local people and businesses, including regeneration. The Paper also makes reference to councils leading efforts to support and improve the health and well being of their local populations.
- 2.11 In terms of 'increasing confidence to invest', the agenda centres on reform of the planning system, and incentivising councils to deliver sustainable economic development.

The Welfare Reform Bill and housing benefit reform

- 2.12 The Welfare Reform Bill introduces Universal Credit as well as changes to housing benefit and other welfare benefits. The Bill also introduces a new 'personal independence payment' to replace the existing disability living allowance.

- 2.13 In addition, the Bill gives the Government powers to implement housing benefit reforms outlined in the June 2010 Budget and the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, these include:
- Introducing a size criteria to the calculation of housing benefit for social sector tenants;
 - Up-rating future Local Housing Allowance rates in line with Consumer Price Index rather than actual rents (from April 2013); and
 - Introducing household benefit caps of £500 per week for couples and £350 per week for single claimants.
- 2.14 Changes already introduced to housing benefit following the June 2010 Budget include:
- Capping the maximum Local Housing Allowance payable for each property size and applying a four-bed limit. This mainly affects households living in London (from April 2011);
 - Calculating Local Housing Allowance rates using the 30th percentile of market rents rather than the 50th percentile (from October 2011);
 - Limiting housing benefit for working age tenants so that it only covers the size of property they are judged to need (from April 2013);
 - Increasing deductions for non-dependents (no longer frozen at £7.40 per week for non-earners and linked to prices since April 2011);
 - Time limiting full housing benefit and Local Housing Allowance payable to people on Job Seekers' Allowance so that after 12 months housing benefit is reduced by 10% (from April 2013);
 - Increasing discretionary housing payments (from October 2010); and
 - Resourcing an additional bedroom for carers (from April 2011).
- 2.15 Additionally the age at which the single room rate is applied increased from 25 to 35 from January 2012. This increases the age that single people can qualify for housing benefit for a self-contained property.

Social Housing reform

- 2.16 The Government set out its key objectives for social housing reform, and its proposals to achieve them, in a consultation paper *Local Decisions: a fairer future for social housing*. Proposals include:
- The introduction of a new, more flexible, local authority affordable rent tenancy with a minimum fixed term of five years (this will be in addition to secure and introductory tenancies);
 - Investment of £100m to bring empty properties in to use as affordable housing;
 - Reforming the social housing allocations system by giving Local Authorities the powers to manage their housing waiting lists;
 - Introduction of a nationwide social home swap programme for social tenants;

- Enabling local authorities to fully discharge a homelessness duty to secure accommodation by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector without requiring the applicant's agreement;
- Introducing reforms to tackle overcrowding; and
- Replacing the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system with transparent self-financing arrangements.

Reform of council housing finance

2.17 The Government's detailed plans for reforming council housing finance were published in January 2011 (*Implementing Self-Financing for Council Housing*). The key features of the proposals include:

- Replacing the current Housing Revenue Account subsidy system with one in which local authorities retain rents following a one-off, mandatory settlement;
- A national debt figure of £28.4m is to be allocated across approximately 160 stock retaining local authorities as at April 2012. This would generate a cash receipt for the Government in the region of £6.5bn;
- The continued national pooling of 75% of Right to Buy receipts;
- A cap on debt in each authority at the starting level of the settlement;
- Assumed national rent convergence by 2016; and
- Uplifts in expenditure allowances of approximately 14% including an allocation for aids and adaptations.

The Affordable Rent model

2.18 In February 2011 the Homes and Communities Agency published its *Framework for Affordable Rent*, and invited providers to bid for funding to develop new homes on Affordable Rent tenancies from April 2012 to March 2015. Under the programme providers had to supplement grant funding by converting vacant social homes into other tenures, therefore generating cross-subsidy, and using Section 106 and public sector land opportunities to deliver affordable housing. Key elements of the programme include:

- Homes are developed at up to 80% of the gross market rent, including service charges;
- Providers retain the option to offer lifetime tenancies should they wish to;
- At the end of an Affordable Rent tenancy, providers and their tenant may convert to shared ownership should they wish to;
- Providers decide the proportion of their re-lets to convert to Affordable Rent to fund new supply; and
- Providers converting existing social rented homes are encouraged to reinvest the funds raised in new supply within the same locality (delivery area); however, funding is not ring-fenced to a particular geographical area.

- 2.19 In July 2011 the Homes and Communities Agency announced the successful bidders for the £1.8bn affordable homes programme. The programme will deliver 80,000 new affordable homes nationally, helping meet the Government's target of 150,000 new affordable homes between 2011 and 2015.
- 2.20 For Stafford Borough, the Council is seeking to deliver 130 affordable dwellings each year.
- 2.21 There are concerns about the capacity of the programme both to fund future developments for supported housing, and deliver homes for larger families.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.22 The National Planning Policy Framework was published on 27th March 2012 and came into effect on the same day, revoking Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing, which had previously formed the basis for housing planning policy. The Government has used the Framework to streamline all existing national policy documents into one short Policy Framework.
- 2.23 The Framework stresses the need for councils to work with communities and businesses to seek opportunities for sustainable growth to rebuild the economy; helping to deliver the homes, jobs, and infrastructure needed for a growing population whilst protecting the environment. A presumption in favour of sustainable development means that proposals should be approved promptly unless they compromise the twelve sustainable development principles set out in the Framework.
- 2.24 The Framework identifies three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The social role is defined as: *'supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations....'*⁶ These three dimensions (or roles) are seen as mutually dependent.
- 2.25 The Framework must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and it is a material consideration in decision making. Up to date local plans are seen as a prerequisite and the following guidance is given:
*'The National Planning Policy Framework does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. ... The National Planning Policy Framework constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers both in drawing up plans and as a material consideration in determining applications.'*⁷
- 2.26 Robust and comprehensive evidence bases (in particular Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments) are seen as essential to 'delivering a wide choice of high quality homes'; the Framework states that local planning authorities should *'use their evidence base*

⁶ CLG National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 para 7

⁷ CLG National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 paras 12 and 13

*to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the delivery area, as far as is consistent with policies set out within the Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.*⁸

- 2.27 The need to ‘*plan for a mix of housing based on current need and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community*’ is emphasised. The Frameworks also states that local planning authorities should:
- *‘identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and*
 - *‘where they have identified that affordable housing is needed set policies for meeting this need on site...’*⁹
- 2.28 Authorities will need to illustrate the expected rate of housing delivery through a housing trajectory for the plan period and a Housing Implementation Strategy for the full range of housing.
- 2.29 New definitions of affordable housing are also included at Annex 2 covering social rented housing, affordable rented housing and intermediate housing.

Localism Act

- 2.30 The Act includes measures to reform:
- The planning system;
 - Social housing; and
 - The council house finance system.
- 2.31 The Act introduces most elements of the Government’s housing reform programme, including changes to homelessness, social housing tenancies (introduction of five year minimum tenancy), mobility, regulation, and access to the Ombudsman. The Act also reforms council housing finance.
- 2.32 In keeping with the Government’s localism ethos, much of the legislation within the Act is permissive, meaning that it is open to interpretation locally in terms of how members, professionals and communities decide to use its powers. Much of the Act came into effect in April 2012.

⁸ CLG National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 para 47

⁹ CLG National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 para 50

Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England

- 2.33 Last year the Government published its Housing Strategy for England, which sets out its *'intended direction of travel for housing, its role in the wider economy and its contribution to social mobility. It sets out ideas on the shape of housing provision that the government wants to see, which involve the primacy of home ownership; social housing as welfare; and an increasing role for the private rented sector.'*¹⁰
- 2.34 The Strategy presents both existing initiatives and policies (as outlined above) and introduces a series of new interventions and approaches, which are set out under the following headings:
- **Increasing supply, more homes, stable growth** which includes a newbuild indemnity scheme led by the Home Builders Federation and Council for Mortgage Lenders to provide up to 95% loan to value mortgages for newbuild properties in England, backed by a housebuilder indemnity fund; and a £400m 'Get Britain Building investment fund;
 - **Social and affordable housing reform** which includes implementing a radical programme of reform to make better use of social housing to support those who need it most; and re-invigorating Right to Buy with the one for one replacement of homes sold (with up to a 60% discount for houses and 70% for flats, with a maximum discount of £75,000);
 - **A thriving private rented sector**, through supporting investment in homes to rent, marketing new Built to Rent pilot sites and encouraging local authorities to make full use of powers to tackle dangerous and poorly-maintained homes;
 - **A strategy for empty homes**, with a commitment to bring empty homes back into use through awarding the New Homes Bonus to empty properties brought back into use, providing information and practical advice to local authorities and communities and proposing changes to Empty Dwelling Management Orders to tackle the worst long-term empty homes;
 - **Quality of housing experience and support**, through supporting the most vulnerable households to prevent and tackle homelessness and providing a better deal for older people, with greater choice and support to live independently; and
 - **Quality, sustainability and design**, by encouraging the promotion of imaginative, innovative, locally distinctive, well designed new homes and neighbourhoods; a commitment to Zero Carbon homes by 2016; reviewing building regulations to further improve energy efficiency and carbon emission standards of new buildings.

¹⁰ CIH Summary *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England* November 2011

Regional and Sub Regional Strategic Context

- 2.35 The Stafford Borough strategic context has undergone significant change over the past eighteen months, reflecting the changes that have been taking place at a national level under the coalition Government. The revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the realignment of housing investment priorities have all had a significant impact across the District.

Local Housing Strategy

- 2.36 The Stafford Borough Housing Strategy is published every five years and sets out the Council's housing investment priorities. The current Housing Strategy 'Homes for our Community' covers 2008 to 2013 and outlines the following five priorities:
- Improving the physical condition of the housing stock across all tenures;
 - Preventing homelessness;
 - Increasing the supply of affordable housing;
 - Promoting independent living for disabled people; and
 - Partnership working.

Concluding comments

- 2.37 The main purpose of this chapter has been to consider the general policy and strategic context within which this research needs to be positioned. A new policy framework for housing and planning is emerging. The Government's housing priorities have been established and set within the context of local decision making and accountability, reduced capital expenditure on housing, fundamental changes to the benefit system, a changing role for social rented housing, and a need for future housing investment to support economic growth. Economic uncertainty, job security, reduction in the level of housebuilding and restricted mortgage lending exacerbate the challenges faced.
- 2.38 The importance of having robust and up-to-date information to help inform decision making at local authority level is evermore essential. In a challenging economic climate, this SHMA provides the LEP and its local authority partners with an excellent range of material to inform policy debate, contribute to the delivery of the Local Investment Plan, help inform and influence strategic responses, and shape local and sub regional strategic housing priorities to inform future investment plans.

3. Stafford Borough Housing Market Context

Introduction

- 3.1 Stafford Borough is located in the West Midlands and its resident population in 2011 was 130,800¹¹. This study provides an opportunity to review the housing market dynamics of Stafford Borough and its interactions with other areas. Housing market areas are:
- “defined by household demand and preferences for housing. They reflect the key functional linkages between places where people live and work.”¹²
- 3.2 CLG guidance on assessing market areas suggests three core sources of information:
- House prices and rates of change;
 - Household migration and search behaviour;
 - Contextual data such as travel to work areas, which reflect the functional relationships between places where people work and live.
- 3.3 This chapter proceeds with a **review of house prices**, rates of change and comparisons with sub-regional and national trends. The **relative affordability** of dwellings and change over time is explored. **Household migration and search** behaviour is analysed, drawing upon national migration data and the characteristics of moving households is reviewed through household survey information collected as part of this research project.
- 3.4 The chapter continues with a review of **travel to work** trends drawing upon 2001 census. Material in the chapter helps to establish the **general housing market context** of Stafford Borough. This is further explored through Estate Agent interviews.

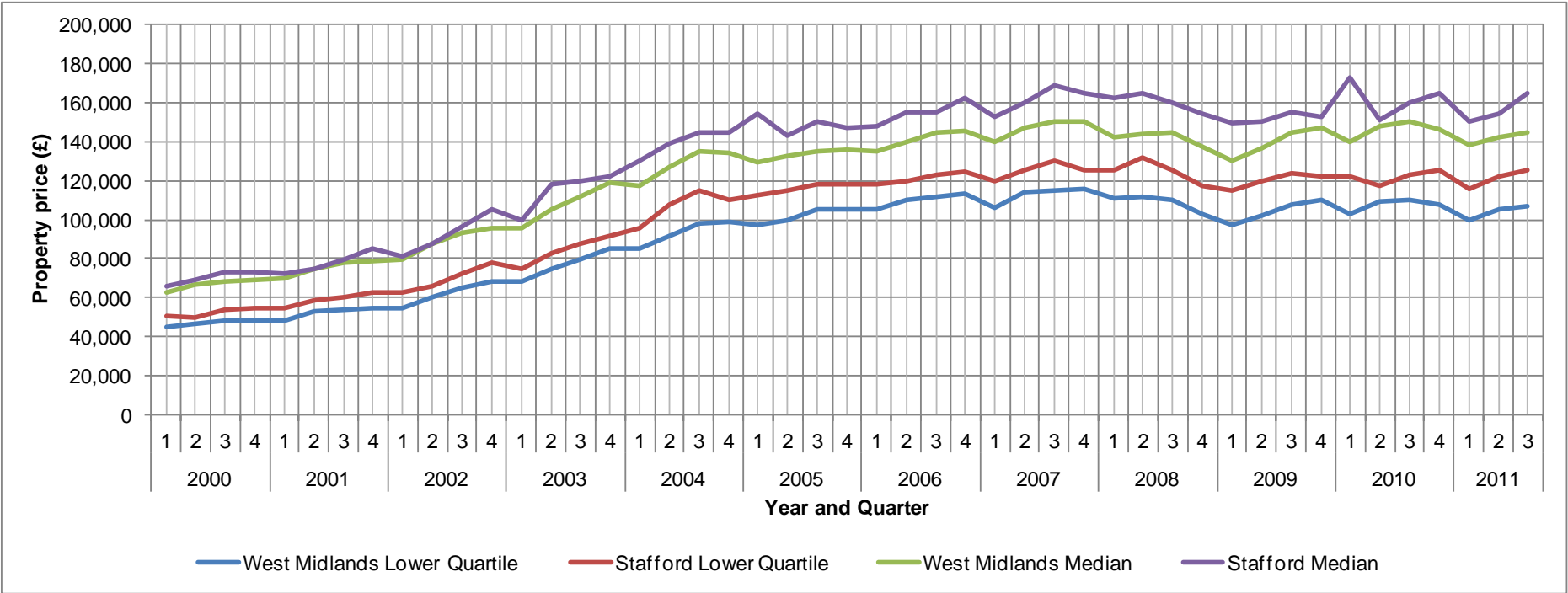
House prices and trends

- 3.5 Figure 3.1 shows how house prices across Stafford Borough have changed over the period 2000 to 2011 relative to changes across the West Midlands region.

¹¹ 2011 Census

¹² Identifying sub-regional Delivery areas, CLG Advice Note April 2007

Figure 3.1 Median house price trends 2000 to 2011: Stafford Borough and West Midlands



Source: DCLG; Land Registry

- 3.6 Median house prices across Stafford Borough have generally been slightly higher than those for the West Midlands. Median prices in Stafford Borough have increased from £62,625 in 2000 to £165,000 in 2011, an increase of 151.4%.
- 3.7 Lower quartile prices have increased from £51,000 to £124,999 over the period 2000 to 2011 (a 145.1% increase).
- 3.8 Table 3.1 summarises lower quartile and median prices over the period Feb 2012 to May 2012 by ward. Map 3.1 summarises how median prices vary across the Borough and in particular flags up the relatively higher prices experienced in rural areas.

