



Radford Bank Stafford

Vision & Delivery Statement

A green infrastructure-led approach

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Park Side

5000m

Beaconside

2000m

Burleyfields



STAFFORD

500m

Queensville

Weeping Cross

Moss Pitt

Walton-on-the-Hill

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This Vision and Delivery Statement has been prepared by Hollins Strategic Land and relates to a parcel of land south of Radford Bank in Stafford (“the site”). It has been prepared to support the promotion of the site for a green infrastructure-led residential development and demonstrates that the site is in a very sustainable location on the edge of the Stafford boundary and should be identified as a residential allocation for early delivery in the Stafford Local Plan (2020-40).

1.1 The context and background to this submission relates to the emerging Stafford Local Plan which has reached Preferred Options stage and is being consulted from 24 October 2022 to 12 December 2022. The proposed requirement to deliver a minimum of 10,700 new homes (535 per year) in the period 2020-2040 is identified and a strategy is set out for how this level of development is to be achieved. The majority (59%) of this requirement is to be met in and around Stafford town.

1.2 There is a need, therefore, for new housing sites to be identified by new Local Plan and a clear need to ensure deliverable sites can make a meaningful contribution to housing delivery.

1.3 The site extends to 4.86 hectares (12 acres). The site is currently undeveloped and is considered suitable for the delivery of green infrastructure and ecological enhancements on more than half of the site, alongside 60 dwellings.

1.4 Radford Bank runs adjacent to the

northern boundary with a large residential area beyond. Ripon Drive and a cycleway delineates the eastern boundary with an established residential area beyond which influences the character of the site. The Stafford Settlement Boundary, as adopted, lies adjacent to the site to the north and east. A large wooded area lies to the south of the site with Wildwood Park beyond. Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal abuts the western boundary. The physical characteristics of the site including the wooded areas to the south and west, which have grown and matured over the years, make it relatively well-contained visually and physically.

1.5 The scale of green infrastructure and ecological improvements alongside some residential development (60 dwellings) would make an excellent contribution as a small/medium sized site which the NPPF states can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly. Whilst the site is a medium-sized site which can be built-out quickly and which the NPPF considers is important to meeting housing needs.

1.6 Taking into account factors such as topography and other technical considerations such as ecology, heritage, landscape and arboriculture, it is anticipated that the site is capable of delivering around 60 homes with open space, green infrastructure and ecological benefits.

1.7 HSL have undertaken initial survey work and due diligence and have fully considering any constraints and opportunities presented by the site as a whole. An overview of the

key technical considerations to-date is also provided, which helps to demonstrate that the site is available, suitable, achievable and can therefore be considered deliverable.

1.8 HSL intend to work collaboratively with local stakeholders to deliver a sensitive scheme, including the community, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Highway Authority, and Canals and River Trust. Comments made on a historic planning application on the site have helped inform the proposed scheme.

The site is well placed to contribute towards meeting future housing needs in Stafford which aligns strongly with the Council’s emerging strategy in the Preferred Options Local Plan 2040.



TRACK RECORD

2.0 Hollins Track Record

HSL, as one of the leading land promoters in strategic land, has a demonstrable track record in securing planning permissions on all our sites with 100% of all consented sites delivering homes. HSL was founded in 2007 and aims to help bring forward sustainable and deliverable sites. Recently, HSL has secured over 10 planning permissions for over 700 dwellings; many have already been sold to national and regional housebuilders, or built out by our SME sister house-building company Hollins Homes.

2.1 HSL work on behalf of a wide range of landowners including private individuals, charities, trusts and Government estate departments, promoting land through the planning system to secure housing allocations and planning permissions for residential development. We then manage the sale of the site from the landowner to the housebuilder who then build out the site and deliver homes. HSL has a sister company, Hollins Homes, who build high quality developments.

2.2 HSL has an in-house project management team who are qualified planners with a collective planning experience of over 60 years. This helps to give HSL the edge in understanding the planning system and the issues associated with a wide and diverse range of projects without relying heavily on outside professional advice. It means that sites we are involved in have a sensible planning strategy 'baked-in' from the very early stages which helps avoid an adversarial approach. Blended with commercial acumen results in HSL actually ensuring delivery of homes on the ground.

2.3 The table opposite provides examples of HSL sites with outline consent which are completed or under construction. It takes on average around 6-12 months to submit a reserved matters (RM) application from outline consent, but in some instances less than 5 months. On average, more recently, building is starting within 2 years from outline consent depending on the scale and complexities of the site.

2.4 In addition, HSL can contractually or legally oblige housebuilders to submit RM much quicker than would normally be the case if the housebuilder gained the outline consent themselves. This can be for several reasons: open marketing is a much more competitive process and performance is key as well as landowners seeking a return sooner.

2.5 It is in HSL's interest to have reserved matters submitted as quickly as possible, either ourselves through our sister company Hollins Homes or by contractual arrangement with a chosen housebuilder. HSL will also oversee and input our expertise into any RM application so the process is smoother and faster. This is a benefit of the sites we are promoting, particularly in instances where deliverability of a site quickly is preferred by the Council.

Recent Land Market Transaction Timescales

2.6 Recent land transactions made by HSL during 2020 up to December 2022 indicate that there is a clear appetite for sites with deliverable outline consents, particularly in locations with pent up demand for new homes.

Over the last two years it has taken between three and six months from outline consent to securing a preferred house builder. HSL's expertise ensures that marketing a site from outline stage is not necessarily a drawn-out process and relatively quick timescales can be achieved with the right site and a deliverable consent in place.

In summary, HSL is a key facilitator of sustainable sites which can be delivered quickly and therefore its approach can boost housing supply in sustainable locations where housing need is greatest.