Table 3.1 House prices in Stafford Borough Feb 2012 to May 2012

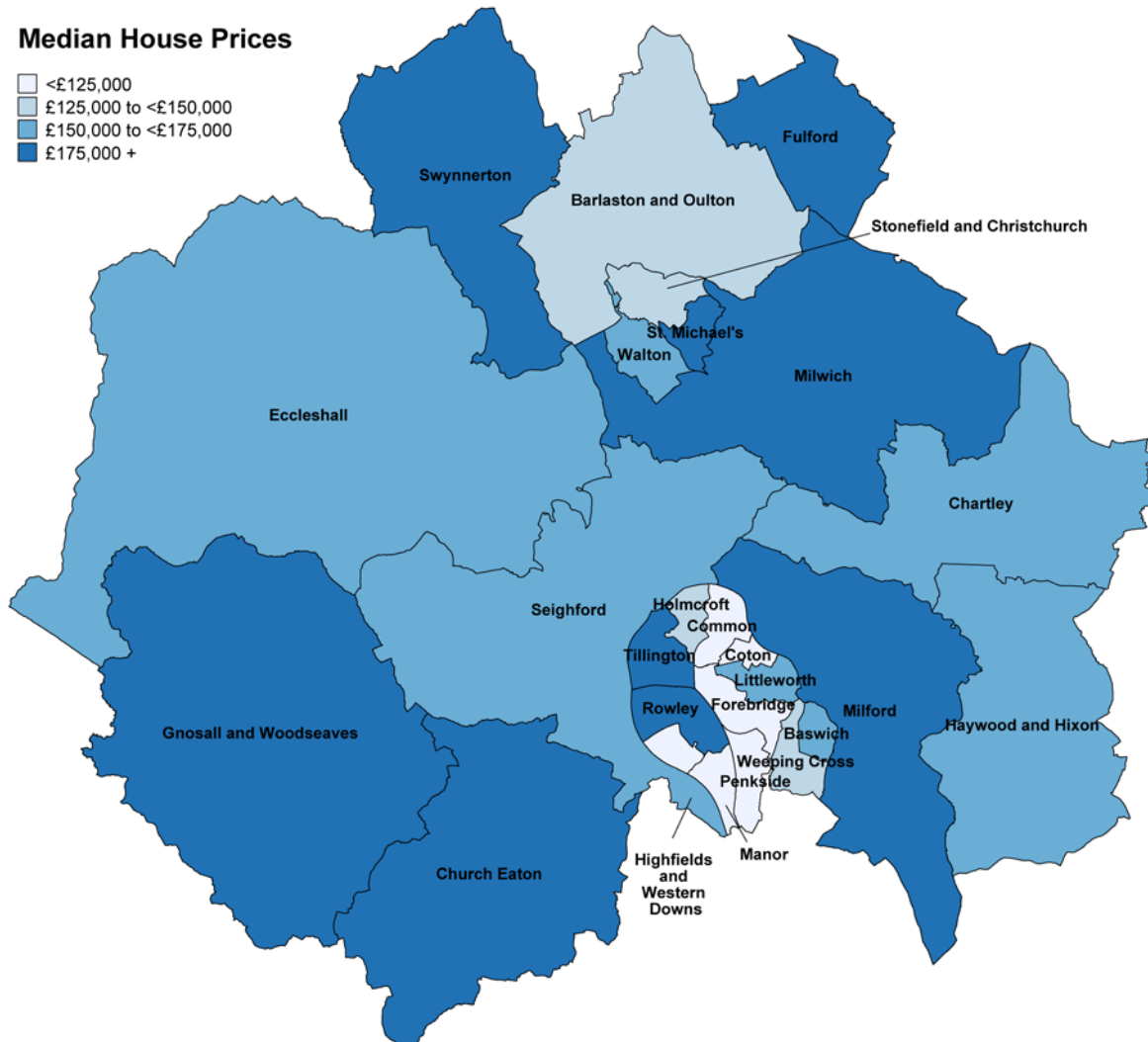
Ward	Lower Quartile	Median	No. Sales
Barlaston and Oulton	£100,000	£131,500	7
Baswich	£145,975	£164,000	13
Chartley	£113,133	£168,500	12
Church Eaton	£230,000	£249,500	7
Common	£97,500	£108,000	11
Coton	£97,250	£111,500	6
Eccleshall	£140,000	£157,500	18
Forebridge	£105,000	£113,000	19
Fulford	£129,250	£185,000	17
Gnosall and Woodseaves	£144,000	£187,475	10
Haywood and Hixon	£124,950	£155,000	23
Highfields and Western Downs	£79,375	£106,500	14
Holmcroft	£115,500	£127,750	15
Littleworth	£128,750	£157,975	10
Manor	£107,750	£120,000	16
Milford	£197,000	£287,500	9
Milwich	£191,000	£260,000	3
Penkside	£83,750	£120,500	10
Rowley	£122,500	£225,000	9
Seighford	£128,500	£153,260	12
St. Michael's	£120,000	£200,000	11
Stonefield and Christchurch	£111,250	£145,000	21
Swynnerton	£130,000	£178,000	19
Tillington	£134,950	£187,673	22
Walton	£115,000	£150,000	23
Weeping Cross	£125,000	£135,000	15
Total	£118,000	£146,500	352

Source: Land Registry Feb 2012 to May 2012

This data covers the transactions received at land Registry in the period 1 Feb 12 the month to 25 May 2012 © Crown copyright 2012."

Please note there is a slight variation between CLG published data and data derived from address-level data.

Map 3.1 Stafford Borough median house prices by ward Feb 12 to May 12



Source: Land Registry Feb 2012 to May 2012

This data covers the transactions received at land Registry in the period 1 Feb 12 the month to 25 May 2012 © Crown copyright 2012."

Relative affordability

3.9 The relative affordability of open market dwellings in Stafford is compared with the other Local Authorities in the West Midlands in Table 3.2. Table 3.2 presents lower quartile house prices, lower quartile gross income of full-time workers and a ratio of lower quartile incomes to house prices.

3.10 In terms of relative affordability, Stafford is the 12th least affordable district in the West Midlands, with an income to house price ratio of 6.8. This means that lower quartile house prices are 6.8 times annual lower quartile gross incomes.

Table 3.2 Relative affordability of lower quartile (LQ) prices by Local Authority (residence based)

District/Region	Lower Quartile House Price	LQ Gross Income each week	Annual LQ Gross Income	LQ Income to House Price Ratio
Malvern Hills	£160,000	£320	£16,661	9.6
Bromsgrove	£165,250	£367	£19,074	8.7
Stratford-on-Avon	£170,000	£378	£19,661	8.6
Warwick	£165,000	£383	£19,890	8.3
Herefordshire, County of UA	£135,000	£315	£16,380	8.2
Wychavon	£145,000	£348	£18,075	8.0
Wyre Forest	£118,500	£306	£15,917	7.4
Worcester	£134,713	£351	£18,226	7.4
South Staffordshire	£135,250	£360	£18,694	7.2
Shropshire UA	£128,000	£341	£17,737	7.2
Solihull	£147,500	£399	£20,722	7.1
Stafford	£124,999	£354	£18,424	6.8
Redditch	£113,000	£335	£17,394	6.5
Lichfield	£132,000	£393	£20,410	6.5
WEST MIDLANDS	£107,000	£335	£17,430	6.1
Telford and Wrekin UA	£102,975	£323	£16,775	6.1
Dudley	£99,498	£315	£16,401	6.1
Staffordshire Moorlands	£105,250	£336	£17,482	6.0
Rugby	£116,250	£374	£19,458	6.0
Tamworth	£108,000	£350	£18,221	5.9
North Warwickshire	£107,975	£356	£18,522	5.8
Cannock Chase	£99,975	£331	£17,222	5.8
Nuneaton and Bedworth	£99,613	£331	£17,228	5.8
Birmingham	£100,000	£334	£17,352	5.8
East Staffordshire	£99,713	£339	£17,612	5.7
Coventry	£97,000	£330	£17,176	5.6
Newcastle-under-Lyme	£90,000	£340	£17,680	5.1
Wolverhampton	£82,500	£314	£16,344	5.0
Walsall	£85,000	£326	£16,942	5.0
Sandwell	£84,098	£326	£16,942	5.0
Stoke-on-Trent UA	£64,000	£314	£16,349	3.9

Sources: CLG House Price Statistics Q3 2011; Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2011

3.11 This analysis is based on district-wide data and it should be appreciated that this masks considerable variations in local level house prices.

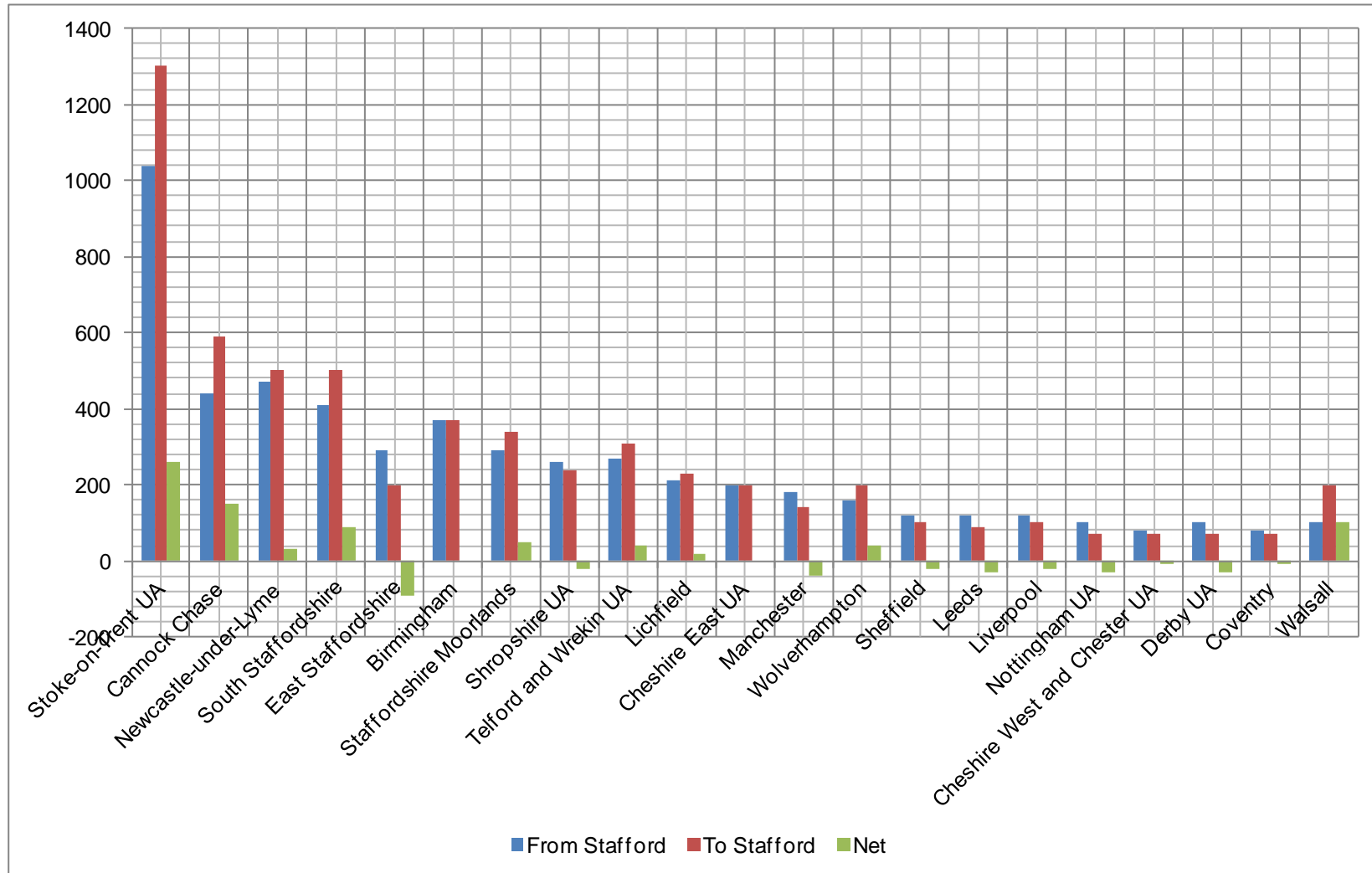
Household migration and search behaviour

- 3.12 Annual migration data is prepared by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) based on patient re-registrations with the National Health Service (NHS). Although it has limitations, it is the best annual source of internal migration data from within England and Wales (Figure 3.2). Over the period July 2008 to June 2010 (2 years) a total of 10,700 people have moved into Stafford Borough, particularly from Stoke on Trent, Cannock Chase, Newcastle under Lyme and South Staffordshire.
- 3.13 Over the same two year period, a total of 10,100 residents have moved out of Stafford to elsewhere in England and Wales. Strongest outflows were to the neighbouring districts Stoke on Trent, Newcastle Under Lyme, Cannock Chase, and South Staffordshire.
- 3.14 Overall, Stafford Borough has had a net inflow of 600 residents from elsewhere in England and Wales over the period July 2008 to June 2010, equivalent to an increase of 300 residents each year.

Travel to work trends

- 3.15 The 2001 census identified the workplace of Stafford Borough's economically active residents (Table 3.3) which indicated that:
- 68.2% lived and worked in Stafford Borough; and
 - 31.8% lived in Stafford Borough but worked elsewhere.
- 3.16 8.5% work in Stoke-on-Trent, 19.2% work elsewhere in the West Midlands and 4.2% work outside the West Midlands.

Figure 3.2 Net flows of population between Stafford Borough and other areas of England and Wales: two years July 2008 to June 2010



Source: ONS Migration Flow Data via NHSCR

Table 3.3 Workplace of Stafford residents by ward

Residence	Workplace (Row %)												SUMMARY	
	Stafford	Stoke-on-Trent	Cannock Chase	South Staffordshire	Newcastle-under-Lyme	Wolverhampton	Birmingham	Telford and Wrekin	Elsewhere WM	North West	Elsewhere	Total	Within Stafford	Within West Midlands
Barlaston and Oulton	51.3	31.1	0.8	0.2	5.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	3.7	2.5	2.0	100.0	51.3	95.4
Baswich	75.3	3.1	4.5	3.1	1.4	1.8	1.9	0.7	6.3	1.2	0.7	100.0	75.3	98.1
Chartley	65.5	6.0	4.2	2.2	1.6	2.3	3.6	0.6	9.3	1.0	3.5	100.0	65.5	95.5
Church Eaton	62.7	3.1	3.8	6.5	0.0	6.3	1.8	3.2	7.6	1.1	3.9	100.0	62.7	95.0
Common	77.8	3.7	1.5	2.2	1.1	1.4	2.0	1.2	5.2	1.2	2.6	100.0	77.8	96.2
Coton	78.4	3.2	3.0	4.0	0.4	1.6	1.8	0.9	3.9	0.9	1.8	100.0	78.4	97.3
Eccleshall	70.7	9.0	1.0	1.0	4.6	0.7	1.2	2.7	3.9	2.6	2.3	100.0	70.7	95.1
Forebridge	73.2	3.5	2.8	2.7	1.4	3.0	2.3	1.3	5.5	1.6	2.8	100.0	73.2	95.6
Fulford	35.8	41.1	0.3	0.1	4.8	0.3	0.1	0.2	11.7	2.6	2.8	100.0	35.8	94.6
Gnosall and Woodseaves	64.3	3.4	2.4	3.4	1.6	3.1	1.4	10.8	5.4	1.4	2.7	100.0	64.3	95.8
Haywood and Hixon	61.0	4.2	7.8	2.9	0.9	1.3	3.0	1.2	12.8	1.4	3.7	100.0	61.0	94.9
Highfields and Western Downs	76.1	2.6	2.5	4.2	1.4	2.2	2.0	1.0	5.1	0.9	2.1	100.0	76.1	97.1
Holmcroft	77.4	4.0	1.8	3.8	0.5	1.5	1.5	0.9	4.9	2.0	1.7	100.0	77.4	96.3
Littleworth	78.3	3.4	2.7	2.3	1.4	2.0	1.2	1.0	4.5	1.4	1.9	100.0	78.3	96.8
Manor	76.1	2.3	2.8	5.9	1.2	2.0	2.1	0.6	4.6	0.6	1.9	100.0	76.1	97.5
Milford	65.0	3.4	6.4	4.3	1.2	2.5	2.7	1.8	7.0	1.5	4.2	100.0	65.0	94.3
Milwich	66.8	10.9	2.3	1.0	2.9	0.7	1.7	1.0	6.9	2.6	3.3	100.0	66.8	94.1
Penkside	72.2	3.2	3.4	5.3	1.2	2.5	2.3	1.6	6.0	1.2	1.0	100.0	72.2	97.9
Rowley	66.5	4.6	3.1	3.5	1.2	3.5	4.1	1.9	6.8	2.8	2.0	100.0	66.5	95.2
Seighford	73.8	4.8	2.1	2.1	1.1	2.4	2.9	1.5	6.4	1.8	1.1	100.0	73.8	97.1
St. Michael's	60.0	15.5	1.6	1.1	5.3	1.1	1.3	0.7	5.9	4.2	3.3	100.0	60.0	92.5
Stonefield and Christchurch	67.7	13.5	1.7	0.9	3.7	1.2	1.3	0.9	4.8	2.4	1.9	100.0	67.7	95.7
Swynnerton	48.0	25.3	1.0	0.7	9.9	0.4	0.8	0.4	5.1	4.5	3.8	100.0	48.0	91.7
Tillington	77.4	3.9	2.6	2.4	0.3	2.2	2.8	1.0	4.8	1.8	0.8	100.0	77.4	97.4
Walton	74.6	11.3	0.6	1.1	3.9	0.6	0.7	0.6	3.2	2.0	1.4	100.0	74.6	96.6
Weeping Cross	70.2	3.3	4.6	3.7	0.7	3.0	1.8	1.0	7.2	1.7	2.8	100.0	70.2	95.6
Stafford Borough	68.2	8.5	2.7	2.7	2.3	1.9	1.8	1.6	6.1	1.9	2.4	100.0	68.2	95.8

Concluding comments

- 3.17 The purpose of this chapter has been to consider the general housing market context of Stafford Borough and its inter-relationships with other areas. By reviewing house prices, migration and travel to work patterns, a picture of the market dynamics emerges.
- 3.18 The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) suggests that a housing market is self-contained if upwards of 70% of moves (migration and travel to work) take place within a defined area. An analysis of 2001 census data indicates that 3,504 households had moved in the year preceding the census and of these households 62.9% had moved from outside Stafford Borough, suggesting that the Borough is not self-contained in terms of migration. More recent data on migration clearly demonstrates strong linkages with neighbouring Stoke on Trent, Cannock Chase, Newcastle-under-Lyme and South Staffordshire suggesting that Stafford is part of a larger housing market area.
- 3.19 In terms of travel to work, 2001 census data reported that 68.2% of residents lived and worked in Stafford Borough and a further 27.6% worked elsewhere in the West Midlands (notably Stoke on Trent) and therefore Stafford is part of a broader functional market which extends sub-regionally and particularly into Stoke on Trent.

4. Strategic Housing Market Assessment Core Outputs

Introduction

- 4.1 The purpose of this chapter is to present the core outputs required by the SHMA guidance relating to Stafford Borough.

Core Output 1: Estimates of current dwellings in terms of size, type, condition, tenure

- 4.2 This study assumes a total of 56,467 dwellings in Stafford Borough of which 54,437 (96.4%) are occupied, 1,898 (3.4%) are vacant and 132 (0.2%) are second homes. Overall, vacancy rates are higher than for the West Midlands region (2.9%) and England (2.8%)¹³.
- 4.3 The proportion of empty dwelling is highest in Milwich ward (6% of total dwellings) and Forebridge ward (5.7%).
- 4.4 Within Stafford Borough there are 493 dwellings (0.9%) which are occupied by students and these are concentrated in Coton, Littleworth and Forebridge wards. There are also 227 dwellings used for the Armed Forces which are mainly located in Coton and Milford wards.

¹³ 2011 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix

Table 4.1 Dwelling stock by ward

Ward	Occupied				Empty			Second Home	Total
	Residential	Armed Forces Accommodation	Student Accommodation	Total Occupied	Long Term	Other	Total Empty		
Barlaston and Oulton	1689	0	3	1692	33	33	66	8	1766
Baswich	1820	0	2	1822	8	33	41	3	1866
Chartley	818	0	1	819	17	20	37	6	862
Church Eaton	907	0	2	909	16	12	28	0	937
Common	2002	0	70	2072	36	63	99	4	2175
Coton	1494	186	118	1798	13	46	59	5	1862
Eccleshall	2756	0	3	2759	51	61	112	13	2884
Forebridge	2408	0	68	2476	59	90	149	7	2632
Fulford	2470	0	3	2473	54	50	104	4	2581
Gnosall and Woodseaves	2685	0	5	2690	44	52	96	7	2793
Haywood and Hixon	2688	0	5	2693	24	46	70	9	2772
Highfields and Western Downs	2851	0	11	2862	16	37	53	5	2920
Holmcroft	2808	2	20	2830	23	51	74	1	2905
Littleworth	2533	0	107	2640	55	79	134	1	2775
Manor	2814	0	7	2821	24	45	69	3	2893
Milford	1630	39	19	1688	30	27	57	7	1752
Milwich	748	0	0	748	29	19	48	3	799
Penkside	1815	0	7	1822	10	26	36	0	1858
Rowley	1806	0	5	1811	21	35	56	5	1872
Seighford	1488	0	0	1488	23	25	48	5	1541
St. Michael's	1992	0	4	1996	24	25	49	5	2050
Stonefield and Christchurch	2467	0	6	2473	71	77	148	6	2627
Swynnerton	1899	0	5	1904	28	45	73	13	1990
Tillington	1894	0	11	1905	15	31	46	2	1953
Walton	2597	0	4	2601	32	50	82	5	2688
Weeping Cross	2638	0	7	2645	16	48	64	5	2714
Stafford Borough Total	53717	227	493	54437	772	1126	1898	132	56467
%	95.1	0.4	0.9	96.4	1.4	2.0	3.4	0.2	100.0

Source: 2012 Council Tax

Property size and type

- 4.5 Table 4.2 reviews the profile of all dwelling stock based on Valuation Office Agency data for Stafford and compares this with national data. Overall, nearly half (49.6%) of dwellings have three bedrooms, 16.9% have four or more bedrooms and 29.5% have one or two bedrooms. In terms of dwelling type, over half (56.5%) are either detached or semi-detached, with a further 18.3% terraced, 11% bungalows and 11.1% flats/maisonettes.
- 4.6 Compared with the national stock profile, Stafford Borough has twice the proportion of detached dwellings and a stock profile skewed towards dwellings with 3 or more bedrooms. That said, recent development, particularly in urban areas, has tended to be of smaller dwellings (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.2 Property type and size across Stafford Borough

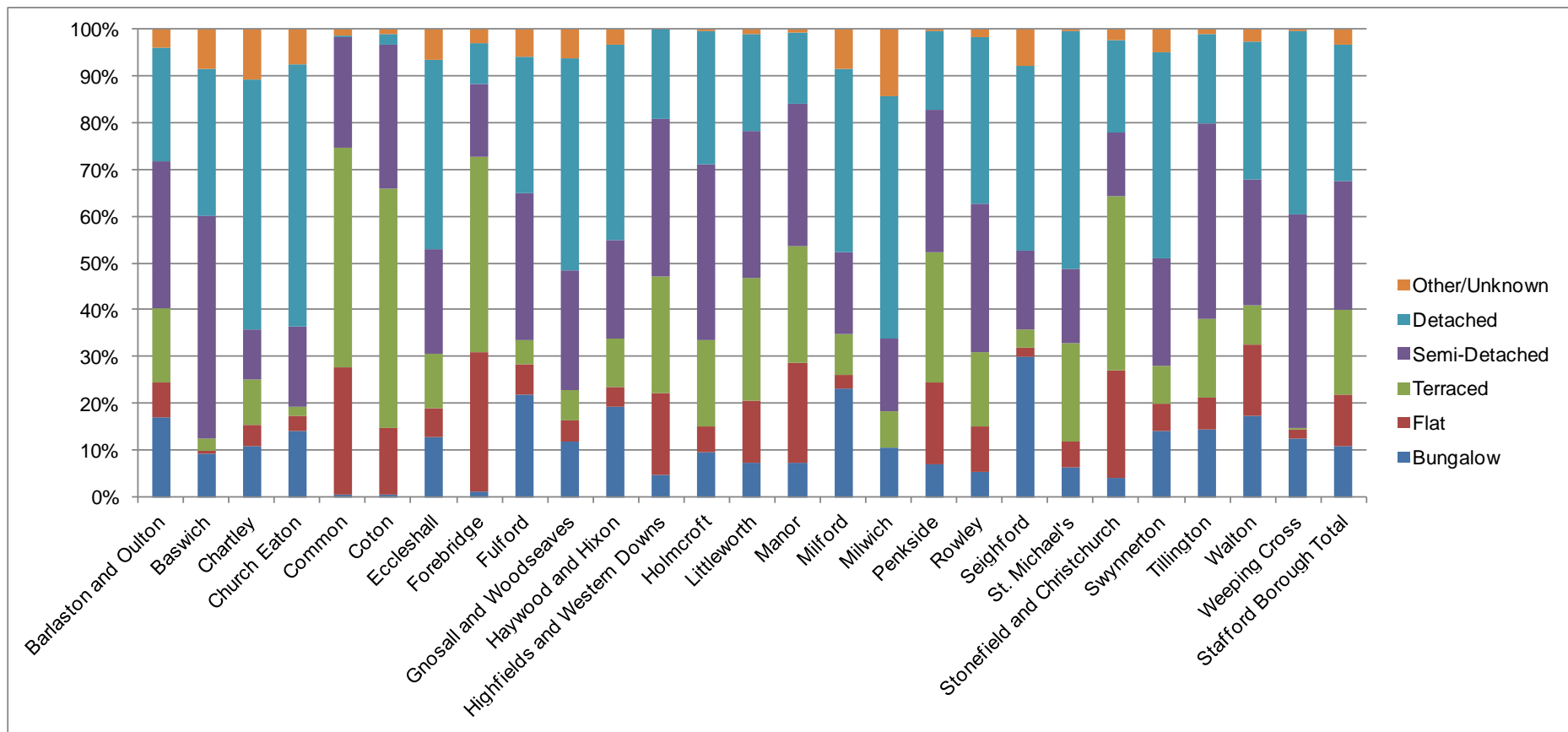
No. beds	Property type (Table %)						Stafford Total	England Total
	Detached House	Semi-Detached House	Terraced House	Bungalow	Flat/ Maisonette	Other/ Unknown		
1	0.1	0.1	0.3	1.0	5.7	0.0	7.1	11.5
2	1.3	4.3	6.4	5.8	4.6	0.0	22.4	28.0
3	12.3	21.2	11.6	4.0	0.4	0.0	49.6	47.3
4	15.1	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.9	11.1
Not known	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	3.3	4.0	2.1
Stafford Total	29.0	27.5	18.3	11.0	11.0	3.3	100.0	100.0
England Total	15.5	24.3	27.0	9.8	22.0	1.4	100.0	

Base: 56,230 dwellings in Stafford Borough

Source: 2011 Valuation Office Agency

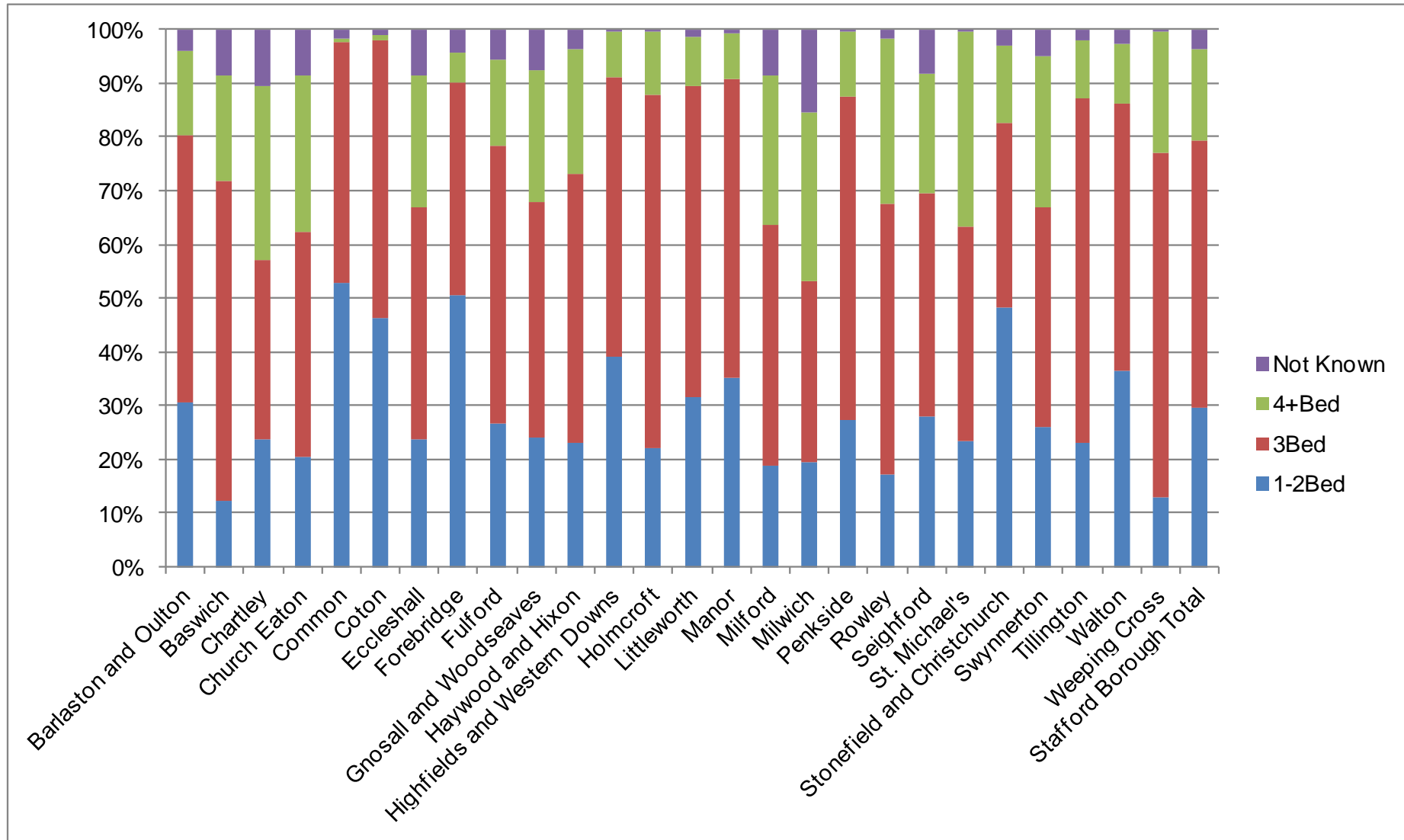
- 4.7 How the dwelling stock profile varies by ward is illustrated in Figures 4.1 (Dwelling type) and 4.2 (number of bedrooms). Data suggests some notable variations within Stafford Borough in property type and size and in particular variations existing between rural and urban areas.
- 4.8 Of particular note, the proportion of :
- Bungalows exceeds 20% in Fulford, Milford and Seighford wards;
 - Flats exceeds 20% in Common, Forebridge and Manor wards;
 - Terraced exceeds 40% in Common, Coton and Forebridge wards;
 - Detached houses exceeds 50% in Chartley, Church Eaton, Milwich and St. Michael's wards;
 - Smaller one and two bedroom dwellings exceeds 50% in Common and Forebridge wards;
 - Four or more bedroom dwellings exceed 30% in Chartley, Milwich and St. Michael's wards.