Table of HSL Track Record of Delivery

SITE	HOUSEBUILDER	STATUS	OUTLINE CONSENT	RESERVED MATTERS SUBMITTED	BUILD START
Adderbury, Oxfordshire (40 dwellings)	Hayfield Homes	RM pending	10/09/21	30/03/22	MAR '23
Forton, Lancashire (173 dwellings)	Persimmon	RM pending	10/05/18	15/07/22	SPRING '23
Melksham, Wiltshire (144 dwellings)	Barratt	Under construction	10/09/21	04/04/22	APR '23
Staveley, Derbyshire (400 dwellings)	Barratt / David Wilson	Under construction	28/08/20	28/07/21	NOV '22
Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire (130)	Seddon Homes	Under construction	01/04/20	07/04/20	JUN '22
Bodicote, Oxfordshire (46 dwellings)	Greensquare	Under construction	30/10/19	15/06/21	SEP '22
Loveclough, Lancashire (80 dwellings)	Hollins Homes	Under construction	17/05/19	19/08/20	MAR '21
Mistley, Essex (67 dwellings)	CALA Homes	Under construction	12/04/19	24/01/20	AUG '20
Galgate, Lancashire (67 dwellings)	Hollins Homes	Under construction	27/02/19	23/08/19	DEC '21
Westhoughton, Lancashire (58 dwellings)	Hollins Homes	Under construction	30/10/18	05/08/19	APR '20
Broughton, Lancashire (97 dwellings)	Watkin Jones	Under construction	03/04/18	12/08/19	JAN '20
Chippenham, Wiltshire (72 dwellings)	Wainhomes	Under construction	09/03/18	03/01/19	AUG '20
Kirkham, Lancashire (170 dwellings)	Story Homes	Under construction	23/01/17	6/3/19	JUL '19
Newton-with-Scales, Lancashire (50)	Hollins Homes	Completed	18/08/17	13/12/17	JUN '19
Calne, Wiltshire (83 dwellings)	David Wilson Homes	Completed	04/7/16	8/7/17	JUN '18
Blackrod, Lancashire (110 dwellings)	Rowland Homes	Completed	26/4/16	19/12/16	NOV '17
Bramley, Hampshire (65 dwellings)	Taylor Wimpey	Completed	25/5/16	05/02/18	SEP '18
Farnsfield, Nottinghamshire (48 dwellings)	Bellway	Completed	12/4/16	24/2/17	DEC '17
Preston, Lancashire (48 dwellings)	Jones Homes	Completed	02/10/15	03/01/17	OCT '17
Whitchurch, Shropshire (57 dwellings)	Hollins Homes	Completed	17/12/14	10/12/15	APR '18
Garstang, Lancashire (130 dwellings)	Barratt	Completed	11/12/14	11/08/15	DEC '16
Shepshed, Leicestershire (270 dwellings)	Persimmon	Completed	07/11/14	12/04/17	OCT '17
Northwich, Cheshire (74 dwellings)	Stewart Milne	Completed	23/10/13	03/11/14	NOV '17
Barton, Lancashire (65 dwellings)	Rowland Homes	Completed	13/7/13	05/12/13	OCT '14
North of Eastway, Preston (140 dwellings)	Barratt	Completed	13/03/14	10/06/16	JUL '17
Eastway, Fulwood, Preston (22 dwellings)	Hollins Homes	Completed	05/12/13	29/10/14	JAN '16
Preston, Lancashire (70 dwellings)	Charles Church	Completed	27/10/11	06/07/12	APR '14
Alsager, Cheshire (65 dwellings)	Miller Homes	Completed	18/01/13	28/3/13	MAY '15
Wheelock, Cheshire (41 dwellings)	Taylor Wimpey	Completed	23/04/10	14/06/10	MAR '11
Hesketh Bank, Lancashire (35 dwellings)	Rowland Homes	Completed	20/12/11	13/02/12	APR '12
Chorley, Lancashire (75 dwellings)	Bellway	Completed	13/10/10	21/11/11	MAY '12

3.0 Sustainable Location

The site is in a highly sustainable location, with easy access to an excellent range of public transport and local services and facilities without the need for significant new built infrastructure as with new settlements. Even if private cars are used, commuting distances are reduced due to the site's location close to jobs, services and facilities.

The Site

3.1 The site is well-positioned to the east of Stafford on the west side of Weeping Cross. The site measures 4.86 hectares (12 acres), and, topographically, is flat and slopes gently downwards towards the west. The eastern boundary of the site is the highest point at approximately 80m AOD and falls gently to approximately 75m AOD at the west of the site.

3.2 The site lies adjacent to the urban settlement boundary with existing development located to the north and east. A footpath and cycleway runs along the eastern edge of the site connecting the site to the wider pedestrian network. The whole site is well-enclosed and bordered to the west and south by mature woodland trees and shrubs. This has matured significantly over the past decade. The canal physically bounds the site to the west.

Surrounding Area

3.3 The site is located within the Stafford urban area which is the borough's principal town. Stafford is the largest and most sustainable settlement in the borough with key

employment located here. The site has a close relationship to the main town which assists with maximising access to services and reducing the need to travel. Supporting and enhancing access to services and facilities is important to achieving sustainable development in the borough.

3.4 The emerging Local Plan recognises the need to locate more development in locations which are or can be made accessible by a range of transport mode. The site being within the highest tier of settlements is considered the most accessible location in the borough where most facilities and services are located and the existing population is concentrated.

3.5 Stafford town has an existing population of around 70,145 people (Census 2021). The population recorded in 2011 was 68,472 with 62,440 recorded in 2001. This shows a significant reduction in population growth in the urban area (from +9.7% to +2.4%) despite growth across the borough of +4.5% from 130,900 in 2011 to 136,800 in 2021. The borough's population grew slower than the West Midlands (6.2%) and England (6.6%) overall. Part of this is likely caused by a lack of housing within or close to the town which has a knock-on effect in increasing longer commuting patterns outside the town.

3.6 The emerging Local Plan recognises that an increase in the number of people living in the town centre will "support a vibrant economy, ensure the efficient use of land and deliver sustainable communities going forward".

Education

3.7 There are several primary and secondary schools within walking distance nearby which currently have capacity (as published November 2022), including St Anne's Catholic Primary, Barnfields Primary, Silkmore Primary Academy, St Leonard's Primary, Flash Ley Primary, St Austin's Catholic Primary and Stafford Manor High School.