Figure 4.1 Dwelling type by ward



Source: 2011 Valuation Office Agency

Figure 4.2 Number of bedrooms by ward



Source: 2011 Valuation Office Agency

Quality of accommodation

- 4.9 The 2011 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix reports that across Stafford Borough there are 1,332 dwellings with Category 1 hazards as identified by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, with 1,331 in the private sector and 1 Registered Provider property. The HHSRS considers 29 potential health and safety hazards including physiological hazards (e.g. damp and mould growth, excess heat/cold), psychological hazards (e.g. overcrowding, lighting, noise), protection against infection (e.g. domestic hygiene, water supply) and protection against accidents (e.g. potential fall, electrical hazards and structural integrity of the building). Overall, 2.4% of dwellings in Stafford Borough have Category 1 hazards. This compares with 5.8% across the West Midlands and 8.4% across England.

Property tenure

- 4.10 The tenure profile of Stafford Borough is summarised in Table 4.3. The 2001 census reported that 75.7% of households were owner occupiers, 9.8% privately rented and 14.5% lived in social rented/intermediate tenure dwellings. The 2011 census will provide an up to date review of tenure profile but based on national estimates the private rented sector may account for around 15% of dwelling stock.

Table 4.3 Tenure profile of dwellings in Stafford and comparator areas

Location	Tenure (Number)			
	Social Rented	Other Public	Private	Total
Stafford	7,266	83	48,850	56,200
West Midlands	446,611	5,146	1,906,566	2,358,320
England	4,045,416	63,237	18,705,000	22,814,000
Location	Tenure (%)			
	Social Rented	Other Public	Private	Total
Stafford	12.9	0.1	86.9	100.0
West Midlands	18.9	0.2	80.8	100.0
England	17.7	0.3	82.0	100.0

Source: CLG, Number of dwellings by Tenure and District 2011

Core Output 2: Past and current housing market trends; balance between supply and demand; key drivers

Total dwelling stock and current provision

- 4.11 There are currently a total of 56,467 residential dwellings across Stafford Borough of which 54,537 are occupied by households¹⁴. The total number of dwellings has increased from 51,984 in 2001¹⁵ which represents a 3.5% increase. Over this period, the proportion of private sector dwellings has increased from 85.7% in 2001 (14.7% social rented) to 87.1% in 2011 (12.9% social rented).
- 4.12 In terms of current provision and future provision, the observations of stakeholders are summarized below.
- 4.13 Activity within the current housing market is down and prices appear to be static, with the exception of the high value rural areas of the Borough. The lack of first time buyers within the market was highlighted as an issue, along with the fact that the age of first time buyers has risen to, on average, 37. Despite the fact that house prices have fallen over recent years, affordability ratios remain high – as does demand for affordable housing. Demand for homes is still very much there, but the lack of affordable mortgage finance prevents sales.
- 4.14 Since 2008 the rate of new build has slowed and this was highlighted as a major cause for concern by respondents, not least because this means a reduction in the number of new affordable homes delivered via Section 106 agreements. This, together with the reduction in grant available from the HCA for new affordable housing, was identified a major concern – reducing the supply of affordable housing at a time when demand is increasing.
- 4.15 Given the inaccessibility of mortgage finance demand for privately rented accommodation has also increased, primarily from those locked out of owner occupation – one respondent referred to the ‘*creation of Generation Rent*’. There is also demand for student accommodation.
- 4.16 Concerns were raised by stakeholders about the impact on the housing market and housing supply from both welfare reforms and the new planning requirements. Demand for both private rented and affordable accommodation is likely to be affected by welfare reforms, and it is likely that patterns of demand will change as the reforms begin to impact. Affordable housing providers are anticipating that demand for smaller properties will increase as a result of the ‘bedroom tax’.
- 4.17 Overall, demand for family homes is strong, as is the demand for a range of housing options for older people. Downsizers are struggling to sell their homes

¹⁴ Based on Council Tax 2011

¹⁵ HIP return 2001

as potential purchasers struggle with 'chains' and accessing mortgage finance, and vendors are reluctant to accept less equity.

- 4.18 When asked about development of executive housing, respondents felt that demand for this type of housing exists on the periphery of Stafford, and within the Borough's villages and rural areas. Concerns were raised about the impact of public sector spending cuts on local employment opportunities, and subsequently demand for these types of homes, given that a number of major local employers are public sector bodies (the County and local Councils, health, MOD, and Tax Office), all of which could reduce staff numbers.
- 4.19 Stakeholders felt that new development should take place in the following areas as priority locations over the next two to five years:
- Areas with high proportions of older people;
 - Edge of town and rural and semi-rural areas; and
 - Stafford and Stone and other key settlements.
- 4.20 The following barriers to the delivery of new housing were identified:
- Finance;
 - Supply of good quality land;
 - Reductions in public subsidy;
 - Mortgage availability and finance;
 - Public opinion, objections, nimbyism and protectionist approach of new Neighbourhood Plans;
 - Employment; and
 - Slow economy.

Recent housing development

- 4.21 Over the period 2010 to September 2012 a total of 825 dwellings were completed across Stafford Borough or around 275 each year. Table 4.4 summarises the overall profile of newbuild dwellings across the Borough and by the urban settlements of Stafford, Stone and other localities.
- 4.22 This data indicates that across Stafford Borough:
- 42.5% of new building has taken place in Stafford Town, 14.2% in Stone and 43.2% elsewhere in the Borough;
 - In terms of dwelling type, 68.5% of new dwellings have been houses, 29.6% flats and 1.6% bungalows;
 - In terms of dwelling size, 21.3% have been one bedroom, 22.9% two bedrooms, 32.7% three bedrooms and 23% four or more bedrooms.
- 4.23 Dwellings built in urban areas have tended to be smaller, with 56.7% of new dwellings in Stafford Town having one or two bedrooms along with 46.9% in

Stone compared with 31.2% elsewhere. Across Stafford District 32.7% of new dwellings have three bedrooms and this proportion does not vary considerably by sub-area. However, the proportion of larger 4 or more bedroom dwellings was highest in the area outside Stafford and Stone (33.1%).

- 4.24 In terms of property type, 41.9% of dwellings built in the urban areas of Stafford and Stone were flats compared with 13.4% in other areas of the Borough. In comparison, the proportion of houses was around 57% in Stafford and Stone and 84.3% elsewhere in the Borough. Around 1.6% of new dwellings were bungalows and the proportion was around 1% in urban areas and 2.2% in other areas.

Table 4.4 Profile of newbuild dwelling stock across Stafford Borough 2010-2012

Locality	Size	Type			
Stafford		Flat	House	Bungalow	Total
	1B	34.5	0.6	0.0	35.0
	2B	7.4	13.4	0.9	21.7
	3B	0.0	28.8	0.3	29.1
	4+B	0.0	14.2	0.0	14.2
	Total	41.9	57.0	1.1	100.0
				Base	351
Stone		Flat	House	Bungalow	Total
	1B	25.6	3.4	0.0	29.1
	2B	14.5	3.4	0.0	17.9
	3B	1.7	31.6	0.9	34.2
	4+B	0.0	18.8	0.0	18.8
	Total	41.9	57.3	0.9	100.0
				Base	117
Elsewhere		Flat	House	Bungalow	Total
	1B	3.1	2.2	0.0	5.3
	2B	7.6	17.4	0.8	25.8
	3B	2.5	32.2	1.1	35.9
	4+B	0.3	32.5	0.3	33.1
	Total	13.4	84.3	2.2	100.0
				Base	357
Stafford Borough		Flat	House	Bungalow	Total
	1B	19.6	1.7	0.0	21.3
	2B	8.5	13.7	0.7	22.9
	3B	1.3	30.7	0.7	32.7
	4+B	0.1	22.8	0.1	23.0
	Total	29.6	68.8	1.6	100.0
				Base	825

Source: Stafford Borough Council Planning Department

Owner-occupied market

- 4.25 Over the period 2000 to 2011, lower quartile and median house prices¹⁶ across Stafford Borough have increased dramatically as summarised in Table 4.5.
- 4.26 It is interesting to note that in 2000, a household income of £14,571 was required for a lower quartile price to be affordable; by 2011 this had increased by 145.1% to £35,714. In comparison, an income of £18,750 was required for a median priced property to be affordable in 2000 compared with £47,143 in 2011, an increase of 151.4%.

Table 4.5 Lower Quartile and median price and income required to be affordable

Year	£	Income to be affordable*	Change in income requirements for property to be affordable
Lower Quartile			
2000	£51,000	£14,571	145.1%
2011	£124,999	£35,714	
Median			
2000	£65,625	£18,750	151.4%
2011	£165,000	£47,143	

Source: DCLG / Land Registry

*Assuming a 3.5x income multiple

Lower Quartile: = 25% of incomes lower than this figure and 75% are higher

Median= 50% of incomes are above and 50% below this figure

Views of estate agents and private lettings agents

- 4.27 Views on the current housing market position were sought from estate agents operating across Stafford Borough. Feedback from agents is that the market is active and demand is strong for all property types with everything selling – bungalows are especially popular. Some agents felt that there was insufficient supply to meet demand, and that a greater volume of property for sale was needed (both new build and resales), preferably properties around the £130,000 to £180,000 mark to help build up the market.
- 4.28 There is a first time buyer market although it is quieter than in the past. Traditional first time buyer properties such as terraced properties are selling, although some agents said first time buyers are looking for something better than a traditional terraced house. First time buyers are generally looking to purchase properties around £120,000, although the price range overall can be

¹⁶ Land Registry House Price information

anything between £80,000 and £150,000 – usually for terraced or semi-detached properties.

- 4.29 The high end of the market is moving but demand is hampered by potential purchasers having something to sell which causes delays and slows down the market.
- 4.30 Properties in rural areas do sell but can sometimes be hampered by lack of amenities and concerns about fuel costs linked to increased travelling, which can make them unattractive to potential purchasers; this is affecting values, and prices are falling in rural areas.
- 4.31 The buy to let market is strong with investors buying a range of property types to meet demand from a range of household types, including professionals.
- 4.32 Agents confirmed that, whilst in Stafford Town itself employment opportunities are limited, its proximity to Birmingham as a major employment centre ensures a steady and strong demand for housing.
- 4.33 Demand for affordable home ownership is there, however, the range of products can be confusing for potential purchasers. Demand has slowed generally due to difficulties linked to accessing mortgage finance.
- 4.34 For older people there is a lack of affordable retirement properties; costs of some recent provision are prohibitively high for many older people.
- 4.35 Overall, whilst demand remains consistent price and access to finance remain key and the lack of first time buyers contributes to general market 'sluggishness'. Agents felt that there was a need to stimulate the 'bottom end' of the market to get it going again.

Private rented sector

- 4.36 The sector is diverse in terms of the range of households it accommodates and the types of properties available. A report 'The Modern Private Rented Sector'¹⁷ provides a useful overview of the sector. Drawing upon 2001 census data, it suggests that the private rented sector has five key roles:
 - A traditional housing role for people who have lived in the private rented sector for many years;
 - Easy access housing for the young and mobile;
 - Providing accommodation tied to employment;
 - A residual role for those who are unable to access owner occupation or social renting;
 - An alternative to social rented housing (for instance those wanting to move to a different area but unable to do so through their social housing provider).

¹⁷ 'The Modern Private Rented Sector' David Rhodes, 2006 University of York with CIH/JRF

- 4.37 Given the range of roles of the private rented sector, there is a considerable diversity in the characteristics of private renting tenants. Evidence from the 2001 census (Rhodes, 2006) indicates that households living in private rented accommodation:
- tend to have younger heads of household;
 - are ethnically diverse;
 - singles, lone parents and other multi-adult households are over-represented compared with other tenures;
 - people in professional and higher technical occupations are over-represented compared with other tenures;
 - are more likely to be highly mobile geographically and turnover rates are high;
 - is more likely to accommodate international migrants.
- 4.38 The report 'The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential'¹⁸ identified that the private rented sector as complex and distinct sub-markets include:
- Young professionals;
 - Students, whose needs are increasingly being met by larger, branded, institutional landlords;
 - The housing benefit market, where landlord and tenant behaviour is largely framed by housing benefit administration;
 - Slum rentals at the very bottom of the PRS, where landlords accommodate often vulnerable households in extremely poor quality property;
 - Tied housing, which is a diminishing sub-sector nationally but still has an important role in some rural locations;
 - High-income renters, often in corporate lettings;
 - Immigrants whose most immediate option is private renting;
 - Asylum seekers, housed through contractual agreements with government agencies;
 - Temporary accommodation, financed through specific subsidy from the Department for Work and Pensions; and
 - Regulated tenancies, which are a dwindling portion of the market
- 4.39 The report concludes that the PRS needs to become a flexible, well-functioning element of the housing market. To this end, its recommendations include:
- More policy to encourage a better understanding of managed rented housing and mandatory regulation of managing agents to ensure better quality

¹⁸ The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential' Julie Rugg and David Rhodes, Centre for Housing Policy The University of York 2008

management standards and Registered Providers should be encouraged to enter this market place;

- Initiatives to 'grow' the business of letting, encouraging smaller, good landlords to expand their portfolios and view this as a business;
- Equalising rental choice so low-income households can make a real choice between a social or private let and see both as being equally desirable;
- Light-touch licensing and effective redress to encourage local authorities to target the very worst landlords and a permit/licence would be required by all landlords which would be revoked if the landlord did not meet statutory requirements on housing management and quality.