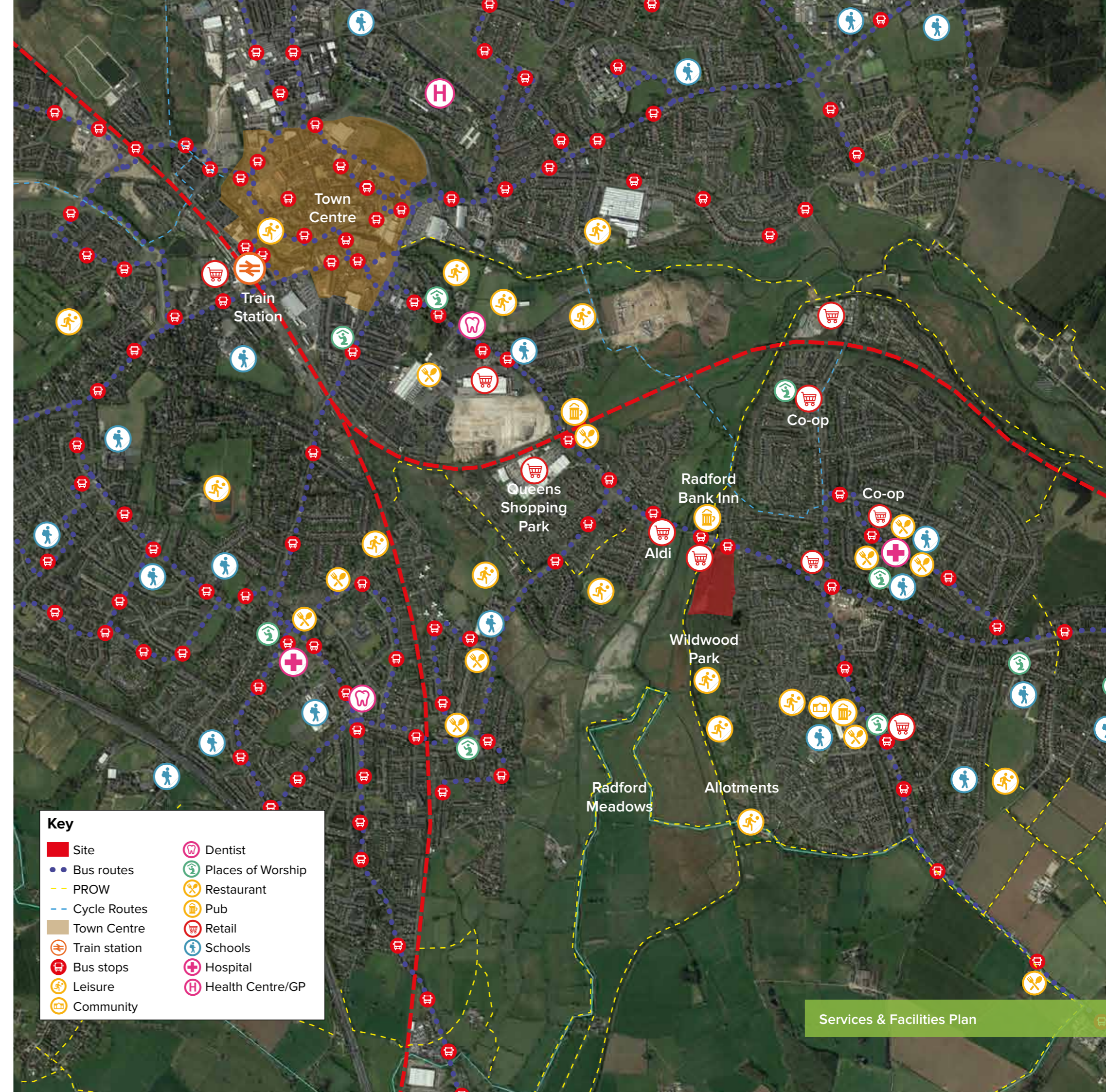
3.8 The small number of additional pupils arising from the proposed scheme across 60 dwellings could be met within existing capacity in nearby schools or via a financial contribution towards the expansion of an appropriate school.

Healthcare

3.9 There are a range of healthcare facilities within walking distance or via bus nearby including Weeping Cross Health Centre, Wildwood Seven Day Pharmacy, Smile Style Dental Care, Wolverhampton Road Surgery and the County Hospital.

Retail

3.10 There are a wide range of retail nearby, some supermarkets within easy walking distance of the site, including Weeping Cross Co-op, Farmdown Road Co-op and Aldi.



Sports and Recreation

3.11 The site has easy access to a range of sport and recreation facilities including Wildwood Park with footpath pitches and skate park, Brocton Football Club, Silkmore Park, Radford Meadows and Stafford Boat Club.

3.12 The site is located within a wider area where high quality, publicly accessible green open spaces and walking routes are already in existence which helps ensure healthy sustainable communities.

Food & Leisure

3.13 The surrounding area caters for an excellent range of food and leisure opportunities including The Radford Bank Inn Stonehouse, Wildwood Community Centre, The Wildwood Grill and Bod Cafe Bar. There are also several places of worship including St Anne's Roman Catholic Church, Holy Trinity Church and Church of Jesus Christ.

Transport and Local Connections

3.14 The site also benefits from excellent regular bus services with the closest bus stops located on Radford Bank immediately adjacent to the site. These are served by the number 74 Chaserider bus service which connect the site to Stafford centre and Cannock. The number 826 Chaserider connects the site to Stafford town, Rugeley and Lichfield. These services typically provides two services per hour Monday to Friday between approximately 05:44 and 19:44. Saturday services are less

frequent with buses running every hour from 06:24 to 19:44.

3.15 Stafford Railway Station is located approximately 2.4km west of the site and is linked to the site via bus routes 74 or 826. The total journey time from the site is 16 minutes and as such provides a realistic opportunity for residents of the proposed site to make a linked sustainable trip.

Local Amenities Table

	Schools	Distance (km)
1	Leasowes Primary	1.4
2	Barnfields Primary	1.2
3	St Anne's Catholic Primary	0.9
4	Walton High School	1.8
5	Oakridge Primary	1.7
6	Silkmore Primary Academy	1.9
Healthcare		
6	Weeping Cross Health Centre	0.8
7	Wolverhampton Road Surgery	2.2
8	Smile Dental Care	1.8
Retail		
9	Aldi	0.4
10	Weeping Cross Co-op	1.1
11	Farmdown Road Co-op	1.2
12	M. Mottershead Butchers	1.0
Transport		
13	Bus stops on Radford Bank	0.1
14	Stafford Train Station	2.4

Bus Services

Service	Route	Daytime	Evening	Sat
74	Stafford - Cannock	Every 30 mins	4 journeys	Every 60 mins
826	Stafford - Rugeley - Lichfield	Every 30 mins	2 journeys	Every 60 mins

3.16 Stafford Station provides direct and frequent services to Birmingham, Manchester and London.

The site's highly sustainable location make it an ideal logical location for some housing growth. There is an opportunity to provide a sustainable development that meets borough-wide and local housing needs and supports the local economy.

	Places of Worship	Distance (km)
15	St Anne's Roman Catholic	0.8
16	Church of Jesus Christ	1.1
17	Holy Trinity Church	1.2
Food & Leisure		
18	Radford Bank Inn Stonehouse	0.2
19	Wildwood Park	0.6
20	Wildwood Skate park	1.3
21	Stafford Boat Club	1.4
22	Wildwood Allotments	1.2
23	Radford Meadows	1.1
24	Brocton Football Club	1.3
25	Wildwood Community Centre	1.1
26	Bod Cafe Bar	1.0
27	Falmouth Ave Play Area	1.7
28	Queens Shopping Park	1.2
29	B&Q Stafford	1.7
30	Spittal Brook Pub	1.2



The site has excellent links to recreational routes along the canal

DELIVERABILITY

4.0 Deliverability

Available

4.1 The entire site has previously been submitted through the Stafford Call for Sites process (Site STAFMB22). HSL have a long term agreement with the landowners to promote the site for development and intend to continue promoting the site as a residential allocation through the preparation and examination of the Stafford Local Plan 2040.

4.2 HSL have a proven track record of facilitating the delivery of high quality developments on suitable and sustainable sites and can confirm that there are no insurmountable technical issues, the green infrastructure enhancements and modest housing development can be delivered within the early period of the Stafford Local Plan 2040. The site is therefore confirmed as being deliverable.

Suitable

4.3 It is demonstrated in this document that the site is in a highly sustainable location, well related to the existing Stafford urban area.

4.4 Stafford town area in which the site is located is the most sustainable location to accommodate growth in the borough being at the top of the settlement hierarchy. The site compares very well to the constraints and issues facing other areas of land around the borough, and their distance from services, facilities and jobs in Stafford town. In light of the specific opportunities and benefits afforded by the proposed vision on this site, not least the delivery of new enhanced publicly

accessible green infrastructure and biodiversity improvements immediately adjacent to the urban area boundary.

4.5 This section is informed by technical work undertaken in relation to the site, as well as information from the previous planning application, and demonstrates there are no physical characteristics or legal constraints that would prevent a modest housing scheme with green infrastructure improvements being delivered at the site.

4.6 The site is therefore confirmed as being suitable for housing.

Achievable

4.7 HSLs professional team have assessed the physical characteristics of the site along with any other technical considerations and can confirm that development of the site is commercially viable, even taking account of a policy compliant proportion of affordable housing as well as the green infrastructure improvements proposed. HSL are confident that when taking all known factors into account the site could be developed for approximately 60 dwellings in a manner which would be sensitive and appropriate to its setting with a moderate density in character with the existing settlement edge. The following is a summary of the technical factors associated with development of the site.

Arboriculture

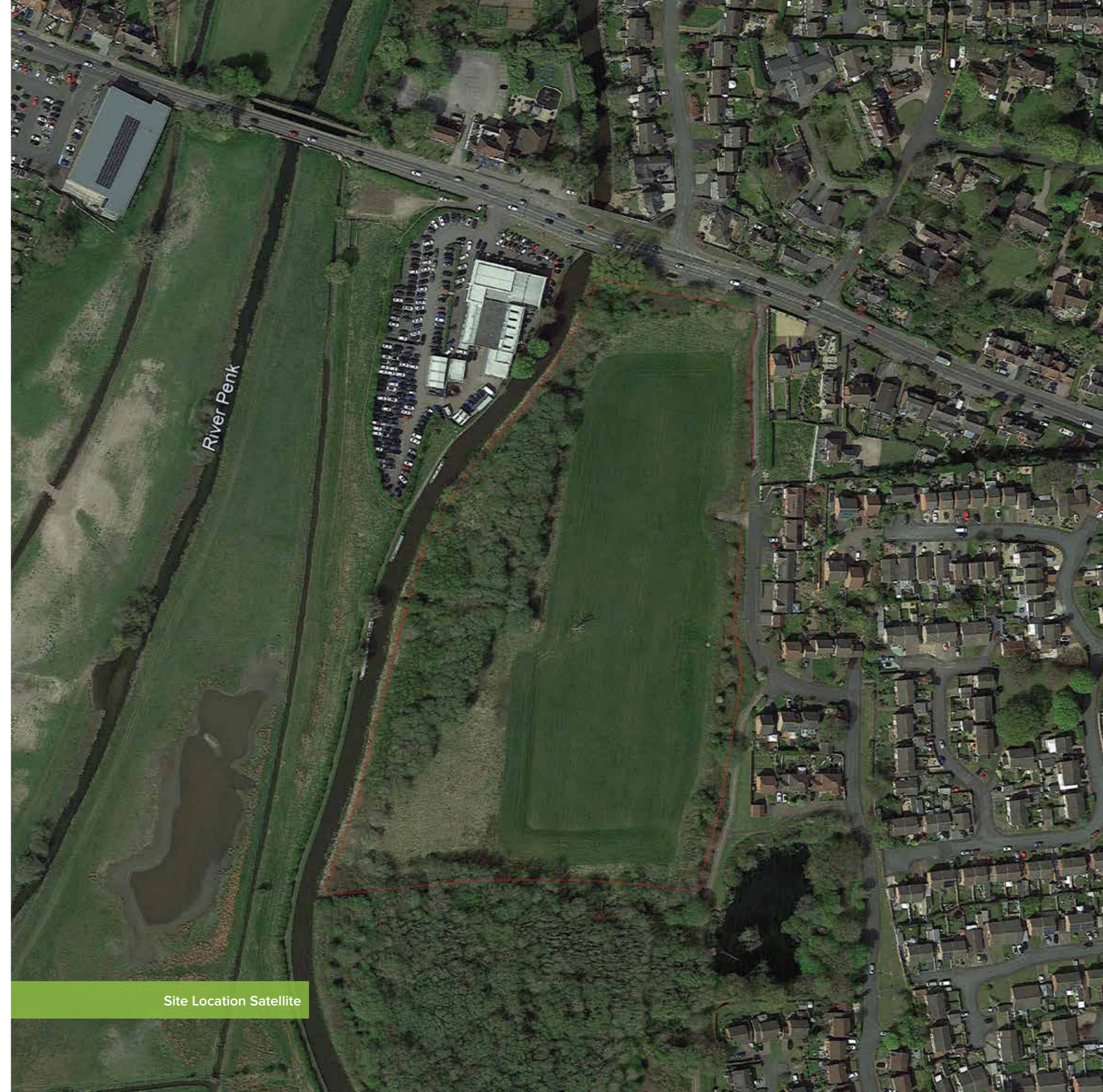
4.8 The site itself contains one standalone mature tree, an ash, and areas of scrub to most boundaries. The biggest feature is the plantation of predominantly goat willow adjacent to the canal which has matured and extended over the past decade. To the south of the site there is an extensive area of woodland which has encroached into the site boundaries due to fallen trees and pioneer species developing. Goat willow is the predominant species. Some Whitebeam species tree and scrub are located along the northern boundary within the adopted highway. Some areas of hawthorn scrub are also located along the eastern boundary.

4.9 In arboricultural terms the site is deemed suitable for development. Further information in this document is provided under Green Infrastructure.

Ground

4.10 The 1:50,000 British Geological Survey (BGS) map shows the site is underlain by superficial deposits of sand and gravel. The solid geology underlying the western portion of the site is the Stafford Halite Member (halite-stone and mudstone). The solid geology in the eastern portion of the site is the Mercia Mudstone Group (mudstone and halite-stone).

4.11 There may be likely potential for sustainable soakaway drainage solutions which will be confirmed at detailed design stage.



Archaeology

4.12 Professional assessment work undertaken appraised the potential for archaeological remains within 1km radius of the site based on information held at the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and Stafford Records Office.

4.13 The potential for undesignated remains of truncated ridge and furrow cultivation is not visible on the ground and in any event is considered very low potential due to farming earthwork as confirmed by lidar imagery undertaken by the Environment Agency.

4.14 Staffordshire County Council Environmental Specialist Team (Historic Environment) previously commented that archaeological mitigation was unnecessary on the site due its location in the agricultural hinterland and the general lack of undesignated archaeological remains recorded on the Historical Remains Record.