- 4.40 The 2001 census reported that 9.8% of households rented privately or lived rent free which would equate to around 5,500 households in 2011. The 2011 census will provide an up to date review of the size of the private rented sector but national estimates may suggest the sector now accounts for around 15% of dwelling stock.
- 4.41 Discussions with estate agents and lettings agents report that the private rented sector in Stafford is particularly buoyant with strong demand from a range of household types although tenants are increasingly discerning about where they want to live. One estate agency stated there was very high demand and everything they had on the books was let, with a mix of tenants including first time buyers; professionals; families, particularly those moving between properties; and older people selling up and renting.
- 4.42 One rental agent suggesting for every five rental enquiries, three are from Housing Benefit recipients and two are from professionals or households moving into renting temporarily. Three bedroom dwellings are very popular and the demand for smaller dwellings is growing due to changes in benefit payments.
- 4.43 Around 10% of applicants at an agency in Stafford are Eastern European migrants, although they have lower wages and benefit dependent.
- 4.44 Prices in Stafford are currently:
- One bedroom £350 to £350
 - Two bedroom £450 to £500
 - Three bedroom £600 to £750
 - Four bedroom £700 +
- 4.45 Respondents to the stakeholder survey felt that, in terms of the private rented sector, there is a broad offer of private rented accommodation available across Stafford; it is a mixed and varied market. Demand for private sector rented housing is high, and it is felt that this trend will continue into the foreseeable future given issues around access to mortgage finance.
- 4.46 Concerns were raised that the sector is now less accessible to those on benefit than in the past, especially given increasing rent levels.
- 4.47 With changes to homelessness legislation and, the ability of local authorities to discharge duty into private rented accommodation, increasing number of

homeless households are likely to be accessing the sector, which will further drive up demand.

- 4.48 Some respondents raised concerns about stock condition within the sector linked to older house types predominantly.

Affordable sector

- 4.49 Around 12.9% of dwelling stock in Stafford Borough is social rented which equates to around 7,300 dwellings.

Views of stakeholders on affordable housing

- 4.50 It is apparent that demand for affordable housing remains high and outstrips supply. Demand pressures are evidently extremely high in the rural areas and villages across the Borough. The existing supply of affordable housing is felt to be coming under increasing pressure from the new Right to Buy discounts, and the reduction in HCA grant.
- 4.51 Registered providers were concerned about their capacity to meet demand given the limited new opportunities for development available. Lack of affordable land and the low new build rate, limit opportunities for delivering affordable housing on private sites through Section 106 agreements.
- 4.52 The following barriers to the delivery of affordable housing in Stafford were also identified by respondents:
- Land availability – including low cost land to make the affordable rent model viable;
 - Lack of public subsidy;
 - The cost of alternative use values (i.e. agricultural land values);
 - Planning agreements;
 - The slow economy;
 - Lack of finance from lenders;
 - Lack of strategy and political will both at local and national levels;
 - Commitment;
 - Planning; and
 - Nimbyism and a protectionist approach.
- 4.53 The impact of welfare reforms on affordable housing were identified as a concern by several stakeholders. Overall it was felt that the Government's reform agenda would:

- Limit the supply of affordable housing at a time when demand is going to increase;
 - Increase arrears and therefore associated costs of collection (leaving less resources available to subsidise new affordable housing development);
 - Increase risks of eviction, which will impact on homelessness and demand for temporary accommodation;
 - Reduce the supply of new affordable housing;
 - Create more 'churn' in affordable homes as the impact of shorter tenancies takes effect, thus impacting on community sustainability;
 - Limited opportunities for tenants affected by the bedroom tax to find smaller, affordable alternative accommodation; and
 - Reduce investment in existing stock/stock improvements.
- 4.54 Concerns were raised about the negative impact of new Right to Buy discounts on the supply of affordable housing, especially given the protected status of many tenants. It was felt that there will be insufficient funding to deliver 1:1 replacement affordable homes for each property sold via the Right to Buy, especially in the higher value areas of the Borough.
- 4.55 In terms of new affordable housing, respondents felt that provision will need to be made for:
- Family housing, critically ensuring that schemes are sufficient size to meet benefit requirements i.e. two bed four person houses; and three bed five person houses;
 - Affordable housing products for the middle market; and
 - Homes for older people.
- 4.56 The priority areas for new development were felt to be across the Borough, and especially in rural areas where need is high.
- 4.57 Overall it was felt that there is an uncertain future regarding delivery of new affordable homes; given reduced grant rates and development opportunities, along with pressure on supply from the Right to Buy, it is likely that the stock of affordable housing will not increase significantly at a time when demand for homes is high and seemingly increasing – some respondents felt that the supply of affordable housing in Stafford will in fact decrease.

Student renting

- 4.58 Across Stafford there are around 493 dwellings which are wholly rented to students and are identified as such in Council tax records. This does not include those households which are occupied partly by students. There households are mainly located in Coton, Common Forebridge and Littleworth wards.
- 4.59 Staffordshire University provides three residential options:

- On-campus accommodation at Stafford Court (554 single study bedrooms of which 264 are ensuite);
 - Yarlet, a traditional Halls of Residence (51 study bedrooms);
 - Beaconside Village (over 200 bedrooms in 54 semi-detached houses).
- 4.60 The University operates a Private Sector Registration Scheme for private landlords and lettings agents report that there is a growing student rental market.

Armed forces accommodation

- 4.61 Across Stafford there are 227 dwellings which are designated as Armed Forces Accommodation. These are mainly located in Coton and Milford wards.

Executive housing

- 4.62 Executive housing provision has a role to help diversify and expand of the sub-region's economy and in contributing towards achieving wider population and economic growth for the Region generally.
- 4.63 Distinctive features of executive housing are:
- High property values:
 - With high incomes required to support purchase and high values are linked to desirable locations; and
 - High quality construction including exterior and interior fittings.
- 4.64 In terms of existing provision, Table 4.6 considers the number and distribution of Council Tax Band F and above properties across Stafford and indicates that 8.5% of all dwelling stock is in these higher bands. The proportions are highest in Milford (11.3%), Eccleshall (10.4%), Gosnall and Woodseaves (9.4%) and Swynnerton (7.4%).
- 4.65 Estate agents report that properties at the upper end of the market are selling slowly, often due to the effect of purchasers having to sell their own properties before moving.

Table 4.6 Location of Council Tax Band F and above by ward

Ward	No. Bands F to I	% Bands F to I	Total Dwellings
Barlaston and Oulton	339	19.2	1766
Baswich	13	0.7	1866
Chartley	239	27.7	862
Church Eaton	248	26.5	937
Common	3	0.1	2175
Coton	0	0.0	1862
Eccleshall	500	17.3	2884
Forebridge	11	0.4	2632
Fulford	336	13.0	2581
Gnosall and Woodseaves	452	16.2	2793
Haywood and Hixon	208	7.5	2772
Highfields and Western Downs	31	1.1	2920
Holmcroft	25	0.9	2905
Littleworth	45	1.6	2775
Manor	37	1.3	2893
Milford	540	30.8	1752
Milwich	303	37.9	799
Penkside	23	1.2	1858
Rowley	220	11.8	1872
Seighford	280	18.2	1541
St. Michael's	121	5.9	2050
Stonefield and Christchurch	226	8.6	2627
Swynnerton	381	19.1	1990
Tillington	16	0.8	1953
Walton	82	3.1	2688
Weeping Cross	116	4.3	2714
Total	4795	8.5	56467

Source: Council Tax 2012

Key market drivers

- 4.66 The factors underpinning housing markets in Stafford Borough are explored in detail in Appendix B. Essentially, there are three key primary drivers influencing the current (and future) housing market: demographic, economic and dwelling stock characteristics, as summarised in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Primary market drivers

Primary Driver	Attributes	Impact on overall demand through:
Demography	Changing no. of households, household structure, ethnicity	Natural Change
Economy	Jobs, income, activity rates, unemployment	Economic migration
Housing stock and aspirations	Quality vs. aspirations, relative prices, accessibility, development programmes	Residential migration

4.67 In summary, the following demographic drivers will continue to underpin the operation of the Stafford Borough housing market area:

- An increasing population, with ONS 2010-based population projections predicting a population of 146,000 in 2035 compared with 127,100 in 2010, an increase of 18,900 (14.9%);
- Over the next few decades, there will be a ‘demographic shift’ with the number (and proportion) of older people increasing. Based on ONS 2010-based population projections there were 34,700 people aged 60 and over and 11,500 aged 75 and over. By 2035, these numbers are expected to increase to 50,500 people aged 60 and over (a 45.5% increase) and 23,300 aged 75+ (a 101.7% increase);
- CLG 2008-based household projections indicate that the number of households in Stafford Borough is expected to increase from 53,000 in 2010 to 65,000 in 2033, an increase of 22.6%. This represents an annual increase to 2033 of around 500 households;
- Although the total number of households is predicted to grow, the age profile of household reference people (heads of household) will change. Of the overall change of 12,000 households, the number of households where the household reference person is aged 65 and over is projected to increase by around 11,000 and the number of households with a household reference person aged under 65 is predicted to increase by around 1,000. It should be noted that a majority of older people are owner occupiers and do not necessarily require affordable housing and this is reflected in the needs modelling accompanying this report;
- Regional household projections suggest that the proportion of singles and other household types is likely to increase in the future.

4.68 The following economic drivers underpin the operation of the Stafford Borough housing market area:

- Economic activity rates (16-64) of 77.9%¹⁹ (with 4.3% unemployed), with a further 22.1% economically inactive;
- 68.2% of people in employment work within Stafford Borough. Of those working outside the Borough, 8.5% work in Stoke-on-Trent, 19.2% work elsewhere in the West Midlands and 4.2% work outside the West Midlands
- According to the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, lower quartile earnings in 2011 across Stafford Borough were £18,424 which compares with £17,430 for the West Midlands region and £18,720 for England. Median incomes were £26,603, compared with a regional median of £24,466 and a national median of £26,395.

4.69 In terms of dwelling stock, across Stafford Borough:

- 74.9% of properties are houses (29% detached, 27.5% semi-detached and 18.3% terraced), 10.9% are flats, 10.9% are bungalows and for 3.3% of dwellings, the type is not known²⁰;
- 6.9% have one bedroom, 22.7% have two bedrooms, 49.7% have three bedrooms, 17% have four or more bedrooms and for 3.7% of properties the number of bedrooms are not known²¹;
- 12.9% of dwellings are social rented and 87.1% are private sector (owner occupied and private rented)²²;

4.70 Stakeholders felt that there were a number of drivers of housing market demand across Stafford, these include:

- Geography (good access to economic centres of Manchester and Birmingham);
- Economy and jobs (both in terms of lack of local employment opportunities, and the impact of those relocating to the area for work);
- Demography and household change (in particular population growth, household formation, and the ageing population);
- Lack of access to affordable mortgage finance (lack of deposit prevents first time buyers accessing the market);
- Lack of new build starts and new supply;
- The impact of welfare reforms (leading to possible increased demand for affordable housing, homelessness and temporary accommodation);
- Lack of affordable housing options;
- Location and accessibility – good transport links to centres of employment (i.e. Birmingham);

¹⁹ Annual Population Survey year to end March 2012

²⁰ 2011 Valuation Office Agency

²¹ 2011 Valuation Office Agency

²² DCLC Table 100 Dwelling Stock Tenure and District 2011

- Demand from students;
- Affordability; and
- Rural housing demand.

Core Output 3: Future households

Household projections

- 4.71 Estimates of the number of future households have been derived from CLG 2008-based household projections. These suggest that the number of households across Stafford Borough is expected to increase from 53,000 in 2008 to 65,000 by 2033 (an increase of 2.6%). This equates to an average annual increase of around 500 households to 2033.
- 4.72 The total number of households in Stafford Borough is expected to increase by around 12,000 and of this increase, around 11,000 will be from households where the Household Reference Person (HRP formerly Head of Household) is aged 65 or over and around 1,000 will be from households where the HRP is aged under 65.

Core Output 4: Current households in need

- 4.73 A robust and defensible assessment of housing need is essential for the development of affordable housing policies which need to be articulated in Local Development Frameworks. Housing need can be defined as:
- ‘The quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance’.
- 4.74 The 2012 Homesfirst data provides a robust and transparent evidence base required to assess housing need across Stafford. This is presented in detail at Appendix A of this report and follows CLG modelling guidance. The Homesfirst data reports that across Stafford, there are 1,013 existing households in need which represent 1.9% of all households. Reasons for housing need are summarised in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Housing need in Stafford Borough

Main reason	Number	Percent
Cost	108	10.7
Discharge	1	0.1
Domestic Violence	6	0.6
End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	22	2.2
Eviction/Repossession	23	2.3
Living with family/friends	19	1.9
Heath	167	16.5
Require independent accommodation	15	1.5
Neighbour issues	62	6.1
Relationship breakdown (non-violent)	17	1.7
Other reasons	223	22.0
Overcrowding	172	17.0
Property condition	38	3.8
Racial Harassment	1	0.1
To be nearer school	3	0.3
Require sheltered accommodation	52	5.1
Require support from family	64	6.3
Currently in tied accommodation	5	0.5
Underoccupancy	5	0.5
For employment	10	1.0
Total	1013	100.0

Source: 2012 Homesfirst Data

- 4.75 Table 4.9 summarises overall housing need (before further analysis to test the extent to which households can afford open market provision to offset their need) by ward and the extent to which housing need varies across Stafford Borough. The proportion of households in need is highest in Penkside ward (4.8%), Manor (4.3%) compared with a Borough average of 1.9%.
- 4.76 Table 4.10 summarises overall need by urban and rural areas. Analysis indicates that the scale of need is greatest in Stafford Town (2.6% of households in need) compared with 1.3% in Stone and 1% in Rural Areas. However, rural parish surveys tend to show greater levels of housing need and it is likely that households in urban areas are more likely to register with Homesfirst as there is a perception that a property may become available compared with few dwellings being available in rural areas.

Table 4.9 Households in need by ward

Ward	No. households in need	Total occupied households	% in need
Barlaston and Oulton	21	1692	1.2
Baswich	8	1822	0.4
Chartley	7	819	0.9
Church Eaton	5	909	0.6
Common	76	2072	3.7
Coton	41	1798	2.3
Eccleshall	27	2759	1.0
Forebridge	55	2476	2.2
Fulford	17	2473	0.7
Gnosall and Woodseaves	17	2690	0.6
Haywood and Hixon	42	2693	1.6
Highfields and Western Downs	111	2862	3.9
Holmcroft	82	2830	2.9
Littleworth	55	2640	2.1
Manor	116	2821	4.1
Milford	8	1688	0.5
Milwich	9	748	1.2
Penkside	84	1822	4.6
Rowley	27	1811	1.5
St. Michael's	10	1488	0.7
Seighford	32	1996	1.6
Stonefield and Christchurch	32	2473	1.3
Swynnerton	6	1904	0.3
Tillington	51	1905	2.7
Walton	45	2601	1.7
Weeping Cross	13	2645	0.5
Ward not stated	16		
Total	1019	54437	1.9

Source: 2012 Homesfirst Data

Table 4.10 Households in need by locality

Locality	No. households in need	Total occupied households	% in need
Stafford Town	719	27504	2.6
Stone Town	87	6562	1.3
Other Areas	207	20371	1.0
Total	1013	54437	1.9

Source: 2012 Homesfirst Data

Core Output 5: Future households requiring affordable housing

- 4.77 Various assumptions regarding the rate of household formation can be derived from a number of sources. These are explored in detail at Appendix A but in summary the study is assuming a baseline household formation rate of 955 households each year. This is based on gross household formation rate of 1.7% of households which is based on Survey of English Housing/English Housing Survey estimates. Analysis of Homesfirst data would suggest that 234 newly-forming households each year require affordable housing based on the number of applicants on the database.
- 4.78 Further details of modelling affordable housing requirements is presented in Appendix A.