EA Lidar Mapping

Conservation

4.15 Due to the significant screening created by the mature vegetation along the western and southern boundaries of the site, the development of the site would have negligible change to the setting of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area, the Grade II Listed Radford Bridge and the Grade II - Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Meadow Canal Bridge No.99. It will also result in a negligible change to the setting of the undesignated post-medieval water meadows at Radford.

4.16 The site lies immediately to the east of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area. As the proposals are to maintain and significantly enhance the woodland trees on-site in the long term, in that a buffer of up to 90m will be provided along the western boundary (and 58% open space), special and sensitive regard is given so that the appearance and character of these assets will be preserved and enhanced. There is an opportunity to provide new public access close to the canal edge, with seating and interpretation boards so that views of the conservation area and Radford Meadows can be appreciated. This is also a heritage benefit.

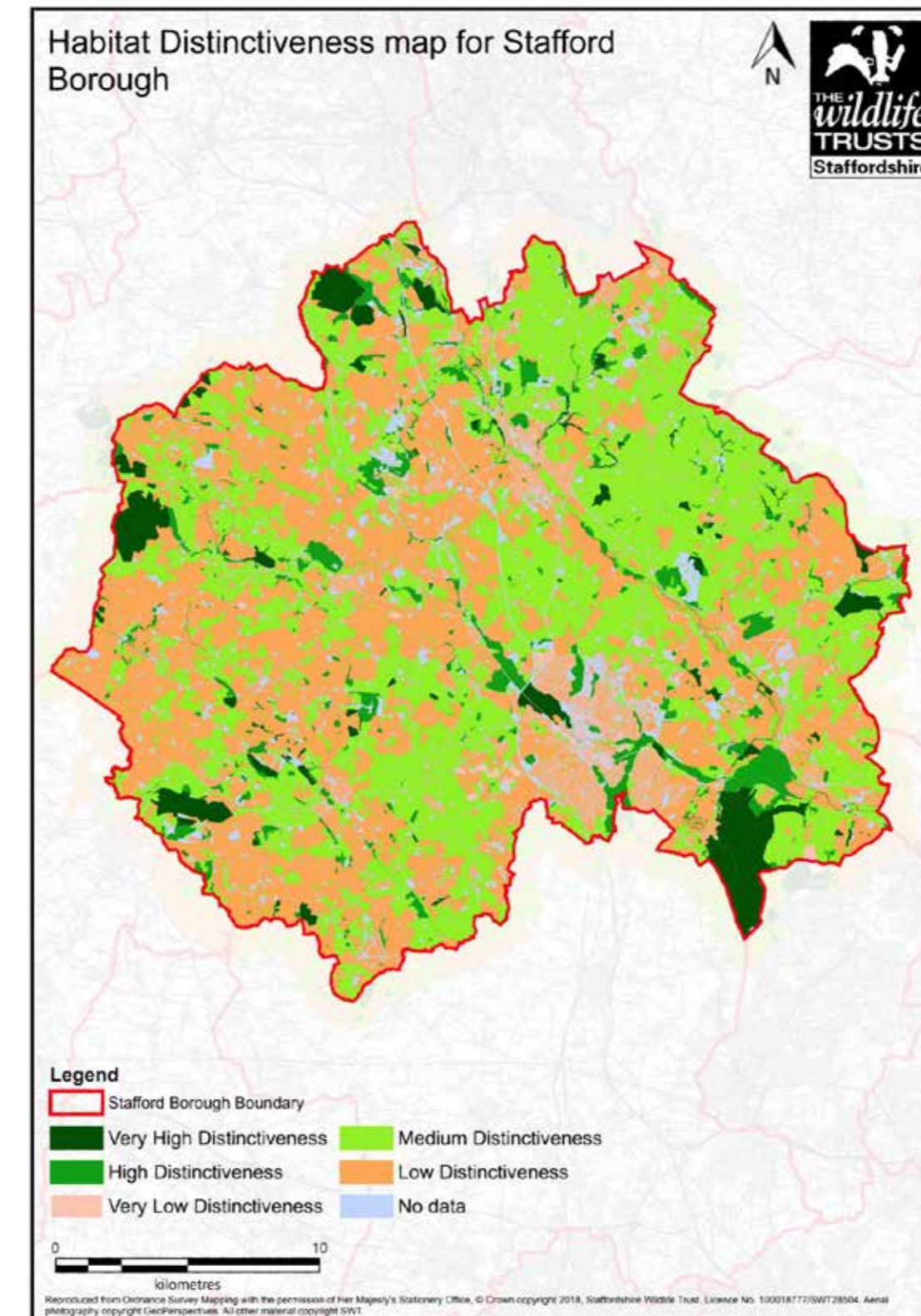
Biodiversity

4.17 The site has no statutory or non-statutory designation for nature conservation. Ecological survey assessment confirms the site is of low ecological value. The site is arable farmland habitat which constitutes the majority of the site and is not an ideal environment for wildlife with low nature conservation value. Boundary hedgerows and vegetation on the southern and eastern boundaries have moderate local nature conservation value, offering foraging and shelter for a wide range of birds and mammals as well as representing important local wildlife corridors.

4.18 The Wildlife Trust 'Stafford Borough Nature Recovery Network Mapping' report (2019) assessed land across the borough to understand areas of biodiversity value and areas which are a priority for protection. The site is assessed as having 'medium' habitat distinctiveness compared with Radford Meadows to the west being 'high' habitat distinctiveness. The report recognises that low and medium distinctiveness habitats could be restored to a higher quality habitat. Indeed, some proposed allocations in the Local Plan 2040 are classed as having at least medium habitat distinctiveness.

4.19 The site also lies within a 'Grassland Opportunity Area' and a 'Wetland Opportunity Area' with some specific opportunities being:

- Enhancement of any existing grassland to create diversity and ensure future management persists;
- Targeting and prioritising further wetland creation and enhancements connected to other watercourses;
- Provide additional wetland habitats



Extract from The Wildlife Trust 'Stafford Borough Nature Recovery Network Mapping' report (2019)

suitable for a range of species;

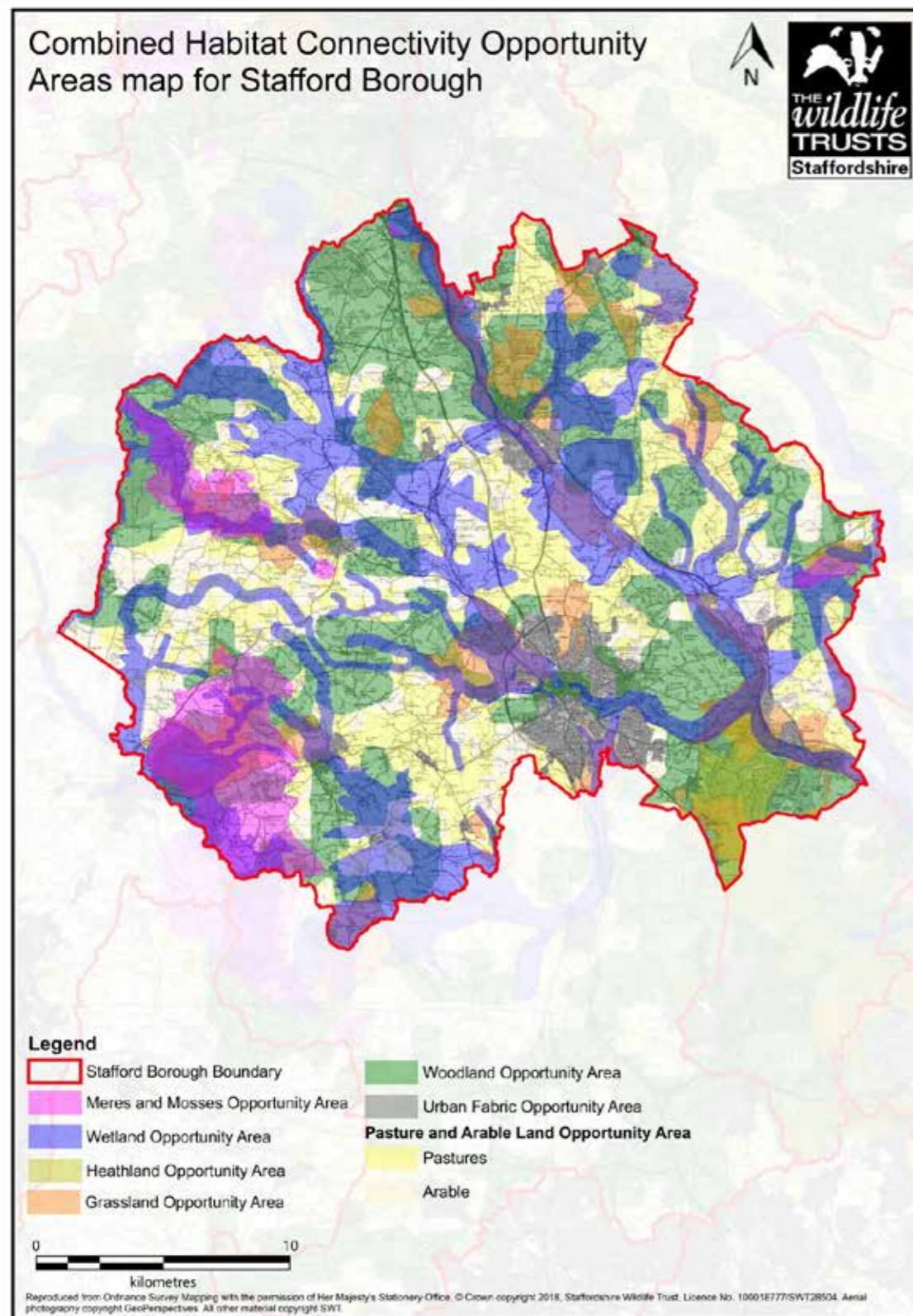
- Recreational and aesthetic benefits;
- Flood and drainage mitigation.

4.20 The hedgerows and woodland trees should be retained and managed appropriately post development. The development of this current agricultural site will offer opportunities to incorporate wildlife friendly landscaping and features which will increase its future nature conservation value.

4.21 There are opportunities to provide new wetland habitats on the site with marshy land and deep linear ponds and drains. This will also help to deter too much direct access by the public and pets from the site to the wider local wildlife site.

4.22 There are also significant opportunities for a habitat and landscape scheme to be designed to positively respond to the targets in the Stafford Borough Biodiversity Action Plan. The site falls within the 'Urban Ecosystem' in the Staffordshire BAP. It notes that the continually expanded population has meant that sustainable development of urban areas is crucial to maintaining, and improving, the level of biodiversity in each area. Not only will this be important for biodiversity itself, but it also provides a direct link for the public to enjoy nature and improve the overall quality of life. Urban areas of high biodiversity will benefit from environmental and economic benefits such as cleaner air and more recreational activities. The objectives include:

- Creation of broadleaved woodland;
- Creation of high quality pond sites;
- Maintain extent of hedgerows, including individual, isolated hedgerow trees and



Extract from The Wildlife Trust 'Stafford Borough Nature Recovery Network Mapping' report (2019)

isolated veteran trees;

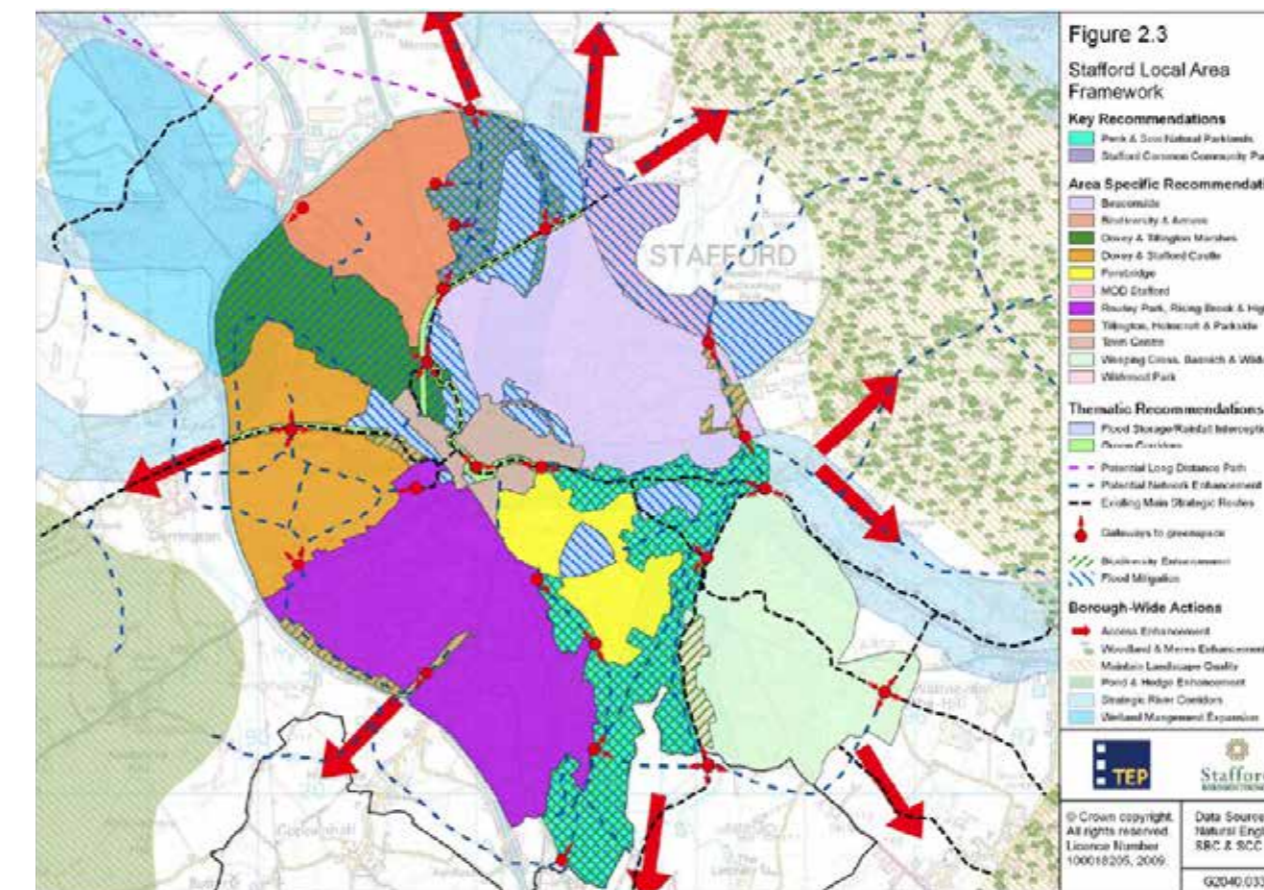
- Create and achieve a net increase in the length of hedgerows;
- Provide semi-natural habitats within and around urban areas;
- Ensure development is sustainable by providing permeable corridors through which wildlife can move.