Core Output 6: Future households requiring market housing

- 4.79 The total number of households is expected to increase at a rate of around 500 each year and the Local Plan is seeking to secure an additional 500 dwellings each year.
- 4.80 Assuming that 30% of new development is affordable (around 150 dwellings), around 350 new market dwellings should be built each year. On the basis of discussions with estate agents and an analysis of newbuild trends, a variety of dwellings should be built across the Borough. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the current profile of dwelling construction should be maintained, although an increased emphasis on the development of family homes (with 2 to 4 bedrooms) in urban areas may be appropriate.

Core Output 7: Size of affordable housing required

- 4.81 A detailed analysis of the following factors determines overall affordable housing requirements:
- Households currently in housing which is unsuitable for their use and who are unable to afford to buy or rent in the market (backlog need);
 - New households forming who cannot afford to buy or rent in the market;
 - Existing households expected to fall into need;
 - The supply of affordable housing through social renting and intermediate tenure stock.
- 4.82 The needs assessment model advocated by the CLG has been used and detailed analysis of each stage of the model is presented at Appendix A.

4.83 In addition to establishing the overall affordable housing requirements, analysis considers the supply/demand variations by county, delivery area, property designation (i.e. general needs and older person) and property size (number of bedrooms). Analysis provides a gross figure (absolute shortfalls in affordable provision) and a net figure (which takes into account surplus accommodation relative to need). Modelling suggests an annual **net shortfall of 210** affordable dwellings each year across Stafford (Table 4.11) over the Plan Period to 2031.

Table 4.11 Net annual affordable housing requirements by property size and designation to 2031

Designation	No. Beds	Net annual requirement
General Needs	1	102
	2	70
	3	-18
	4	1
Older Person	1	57
	2	-2
Total		210

4.84 Please note that this modelling does not include future affordable development which would help to offset the scale of affordable shortfall identified. It should also be noted that the evidenced affordable shortfall is likely to be an underestimate given that:

- Households in rural areas are less likely to be registered on the Homesfirst as evidenced in rural Housing Needs Surveys;
- There is a potential loss of social housing stock through a reinvigorated 'right to buy' policy;
- Changes in allocation policy for Stafford and Rural Homes, with 10% of lets to go to key workers and military personnel.

4.85 The breakdown of affordable requirements by settlement/parish is summarised in Table 4.12. It is important to reiterate that this analysis is based on a review of the Homesfirst dataset and does not take account of parish-level surveys which may demonstrate a greater degree of housing need.

4.86 It should also be noted that the last few years has been a time of marked slowdown in housing market activity and a time of increasing economic uncertainty. Furthermore, the ability of households to access mortgage finance is a critical consideration in looking at overall affordable housing need in the short-term. The current affordable need estimates are based on CLG SHMA guidance modelling but may be higher as they are simply based on an income multiplier/access to equity and not on the ability to actually access a mortgage.

Table 4.12 Net annual affordable housing requirements by property size, designation and locality over the Plan Period to 2031

Locality	Designation and Bedroom size			
	General Needs		Older	Total
	Smaller 1/2 Bed	Larger 3+ Bed	All Sizes	
Stafford Town	125	-5	29	149
Stone Town	15	-3	9	21
Other Areas	32	-9	17	40
Stafford Borough Total	172	-17	55	210

IMPORTANT NOTES WHEN INTERPRETING THIS TABLE

1. This analysis is based on a review of the Homesfirst database. This is likely to underestimate need in rural areas as households may not consider registering as there is a limited availability of social rented dwellings in their area
2. A negative number indicates there is sufficient supply relative to identified need
3. A positive number indicates there is a shortfall in dwelling stock relative to identified need
4. Numbers may not add up due to rounding

- 4.87 Analysis demonstrates a need to deliver additional affordable housing across the Borough. The actual proportion of new dwellings to be affordable should reflect this evidence but crucially be tested against the economic viability of delivery. This concluded that the Council's preferred tenure mix of 80% social rented and 20% intermediate tenure should be a starting point for all affordable housing negotiations.
- 4.88 On the basis of the income profile of households moving into social rented and intermediate tenure dwellings:
- 36.6% could afford an intermediate tenure dwelling with an equity share of £70,000;
 - 27.2% could afford an intermediate tenure dwelling with an equity share of £80,000;
 - 20.5% could afford an intermediate tenure dwelling with an equity share of £90,000.
- 4.89 Over the past three years, a total of 31 intermediate tenure dwellings have been moved into across Stafford. The mortgage element has ranged from zero to £124,475, with a lower quartile mortgage of £47,000 and a median of £64,622.
- 4.90 Evidence would suggest that there continues to be potential for an intermediate tenure market in line with the Council's preferred tenure mix. However, accessing mortgage finance continues to be an issue for lower income households.

Longer-term affordable requirements

- 4.91 It is reasonably assumed that the identified imbalance in affordable requirements (210 each year) will continue over the longer-term. Future updating of the evidence base every five years would be recommended to identify any change in the overall imbalance between supply and need for affordable housing.
- 4.92 Over the period to 2012 to 2031 (19 years), the total number of households across Stafford is expected to increase by around 500 each year or 9,500 over the period 2012 to 2031. Table 4.13 considers the implications of this the overall tenure profile.
- 4.93 Assuming that the Council delivers 150 affordable dwellings each year (and 350 open market dwellings), this will increase affordable dwelling stock by 2,850 (and open market dwellings by 6,650). By 2031 around 15.4% of dwelling stock will be affordable and 84.6% private sector, resulting in a greater degree of tenure options for local residents.

Table 4.13 Potential dwelling tenure profile in 2031

Year		Affordable	Private	Total
2012	Number	7285	49183	56468
	%	12.9	87.1	
<i>Increase in dwellings 2012-2031</i>		<i>2850</i>	<i>6650</i>	<i>9500</i>
2031	Number	10135	55833	65968
	%	15.4	84.6	

The new delivery model for affordable housing

Overview

- 4.94 The Coalition Government has announced a new delivery model for affordable housing. Affordable rent will be the main type of new affordable supply and in addition Registered Providers will be encouraged to convert a proportion of social rented properties at Affordable Rent at re-let. The principal aim of the new model is to use the new Affordable Rent product, together with new flexibilities on the use of existing assets, to generate additional financial capacity to support new supply.
- 4.95 Affordable Rented homes will be made available to tenants at up to a maximum of 80% of market rents and allocated in the same way as social housing is at present. Landlords will have the freedom to offer Affordable Rent properties on flexible tenancies tailored to the housing needs of individual households. The government has introduced a series of other measures such as changes to tenure (no longer a requirement to offer lifetime tenancies, flexibility to offer shorter terms with a minimum of two years); greater flexibility for local

authorities in their strategic housing role and options to increase mobility for social tenants²³.

- 4.96 The potential impact of affordable rent on the relative affordability of rental options is explored in Table 4.14. This considers the income required for different rental tenures to be affordable (with a property deemed to be affordable if it costs less than 25% of income).

Table 4.14 Relative affordability of renting options

Affordability by tenure	Average Rent (Monthly)	Average Rent (Weekly)	Income required (monthly)	Income required (Weekly)
Affordability of Private Rent	£550	£126.92	£2,200	£507.69
Affordability of 80% private rent	£440	£101.54	£1,760	£406.15
Affordability of Social Rent	£303	£69.92	£1,212	£279.68

Source: 2011 Registered Provider rents from Regulatory Statistical Return; 2012 Private sector rents

Core Output 8: Estimates of household groups who have particular housing requirements

Introduction

- 4.97 There is a range of household groups who have particular housing requirements. The SHMA focuses on families, older people, homeless households and support issues.

Families

- 4.98 2001 census data reported that across Stafford Borough, 29.2% of households comprised a couple with child(ren) and 7.7% comprised a lone parent with child(ren).
- 4.99 Estate agents report a particular demand for family accommodation.
- 4.100 Although modelling of affordable housing requirements suggests that priority should be given to delivering smaller dwellings, Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix data does suggest a need for some larger 3+ bedroom dwellings appropriate for families.

²³ Homes and Communities Agency website

Older people

- 4.101 A major strategic challenge for the Council is to ensure a range of appropriate housing provision, adaptation and support Stafford's growing older population. Based on CLG 2008-based population projections, the number of people across Stafford Borough aged 60 or over is projected to increase by 45.5% from 34,700 in 2010 to 50,500 by 2035.
- 4.102 The aspirations and preferences of older people need to be carefully considered in developing appropriate policy responses. A range of options and solutions to address the needs of older people are available in addition to traditional sheltered accommodation, for instance apartments specifically marketed at older people and Extra Care housing. The following definitions have been used to describe different types of older persons' housing:
- **Sheltered accommodation** is usually a group of bungalows or flats and you have your own front door. Schemes usually have a manager/warden to arrange services and linked to a careline/alarm service;
 - **Extra Care Housing** is designed with the needs of frailer older people in mind. It includes flats, bungalows and retirement villages. You have your own front door. Domestic support and personal care are available;
 - **Residential Care Homes** provide a bedroom and the use of a shared lounge with other residents. Personal care is provided – bathing, help dressing, meals etc.;
 - **Co-housing** is a home in a small community which shares facilities (e.g. laundry) and activities.
- 4.103 Similar SHMAs have shown that the majority of older people want to stay in their own homes with help and support when needed and the vast majority are owner occupiers. Studies also show a degree of interest in a range of alternative older persons' accommodation. This is borne out in comments from stakeholders which identified the lack of housing options for older people as a weakness in the housing market.
- 4.104 The lack of housing options for older people was identified as a weakness in the housing market; and accommodation for older people was identified as a priority with a need for a broader and more attractive and accessible offer of accommodation for this demographic. In particular it was felt that extra care and dementia care housing were priorities.
- 4.105 Stakeholders also identified that there is a demand from people looking to downsize.

Specialist support requirements

- 4.106 Respondents to the stakeholder identified provision of supported housing as a medium to high priority. The following observations were made.

- 4.107 Need for other supported housing was identified by stakeholders including supported accommodation for people fleeing domestic violence, young people and care leavers.
- 4.108 Barriers to delivery were identified as being:
- Objections to planning applications based on misconceptions about future occupiers;
 - High cost of delivery;
 - Lack of funding: both capital funding and Supporting People and other revenue funding;
 - Contractual issues;
 - Difficulties with partnership working;
 - Land availability; and
 - Lack of mortgage finance for potential purchasers.
- 4.109 In terms of the specific need for housing for military personnel, a number of respondents identified the need to provide for returning ex-military personnel – especially given planned redundancies within the MOD.
- 4.110 In terms of self-build no need was identified by respondents, however, it was felt that increased publicity could lead to increased demand.
- 4.111 Table 4.15 summarises the type of client groups accommodated in social rented housing across Stafford Borough over the three year period 2008/9 to 2009/10 and 2010/11. Data indicates that a range of groups are accommodated in Registered Provider specialist provision, most notably older people with support need, single homeless with support needs and homeless families with support needs.

Table 4.15 Client groups accommodated in social rented sector in Stafford Borough 2008/9 to 2010/11

Client group	Number
People with learning disabilities	4
People with mental health problems	19
Women at risk of domestic violence	17
Older people with support needs	720
Single homeless people with support needs	142
Homeless families with support needs	23
People with alcohol problems	15
Total	940

Source: Supported CORE lettings data

Homeless households

4.112 Homelessness statistics for 2010/11²⁴ indicate that a total of 87 decisions were made on households declaring themselves as homeless across Stafford Borough (Table 4.16). Of these households, 50 were classified as homeless and in priority need. Over the three years 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11, an average of 151 decisions have been made across Stafford Borough and 93 households have been declared as homeless and in priority need.

Table 4.16 Homeless decisions and acceptances 2008/9 to 2010/11

Year	Decisions made	Accepted as homeless
2008/09	238	160
2009/10	116	68
2010/11	98	50
Total	452	278
Annual Average	151	93

Source: CLG Homelessness Statistics

4.113 The rate of homeless acceptances per 1,000 households has fallen over the period 2008/09 to 2010/11 as illustrated in Table 4.17. The table also compares rates of acceptances by region and England and indicates that rates of acceptances have fallen substantially in Stafford Borough compared with these areas.

Table 4.17 Homeless acceptance rates per 1,000 population 2008/9 to 2010/11

Year	Stafford Borough	West Midlands	England
2008/09	3.0	3.9	2.5
2009/10	1.3	3.2	1.9
2010/11	0.9	3.8	2.0

Source: CLG Homelessness Statistics

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic households

4.114 The 2001 household survey indicates that 95.9% of households had a Household Reference People who described themselves as 'White British' and 4.1% describe themselves as having other ethnicities. Of these, 2.1% were other white, 0.8% Asian/Asian British, 0.6% Black/Black British, 0.3% were mixed ethnicity 0.3% were other groups

²⁴ CLG Homeless Statistics [Table 627: Local Authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 and 1996 Housing Acts, by district](#)

- 4.115 Coton, Forebridge, Rowley and Common wards were the most ethnically diverse areas, with at least 6% of HRPs identifying with an ethnicity other than White British.
- 4.116 In terms of Gypsy and Traveller provision, there are currently 76 pitches across Stafford Borough (64 on private sites and 12 Local Authority owned socially rented pitches). The needs of Gypsies and Travellers is currently being reviewed.

5. Conclusion: policy and strategic issues

- 5.1 This document has been prepared to equip Stafford Borough Council and its partners with robust, defensible and transparent information to help inform strategic decision-making and the formulation of appropriate housing and planning policies. It has delivered core outputs required under the CLG Strategic Housing Market Assessment Guidance, which are underpinned by comprehensive technical appendices.
- 5.2 The work also takes account of the new National Planning Policy Framework which came into effect in March 2012. The SHMA will help local authorities plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community.
- 5.3 This concluding chapter summarises key messages from the research findings, structured around a commentary on the current and future housing markets; the interactions of Stafford Borough with other areas; and relates findings to key local and sub-regional strategic issues.

The current housing market

- 5.4 This study has provides up to date information on the housing stock in Stafford Borough. How the stock profile varies by ward has also been presented.
- 5.5 There are currently a total of 56,467 residential dwellings across Stafford Borough of which 54,437 (96.4%) are occupied, 1,898 (3.4%) are vacant and 132 (0.2%) are second homes. In terms of dwelling stock, 2011 Valuation Offices Agency reports that:
- 74.9% of properties are houses (29% detached, 27.5% semi-detached and 18.3% terraced), 10.9% are flats, 10.9% are bungalows and for 3.3% of dwellings, the type is not known;
 - 6.9% have one bedroom, 22.7% have two bedrooms, 49.7% have three bedrooms, 17% have four or more bedrooms and for 3.7% of properties the number of bedrooms are not known;
 - 12.9% of dwellings are social rented and 87.1% are private sector (owner occupied and private rented)²⁵;
 - There are 1,898 vacant properties (3.4% of total dwelling stock) of whom 772 (1.4%) are classed as long-term empty, and there are 132 second homes located across the Borough.