4.23 The site can assist with meeting many of these objectives.

4.24 New publicly accessible green spaces can be provided to create an alternative area for recreation and avoid impacts to the SAC. The majority of the site can be provided for open space with green and blue infrastructure enhancements on more than 58% of the site, equivalent to 2.86 hectares.

4.25 It is concluded that development can be achieved at the site whilst conserving the hedgerows and trees and other features of ecological interest, particularly the habitat connectivity function of the hedgerows and trees. Development proposals provides an opportunity to secure and implement a significant net gain in biodiversity and green infrastructure at the site.

4.26 Incorporation of opportunities for biodiversity within the built environment is entirely feasible by habitat creation and a landscape planting strategy and will be secured and delivered by a 'Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and Long-term Management Plan'.



Stafford Town GI Local Area Framework

Green Infrastructure

4.27 Enhancing the green network will increase its conservation value alongside informal recreation. Ensuring the continuity of existing green linkages to ensure they are not severed is important. The retention and enhancement of the woodland belt along the west and south of the site as part of the green infrastructure proposals is considered feasible.

4.28 The emerging proposals demonstrate how development can be designed to utilise the existing tree cover on the site to create a scheme that offers a high quality landscape setting with maturity. The additional tree planting as part of a soft-landscaping scheme will provide a net gain in the sites tree cover and overall arboricultural betterment.

4.29 As part of the proposals there is an opportunity to contribute towards the Stafford Green Infrastructure Network, in particular the 'Strategic Open Space Action Area' and 'Strategic Watercourse Corridor' area (shown above). The objectives are:

- Flood and drainage management such as storage will reduce run-off rates and has the added benefit of supporting wildlife and public access to create multifunctional corridors and community asset, linking communities with the wider green space network;
- Improved access to quality and natural green space, reducing the numbers of people visiting Cannock Chase;
- Biodiversity enhancement

4.30 The site is identified within the Stafford Town Local Area Framework, as part of recommendations for Wildwood Park. This is the most ambitious project area for Stafford town which aims to yield many benefits including recreational areas providing health and community benefits, flood mitigation and biodiversity.

4.31 The GI Strategic Plan notes that the Weeping Cross area is well located on the Borough's main strategic recreational network, although access to the canal is limited with the towpath occupying the opposite bank to the settlement. The area contains a high percentage of older people. Large open green space in the area is restricted, small local spaces are limited, with a lack of community spaces in which interaction can take place.

4.32 The identified GI area around the site, specifically Wildwood Park, aims to provide activities for those that cannot for mobility reasons enjoy the Park such as families with young children or less-mobile older people. Key actions relevant to the area around the site include:

- Enhance the area through creating exercise routes and associated infrastructure such as green gyms;
- Explore the possibility of linking Wildwood Park to the Penk Valley through installing a pedestrian bridge across the canal;
- Ensure that new facilities for younger people do not affect the peaceful nature of the Park.

4.33 HSL will work with Stafford and key stakeholders, including the Wildlife Trust, to deliver key biodiversity and green infrastructure benefits.

Landscape & Visual Impact

4.34 The proposals would comprise development of dwellings no more than 2.5 storeys high. Implementation of residential development on the site would result in a change to the landscape character of the site itself but would have no significant adverse effects on the landscape features of the site that contribute to its character (such as the trees), or on the contribution the site makes to local landscape character.

4.35 Visual effects of the development are likely to be limited to local views from Radford Bank and Ripon Drive and some views from adjacent properties. These would be reduced as new planting matures.

4.36 The design of open spaces and proposed planting would be focussed on providing integration of the proposal into its setting but would also provide landscape enhancements through pond and tree management and strengthening of hedgerows.

4.37 The proposal would allow for the implementation of an agreed landscape management plan which would ensure the long-term success of the landscape proposals and appropriate management of the existing vegetation.

4.38 Notably, there were no objections from the Staffordshire County Council Environmental Specialist Team (Landscape) on the 2013 planning application for 80 dwellings. The response consider that the mitigation incorporated into the design would allow for landscape enhancement, which is the landscape character policy objective for the 'Riparian Alluvial Lowlands in the Staffordshire Plain' area.



Photo of the site from Radford Bank. The existing woodland trees provide enclosure and the adjacent residential area influences its character.

Flood Risk and Drainage

4.39 The entire site is located within Flood Risk Zone 1 with reference to the Environment Agency flood maps and therefore residential development would be entirely acceptable in line with national guidance on flood risk. There are no water bodies within the site although an agricultural drain runs along the southern boundary into the canal.

4.40 The Environment Agency surface water mapping indicates there is a low risk of surface water flooding. The vulnerability of the development to flooding from all other sources including sewerage, groundwater and artificial water bodies has been reviewed and no issues have been identified.

4.41 At this stage it has been assumed surface water flows can be drained via gravity and will be restricted via on site attenuation through the use of ponds and swales. Infiltration methods are likely to be suitable for surface water disposal in parts of the site, due to the underlying sand and gravel. On-site investigations will confirm at detailed design stage.

4.42 Foul flows will drain by pumped solution towards an existing sewer on Radford Bank which travels adjacent to the site. Surface and foul outfalls would be to Severn Trent infrastructure.

Utilities

4.43 Based on the information currently available for review, the existing utility infrastructure within the vicinity of the development site appears to be capable of supporting the additional demand required to provide connections for the

Environment Agency Flood Map



proposed development. Radford Bank itself accommodates a foul sewer, surface water sewer, fresh water supply, gas main, electricity, BT services and Virgin fibre.

4.44 Formal applications will be made to the relevant statutory network operators to confirm the actual availability of capacity within the existing networks and to provide firm points of connection.