²⁵ DCLC Table 100 Dwelling Stock Tenure and District 2011

Housing markets and mobility

- 5.6 A range of material has been gathered to help identify market drivers and the characteristics Stafford Borough and linkages with other areas.
- 5.7 An analysis of 2001 census data indicates that 3,504 households had moved in the year preceding the census and of these households 62.9% had moved from within Stafford Borough, suggesting that the Borough is not self-contained in terms of migration. More recent data on migration clearly demonstrates strong linkages with neighbouring Stoke on Trent, Cannock Chase, Newcastle-under-Lyme and South Staffordshire suggesting that Stafford is part of a larger housing market area.
- 5.8 In terms of travel to work, 2001 census data reported that 68.2% of residents lived and worked in Stafford Borough and a further 27.6% worked elsewhere in the West Midlands (notably Stoke on Trent) and therefore Stafford is part of a broader functional market which extends sub-regionally and particularly into Stoke on Trent.
- 5.9 Therefore, Stafford Borough is not a self-contained housing market area but exhibits strong migration and travel to work interactions with neighbouring areas and is part of a wider sub-regional market which includes Stoke on Trent, Cannock Chase, Newcastle under Lyme and South Staffordshire.

Future housing market

- 5.10 Household projections point to an overall increase in the number of households across Stafford Borough, with CLG 2008- based household projections suggesting that the number of households expected to increase from 53,000 in 2010 to 65,000 in 2033, an increase of 22.6%. This represents an annual increase to 2033 of around 500 households.
- 5.11 Managing demographic change will become an increasingly important issue for Stafford Borough. Population projections suggest that the proportion of the population in the county aged 60 and over will continue to grow, with an increase from 34,700 in 2010 to 50,500 by 2035.
- 5.12 Although the total number of households is predicted to grow, the aging population means that most of the growth will be in older person households. Over the period 2008-203, the total number of households is expected to increase by around 12,000. Overall, the number of households headed by someone aged 65 or over is expected to increase by around 11,000 and the number headed by someone aged under 65 is expected to increase by 1,000

Housing need and demand

Delivering new housing

- 5.13 A challenge for the Council is to align future housing development with trends relating to household growth, household aspirations and the need for affordable housing. Crucially, the nature of household change needs to be better reflected in strategic housing and planning policies. Analysis would suggest that the most growth will be amongst households with a household reference person aged 65 and over and more modest growth of households headed by people in younger age bands.
- 5.14 The SHMA has demonstrated that over the past three years an average of 275 new dwellings have been built. Across the urban areas of Stafford and Stone newbuild has tended to be smaller dwellings with around 40% being flats. Elsewhere in the Borough around 84% of newbuild has been of houses and dwellings with three or more bedrooms. Overall, there is a need to maintain the delivery of a range of dwellings, particularly for families.
- 5.15 In terms of affordable housing, an annual net shortfall of 210 affordable dwellings has been calculated (gross requirement of 229) with strongest need for smaller one and two bedroom general needs and older person dwellings. Housing Waiting List figures from the 2011 CLG Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix suggests that 90.9% of need is for smaller one and two bedroom dwellings and 9.1% from properties with three or more bedrooms. Both sources of evidence indicate the priority to delivery smaller affordable dwellings across Stafford Borough.
- 5.16 An Economic Viability Assessment prepare for the Council concluded that the Council's preferred tenure mix of 80% social rented and 20% intermediate tenure should be a starting point for all affordable housing negotiations. The SHMA indicates that there is a continued demand for intermediate tenure products in line with the Council's preferred tenure mix, although any new rented provision is likely to be affordable rented.
- 5.17 In summary, key drivers in determining the tenure and type of future development include:
- The need to continue development to maintain the diversity of existing provision and enhance the range of existing stock through newbuild;
 - Responding to the impact of demographic change on dwelling requirements and in particular developing an increasing range of housing and support products for older people;
 - Delivering additional affordable housing to help offset the identified net shortfalls; and diversifying the range of affordable options by developing intermediate tenure dwellings and products;

- The economic viability of delivering affordable housing on sites across Stafford.
- 5.18 The current economic circumstances clearly present a number of challenges to the delivery of housing and in particular the delivery of affordable rented housing and intermediate market dwellings.

Affordable housing policy recommendations

- 5.19 The 2012 SHMA demonstrates an ongoing requirement for affordable housing across Stafford Borough which should be reflected in the Local Plan. The Council's preferred Core Policy anticipates a minimum of 30% of housing on qualifying sites will be affordable and in some areas, such as Stone, up to 40% could be achieved in some circumstances. This scale of affordable housing requirement is substantiated by the housing needs analysis carried out as part of this SHMA. The Council's Economic Viability Assessment recommends that any Borough wide affordable housing policy is not unduly rigid and can be applied flexibly and pragmatically allowing development to come forward whilst meeting the needs of the community.

Improving the quality of existing stock

- 5.20 Strategic challenges include reducing the level of vacant dwellings and improving the quality of existing dwellings through better energy efficiency and modernisation.

Vacant stock

- 5.21 There are 772 long-term vacant properties across Stafford Borough and these are mainly in the private sector. Properties can be empty for a variety of reasons which include: the properties are too difficult to repair or are in the process of being repaired; they are in the process of being sold; they have been bought for capital investment; or they are in probate.
- 5.22 The Council should continue to consider identifying the reasons why properties are empty and identify mechanisms for bringing them back into use. Mechanisms could include:
- Financial/professional help for repairs and improvements in the form of equity loans; grant aid for renovation and subsequent leasing to a Registered Provider for a fixed term; a professional service to manage repairs or full renovation;
 - Assistance with letting management or the sale of a property

Satisfaction and repair

- 5.23 Improving the energy efficiency of dwellings and modernisation of stock is an important driver to improving the quality of existing stock and extends beyond

those households expressing dissatisfaction. Given the need to reduce energy consumption, improve thermal comfort and future proof households from spikes in energy prices, retrofitting stock with improved insulation, heating systems and solar panels is likely to become a significant strategic issue.

The ageing population and addressing the needs of vulnerable people

- 5.24 The proportion of older people is expected to increase dramatically over the next few decades and delivering housing and support services to older people is going to become a key strategic issue. By 2035, the number of people across Stafford Borough:
- aged 60+ is projected to increase by 15,800; and
 - aged 75+ is projected to increase by 11,700.
- 5.25 This trend has significant policy implications, given the greater need for appropriate housing and support as people age.
- 5.26 A key challenge for the Council is to ensure a greater diversity of support services are made available to older people wanting to stay in their own home and develop funding mechanisms to achieve this. Additionally, the range of housing options available to older people needs to be diversified.

Final comments

- 5.27 Appropriate housing and planning policies have a fundamental role to play in the delivery of thriving, inclusive and sustainable areas. These policies need to be underpinned with high quality data. This study has provided a wealth of up-to-date social, economic, demographic and housing data for Stafford Borough.
- 5.28 This research has reflected upon the housing market attributes of the Borough and interactions with other localities, notably Stoke-on-Trent and other neighbouring districts. The report signposts future strategic challenges which include the ongoing delivery of new market and affordable housing to address need and support economic growth; diversifying the range of affordable tenures available to local residents; improving the condition and energy efficiency of existing stock; and addressing the requirements of an increasingly ageing population and vulnerable groups.

Introduction to Technical Appendices

The SHMA guidance establishes a framework for the analysis of local housing markets from which core outputs can be derived.

There are seven technical appendices accompanying this report which provide further background information on the following areas:

- Technical Appendix A Housing need
- Technical Appendix B Monitoring and updating
- Technical Appendix C Statement of conformity to SHMA guidance

Technical Appendix A: Housing need calculations

Underpins core outputs 4,5,6,7

Summary of contents

Stage 1: Current housing need (gross backlog)

- Step 1.1 Homeless households and those in temporary accommodation
- Step 1.2 Overcrowding and concealed households
- Step 1.3 Other groups
- Step 1.4 Total current housing need (gross)

Stage 2: Future housing need (gross annual estimate)

- Step 2.1 New household formation (gross per year)
- Step 2.2 Proportion of new households unable to buy or rent in the market
- Step 2.3 Existing households falling in to need
- Step 2.4 Total newly-arising housing need (gross per year)

Stage 3: Affordable housing supply

- Step 3.1 Affordable dwellings occupied by households in need
- Step 3.2 Surplus stock
- Step 3.3 Committed supply of new affordable housing
- Step 3.4 Units to be taken out of management
- Step 3.5 Total affordable housing stock available
- Step 3.6 Total supply of social re-lets (net)
- Step 3.7 Annual supply of intermediate affordable housing available for re-let or resale at sub-market levels
- Step 3.8 Annual supply of affordable housing

Stage 4: Estimate of annual housing need

- Step 4.1 Total backlog need
- Step 4.2 Quota to reduce over 5 years (20%)
- Step 4.3 Annual backlog reduction
- Step 4.4 Newly-arising need
- Step 4.5 Total annual affordable need
- Step 4.6 Annual social rented capacity
- Step 4.7 Net Annual Shortfall

Introduction

- A.1 A working definition of housing need is 'the quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance'. A range of secondary data provides a robust range of information to quantify housing need in Stafford and the extent to which additional affordable housing is required. This includes data from the current Homesfirst Choice-Based lettings dataset.
- A.2 Housing needs analysis and affordable housing modelling has been prepared in accordance with CLG guidance at Borough and sub-area. In summary, the model reviews in a step-wise process:
- Stage 1: Current housing need (gross backlog)
 - Stage 2: Future housing need
 - Stage 3: Affordable housing supply
 - Stage 4: Estimate of annual housing need
- A.3 Table A1 summarises the different steps taken in assessing housing need and evidencing the extent to which there is a surplus or shortfall in affordable housing across the Stafford Borough. Please note that in Stage 1, step 1.4 reports the total number of households in need and avoids double counting as in some cases households have more than one housing need.

Table A1 CLG Needs Assessment Summary for Stafford Borough

Step	Stage and Step description	Calculation	Stafford
Stage1: CURRENT NEED			
1.1	Homeless households and those in temporary accommodation	Annual requirement	69
1.2	Overcrowding and concealed households	Current need	172
1.3	Other groups	Current need	772
1.4	Total current housing need (gross)	Total no. of housholds with one or more needs	1013
Stage 2: FUTURE NEED			
2.1	New household formation (Gross per year)		955
2.2	Number of new households requiring affordable housing		234
2.3	Existing households falling into need	Annual requirement	19
2.4	Total newly-arising housing need (gross each year)	2.2 + 2.3	253
Stage 3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY			
3.1	Affordable dwellings occupied by households in need	(based on 1.4)	563
3.2	Surplus stock	Vacancy rate <2% so no surplus stock assumed	0
3.3	Committed supply of new affordable units	Annual	0
3.4	Units to be taken out of management	None assumed	0
3.5	Total affordable housing stock available	3.1+3.2+3.3-3.4	563
3.6	Annual supply of social re-lets (net)	Annual Supply (3 yr ave)	303
3.7	Annual supply of intermediate affordable housing available for re-let or resale at sub-market levels	Annual Supply	10
3.8	Annual supply of affordable housing	3.6+3.7	313
Stage 4: ESTIMATE OF ANNUAL HOUSING NEED			
4.1	Total backlog need	1.4A-3.5	450
4.2	Quota to reduce over 1 year		100%
4.3	Annual backlog reduction (assume 60.1% cannot afford open market prices)	Annual requirement	270
4.4	Newly-arising need	2.4	253
4.5	Total annual affordable need	4.3+4.4	523
4.6	Annual social rented capacity	3.8	313
4.7	Net annual shortfall	Net	210

Source 2012 Homesfirst Data; Registered Provider CORE Lettings and Sales data

Note 3.2 Vacancy rate <2% relates to social rented housing.

Note 3.3 See comments in para 3.3

Stage 1: Current need

- A.4 A working definition of housing need is 'the quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance'. The SHMA Guidance suggests types of housing that should be considered unsuitable, as summarised in Table A2.

Table A2 Summary of housing need factors

Category	Factor
Homeless households or with insecure tenure	N1 Under notice, real threat of notice or lease coming to an end
	N2 Too expensive, and in receipt of housing benefit or in arrears due to expense
Mismatch of housing need and dwellings	N3 Overcrowded according to the 'bedroom standard' model
	N4 Too difficult to maintain
	N5 Couples, people with children and single adults over 25 sharing a kitchen, bathroom or WC with another household
	N6 Household containing people with mobility impairment or other special needs living in unsuitable accommodation
Dwelling amenities and condition	N7 Lacks a bathroom, kitchen or inside WC and household does not have resource to make fit
	N8 Subject to major disrepair or unfitness and household does not have resource to make fit
Social needs	N9 Harassment or threats of harassment from neighbours or others living in the vicinity which cannot be resolved except through a move

Step 1.1 Homeless households and those in temporary accommodation

- A.5 CLG SHMA guidance suggests that information on homeless households and those in priority need who are currently housed in temporary accommodation should be considered in needs modelling. The scale of need from these types of household can be derived from several sources.

- A.6 Homelessness statistics for 2010/11²⁶ indicate that a total of 87 decisions were made on households declaring themselves as homeless across Stafford Borough (Table A3). Of these households, 50 were classified as homeless and in priority need. Over the three years 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11, an average of 151 decisions have been made across Stafford Borough and 83 households have been declared as homeless and in priority need.

Table A3 Homeless decisions and acceptances 2008/9 to 2010/11

Year	Decisions made	Accepted as homeless
2008/09	238	160
2009/10	116	68
2010/11	98	50
Total	452	278
Annual Average	151	93

Source: CLG Homelessness Statistics

- A.7 The Homesfirst choice-based lettings data identified 69 households who were homeless and this figure has been used in needs analysis.

Step 1.2 Overcrowding and concealed households

- A.8 The extent to which households are overcrowded is measured using the 'bedroom standard'. This allocates a standard number of bedrooms to each household in accordance with its age/sex/marital status composition. A separate bedroom is allocated to each married couple, any other person aged 21 or over, each pair of adolescents aged 10-20 of the same sex and each pair of children under 10. Any unpaired person aged 10-20 is paired if possible with a child under 10 of the same sex, or, if that is not possible, is given a separate bedroom, as is any unpaired child under 10. This standard is then compared with the actual number of bedrooms (including bedsits) available for the sole use of the household.
- A.9 The Homesfirst identifies 172 households who are currently living in overcrowded accommodation.

Step 1.3 Other groups

- A.10 Table A2 identified a series of households who were in housing need for other reasons including the property is too expensive, difficult to maintain, household containing people with mobility impairment/special need, lacking amenities, disrepair and harassment.

²⁶ CLG Homeless Statistics [Table 627: Local Authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 and 1996 Housing Acts, by district](#)

- A.11 A total of 772 households across Stafford Borough were identified to be experiencing one or more of these needs factors and intending to move in the next five years. This figure is taken as the annual year backlog of need from other groups.

Step 1.4 Total current housing need

- A.12 The total current housing need is assumed to be 1,013 households across Stafford Borough. As the Homesfirst database is refreshed annually this is assumed to be the annual backlog of households in housing need. Other SHMAs tend to demonstrate that between 6 and 10% of households are in some form of housing need which would equate to a backlog need of between around 3,300 and 5,600. On the general assumption that this backlog is cleared over a five year period, this would result in an annual requirement of between 680 and 1120.

Summary of Stage 1: Current need

- A.13 In summary, of the households identified in Steps 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3, a total of 1,013 households across Stafford require affordable housing.

Step 2.1 New household formation (gross per year)

- A.14 The needs analysis assumes a 1.7% gross household formation rate of 955. This is based on a national estimate of 1.7% (based on the five year period 2005/6 to 2009/10 as reported in the English Housing Survey/Survey of English Housing)

Step 2.2 New households unable to buy or rent in the open market

- A.15 This is based on the number of newly-forming household currently on the Homesfirst database (234).

Step 2.3 Existing households expected to fall into need

- A.16 An estimate of the number of existing households falling into need each year has been established by drawing upon the Registered Provider lettings data. This suggests that over the period 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11, a total of 19 households moved into the social rented sector because they had fallen into housing need and were homeless.

Step 2.4 Total newly arising housing need (gross per year)

- A.17 Total newly arising need is calculated to be 253 households each year across Stafford Borough.

Stage 3: Affordable housing supply

- A.18 The CLG model reviews the supply of affordable units, taking into account how many households in need are already in affordable accommodation, stock surpluses, committed supply of new affordable dwellings and dwellings being taken out of management (for instance pending demolition or being used for decanting).

Step 3.1 Affordable dwellings occupied by households in need

- A.19 This is an important consideration in establishing the net levels of housing need as the movement of these households within affordable housing will have a nil effect in terms of housing need²⁷.
- A.20 A total of 563 households are current occupiers of affordable housing in need. Although the movement of these households within affordable housing will have a nil effect in terms of housing need (i.e. they already live in affordable housing), the types of property they would 'free up' if they moved is considered in modelling.

Step 3.2 Surplus stock

- A.21 A proportion of vacant properties are needed to allow households to move within housing stock. Across the social rented sector, this proportion is generally recognised as being 2%. Stock above this proportion is usually assumed to be surplus stock. Modelling assumes no surplus social rented stock across Stafford Borough.

Step 3.3 Committed supply of new affordable units

- A.22 The Council are seeking to deliver around 130 new affordable homes each year and although this delivery is not factored into the model specifically, the result would be an annual reduction in the shortfall of affordable dwellings to 80 each year (based on the imbalance of 210 being reduced by 130 each year, leaving an overall shortfall of 80 each year).

²⁷ Strategic Housing Market Assessment Guidance (CLG, August 2007)

Step 3.4 Units to be taken out of management

- A.23 The model assumes there will be no social rented units taken out of management over the next five years.

Step 3.5 Total affordable housing stock available

- A.24 It is assumed that there are **563** social (affordable) rented dwellings available.

Steps 3.6 Annual supply of social re-lets

- A.25 The CLG model considers the annual supply of social re-lets. Address-level Registered Provider CORE lettings data has been analysed for the three years 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11. This information can be used to accurately assess the likely capacity of the social rented sector by location, size of property and designation (whether the property is general needs or older person). For the purposes of analysis, it is important to focus on the ability of households requiring affordable housing to access it. Therefore, the annual supply figures derived from CORE lettings data and used in modelling:

- **Exclude** those moving into accommodation from outside Stafford Borough and households moving within the social rented stock; and
- **Include** households who moved from within Stafford into social renting from another tenure; newly-forming households originating in Stafford and moving in social renting; and households moving from specialist/supporting housing from within Stafford into affordable housing.

- A.26 Analysis suggests that there is an annual average of 303 social rented dwellings let to new tenants i.e. households originating in Stafford who either moved into social renting from another tenure, were newly-forming households, or who moved from supported/specialist accommodation.

- A.27 Modelling therefore assumes an annual capacity of **303** dwellings for new tenants across Stafford Borough. Table A4 illustrates how the annual capacity by figure is broken down by designation (general needs and older person) and property size.

Table A4 Annual social rented re-lets

Designation	No. of bedrooms				Total
	1	2	3	4	
General Needs	91	150	52	3	296
Older Person	4	2	1	0	7
Total	96	151	53	3	303

Source: Registered Provider CORE data

Steps 3.7 Annual supply of intermediate re-lets/sales

- A.28 Table A5 presents a summary of the average supply of intermediate tenure dwellings which have either been sold or relet over the three year period 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11 as recorded in CORE Sales data.

Table A5 Intermediate tenure sales/relets

Designation	No. of bedrooms			Total
	2	3	4	
General Needs	5	4	0	9
Older Person	1	0	0	1
Total	6	4	0	10

Source: Registered Provider CORE lettings data for 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11

Summary of Stage 3

- A.29 Overall, the model assumes an existing affordable supply of 563 and an annual supply of 303 social (affordable) lettings and an annual supply of 10 intermediate tenure lettings/sales.

Stage 4: Estimate of annual housing need

Overview

- A.30 Analysis has carefully considered how housing need is arising within Stafford Borough by identifying existing households in need (and who cannot afford market solutions), newly-forming households in need and existing households likely to fall into need.
- A.31 This has been reconciled with the supply of affordable dwellings which considers location, size and designation (i.e. for general needs or older person). Based on the CLG modelling process, analysis suggests that there is an overall annual net shortfall of **210** dwellings before any affordable newbuild is considered.
- A.32 For critical stages of the needs assessment model (Step 1.1, Step 1.4, Step 2.4 and Step 3.8), information is broken down by designation (general needs and older), property size and parish/settlement. This goes beyond the requirement of the SHMA guidance but allows a detailed assessment of the overall housing requirements of households in need and provides clear affordable requirement information. In turn, this can help identify where there are shortfalls and sufficient capacity of affordable housing, and help to shape policy responses.

- A.33 Stage 4 brings together the individual components of the needs assessment to establish the total net annual shortfall.
- A.34 Step 4.1 is the total backlog need which is derived from the number of households in Step 1.4 minus total affordable housing stock available (Step 3.5).
- A.35 Given that the Homesfirst database is refreshed annually, it is assumed for modelling purposes that the backlog should be cleared annually. Step 4.2 therefore assumes that all of the need should be addressed each year.
- A.36 Step 4.3 is the annual backlog reduction based on step 4.2. At this stage, the extent to which households in need could afford open market solutions is factored into analysis.
- A.37 No household income data is recorded on the Homesfirst database and therefore it has not been possible to test the potential for households to afford open market solutions. However, it is possible to review the income of households moving into social rented and intermediate tenure dwellings from Registered Provider CORE lettings and sales data. This indicates that 60.1% of households moving into affordable dwellings over the three years 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11 could not afford open market solutions (either to rent or buy based on a lower quartile purchase price of £118,000 and a lower quartile rent of £495 each month). The model therefore assumes that 60.1% of households in housing need could not afford open market solutions.
- A.38 Step 4.4 is a summary of newly-arising need from both newly forming households and existing households falling into need.
- A.39 Step 4.5 is the total annual affordable need based on steps 4.3 and 4.5.
- A.40 Step 4.6 is the annual social rented capacity based on step 3.8.

Total net shortfall

- A.41 Table A6 summarises the overall annual net affordable housing requirements for Stafford by designation (general needs and older person) and property size. Table A7 summaries the same data by settlement/parish. Overall, analysis suggests a shortfall in affordable housing across Stafford

Table A6 Net affordable housing requirements – annual requirements over the Plan Period to 2031

Designation	No. Beds	Net annual requirement
General Needs	1	103
	2	70
	3	-18
	4	1
Older Person	1	57
	2	-2
Total		210

Table A7 Net affordable housing requirements – annual requirements by locality over the Plan Period to 2031

Locality	Designation and Bedroom size			
	General Needs		Older	Total
	Smaller 1/2 Bed	Larger 3+ Bed	All Sizes	
Stafford Town	125	-5	29	149
Stone Town	15	-3	9	21
Other Areas	32	-9	17	40
Stafford Borough Total	172	-17	55	210

Tenure and dwelling type profile of affordable dwellings

A.42 Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate tenure dwellings. New affordable development by Registered Providers will be affordable rented (with rents of up to 80% open market rent) and in order to recommend an appropriate split between social rented and intermediate tenure, it is necessary to consider the findings of the Council's economic viability assessment (Need to check findings!).

Implications for planning

A.43 There is an ongoing need for affordable housing delivery within Stafford Borough,

A.44 It is recommended that the Council considers and further explores:

- Applying affordable housing requirements with flexibility whilst the market is in recession subject to the provision of robust viability evidence from developers when flexibility is sought;
- Working with developers to explore innovative ways to deliver affordable housing in their areas;
- Discuss with the HCA and Registered Provider partners options to maximise and facilitate affordable housing delivery in current market conditions, including investment opportunities and the future use of funding;
- Monitoring, reviewing and responding to the changing national policy agenda to be implemented through the National Planning Framework; and
- Continued monitoring of affordable housing delivery (effective monitoring of delivery is increasingly important when applying policy flexibly)

Technical Appendix B: Monitoring and updating

A framework for updating the housing needs model and assessment of affordable housing requirements

Introduction

- B.1 Having invested considerable resources in obtaining an excellent range of primary and secondary data, it is vital that this information be used to the maximum effect and updated on a regular basis. The purpose of this appendix is to establish a framework for updating the housing needs model and affordable housing requirements. In addition, it recommends the regular monitoring and review of housing market activity and regular reflections on the wider strategic context.

Updating of baseline housing needs and affordable housing requirements

- B.2 A baseline assessment of housing need across Stafford Borough has been derived from the household survey. This information should be taken as a baseline from which annual reviews of key aspects of the model proceed. It is recommended that the baseline information has a shelf-life of three to five years (with a recommended refresh of household information after 2015/16 through primary surveying).
- B.3 Key elements of the needs assessment model can be readily updated on an annual basis to reflect:
- changes in house prices and rental costs;
 - capacity of the social rented sector;
 - availability of intermediate tenure housing.

Changes in house prices and rental costs

- B.4 It is recommended that the annual purchase of address-level house prices to complement the existing dataset continues. This will result in an annual refresh of house price data by survey area and provide an indication of changing lower quartile prices. In turn, these can be applied to **Step 1.4** of the needs assessment model which considers the extent to which households in need can afford open market prices. As part of this analysis, updated information on

private rented sector rents needs to be secured. Several websites can provide a snapshot of private rents and help inform this element of the update.

- B.5 Lower quartile prices and private sector rents should also be compared with the income profile of newly-forming households at **Step 2.2** of the needs assessment model.

Capacity of the social rented sector

- B.6 The capacity of the social rented sector needs to be reviewed annually using Registered Provider CORE lettings data (**Step 3.6**).
- B.7 A dataset has been prepared for Registered Provider CORE data for 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11 as part of this research. This includes some additional variables identifying the characteristics of households (by designation i.e. under 60 or over 60) and previous housing circumstances (from out of area, previously social renter, previously other tenure and from supported/specialist accommodation). The capacity of the social rented sector is based on the number of lettings to households from within the Local Authority District who were previously living in (non social rented or intermediate) tenure.

Availability of intermediate tenure housing

- B.8 CORE Sales data can identify the availability of intermediate tenure housing (**Step 3.7**). Data has been assembled for 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Annual adjustments to affordable requirements

- B.9 Datasets can be provided from which annual reviews of affordable requirements can proceed. This will point to any adjustment in net requirements by survey area, designation and property size.

Updating of contextual information

- B.10 This report has presented a range of contextual information relating to the economy, demography (including population projections and migration) and dwelling stock. This information should be updated where possible and in particular progression with economic growth and diversification should be carefully monitored.

Reflections on the general strategic context and emerging issues

- B.11 As part of its strategic housing function, all LAs need to understand the general strategic housing market context and respond to emerging issues. Given the dynamic nature of housing markets, the Central and Local Government policy agenda and bidding for resources, any update of housing needs must be positioned within a wider strategic context.

- B.12 Ongoing stakeholder consultation and engagement with local communities is also vital to maintain up-to-date intelligence on housing market issues.

Concluding comments

- B.13 It is vital that mechanisms are in place to derive robust, credible and defensible estimates of housing need and affordable requirements across Stafford Borough. We believe that this study provides a robust evidence base which has the capacity to be updated.
- B.14 Having established a baseline position on affordable housing and advice on open market provision to reflect aspirations, it is essential that housing market activity is regularly monitored. This is highly relevant given current housing market uncertainty. A range of methods have been suggested to ensure that housing need and affordability modelling is revised on an annual basis. Annual reviews should also take into account the changing strategic context and impact on housing market activity.

Technical Appendix C: Statement of conformity to SHMA guidance

- C.1 This Statement of Conformity confirms that in delivering the eight core SHMA outputs, the process criteria outlined in the SHMA guidance has been adhered to. Further details are now provided.
- C.2 In order for a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to be deemed robust and credible, it needs to provide, as a minimum, all of the core outputs and meets the requirements of all of the process criteria (these were presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 of this report).
- C.3 This Statement of Conformity confirms that in delivering the eight core SHMA outputs, the process criteria outlined in the SHMA guidance has been adhered to. Further details are now provided.

Approach to identifying Market area(s) is consistent with other approaches to identifying Market areas within the region

- C.4 The 2012 SHMA has used migration, travel to work and house price analysis (in accordance with CLG advice note on defining market areas). The approach to define market areas has therefore been consistent with other approaches to identifying markets and follows national best practice.

Housing market conditions are assessed within the context of the delivery area

- C.5 Although specific focus of this research has been Stafford Borough, research has considered inter-relationships with other areas, notably with Stoke on Trent and other neighbouring authorities. This has been achieved through a review of migration and travel-to-work.

Involves key stakeholders, including house builders

- C.6 The research has been overseen by a steering group comprising Local Authority housing and planning officers. During the course of the research, stakeholder interviews have been carried out with a wide-range of interest groups including estate agents, supporting people representatives, house builders and private lettings agents. The research has therefore ensured that the views of a range of key stakeholders are represented in the study.

Contains a full technical justification of the methods employed, with any limitations noted

- C.7 The research has been multi-method and involved secondary data analysis, a major household survey and stakeholder consultation. The study methodology was summarised in Chapter 1. The range of data assembled is in accordance with the SHMA guidance. In order to understand housing market dynamics more fully, the research has placed a particular emphasis on primary fieldwork to

enhance and supplement the review of secondary data sources. Within the text of the report, any particular observations relating to data including limitations and interpretation have been presented.

Assumptions, judgements and findings are fully justified and presented in an open and transparent manner.

- C.8 Given our expertise and understanding of housing research, the strategic housing agenda and affordability issues, we believe that any assumptions, judgements and findings are fully justified and have been presented in an open and transparent manner. In particular, we have ensured that robust data has been presented and interpreted based on our understanding of general market drivers and the wider sub-regional, regional and national strategic context.

Uses and reports upon effective quality control mechanisms

- C.9 Throughout the research process, we have ensured that the most up-to-date and robust data sources have been used. We have a series of internal quality control mechanisms relating to data analysis and interpretation; project management; and client liaison. By having these quality control mechanisms in place, we trust that this is evidenced in the quality of research and output we produce.

Explains how the assessment findings can be monitored and updated since it was originally undertaken.

- C.10 A series of recommendations for updating the study have been presented at Appendix B.