Agricultural Land Quality

4.45 The Natural England Agricultural Land Classification regional maps identify the majority of the site being 'Urban' classification with an area along the western edge being classified as Grade 3 agricultural quality with adjoining land predominantly in urban use. Further survey investigations would determine

if the land is considered best and most versatile (i.e. Grade 3a or above).

4.46 The area of land classified as Grade 3, would not be economically practicable or viable for commercial agricultural farming given its small scale and isolated location between roads and residential dwellings.

Highways and Transportation

4.47 Radford Bank is a classified adopted main road with a speed limit of 30mph. HSL have undertaken initial highway assessment with Eddisons which confirms a standard 5.5m wide residential access, with 2.0m footways and 6.0m radii is achievable. In order to achieve acceptable distances from the bus layby and pedestrian crossing, the bus layby will need moving slightly in accordance with design standards. A 30m separation distance is provided between the access points and

the pedestrian crossing and bus layby. Early discussions with Staffordshire County Highways will be held to explore other potential options and seek agreement.

4.48 The site benefits from excellent regular bus services with the closest bus stops located on Radford Bank immediately adjacent to the site. These are served by the number 74 Chaserider bus service which connect the site to Stafford centre and Cannock. The number 826 Chaserider connects the site to Stafford town, Rugeley and Lichfield. These services typically provide two services per hour Monday to Friday between approximately 05:44 and 19:44.

Saturday services are less frequent with buses running every hour from 06:24 to 19:44.

4.49 Stafford Railway Station is located approximately 2.4km west of the site and is linked to the site via bus routes 74 or 826. The total journey time from the site is 16 minutes and as such provides a realistic opportunity for residents of the proposed site to make a linked sustainable trip. Stafford Station provides direct and frequent services to Birmingham, Manchester and London.

4.50 Improvements to the existing bus stops could be provided as part of development proposals to encourage their use.

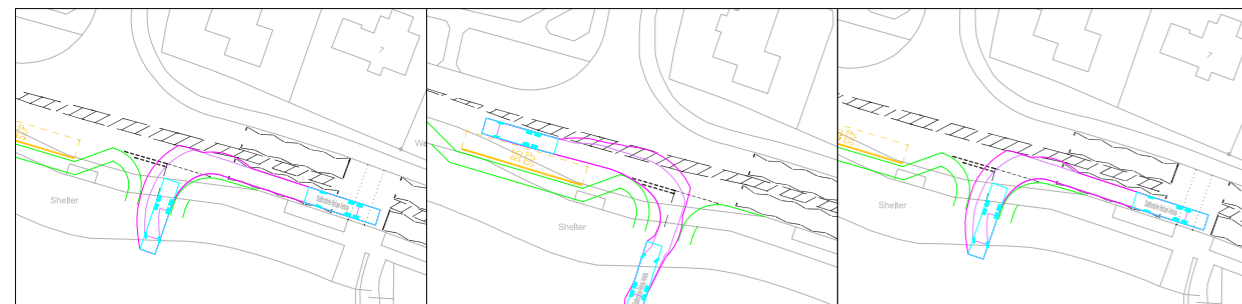
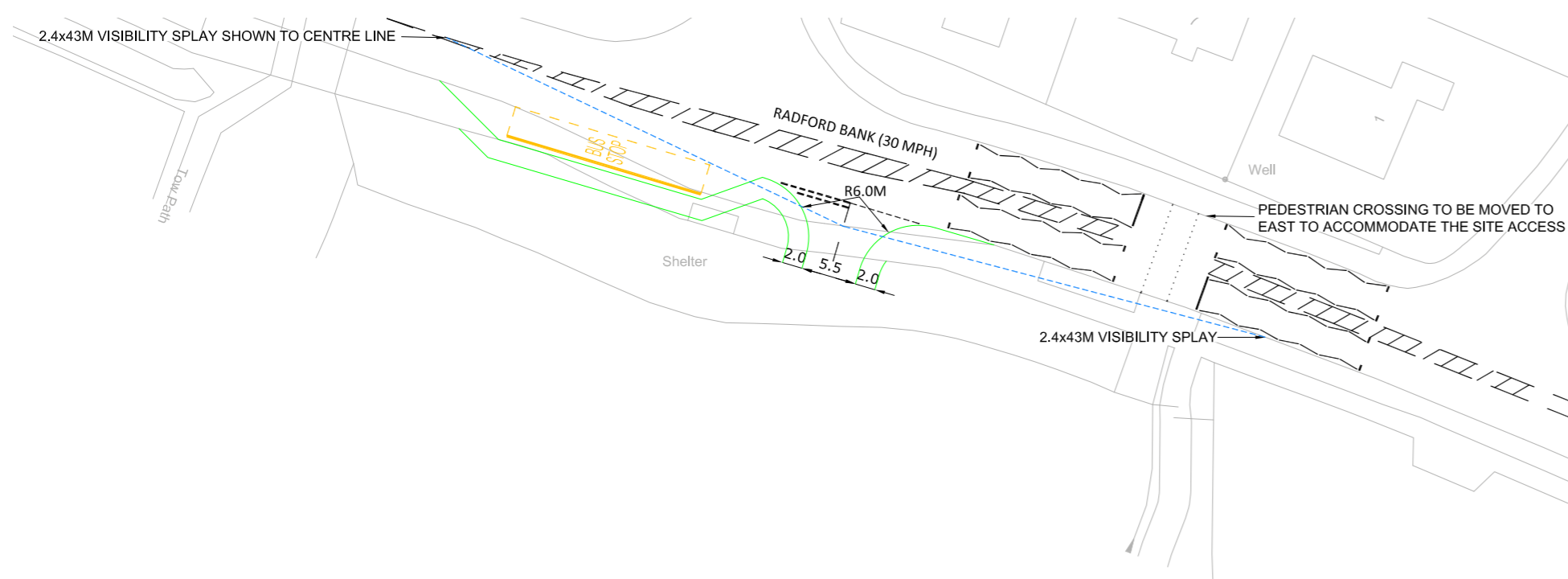


Photo of the site from Radford Bank. The existing woodland trees provide enclosure and the adjacent residential area influences its character.



HISTORIC
APPLICATION

5.0 Historic Application

4.51 An historic outline planning application was submitted in 2013 (Ref: 13/19777/OUT), prior to our involvement, for up to 80 dwellings and was refused on 21 March 2014 for the following technical reasons:

- The 80 dwelling development would adversely affect the character of the Green Infrastructure Network;
- The development would fail to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the canal conservation area;
- The proposed access onto the A34 Radford Bank is too close to the existing controlled pedestrian crossing;
- Insufficient information on the effects of the development on the Cannock Chase SAC;
- Potential detrimental impacts for wetland birds.

4.52 No objections were received from the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water, Staffordshire County Council (Schools Organisation), Natural England, SCC Historic Environment, SCC Landscape, SCC Rights of Way, Borough Tree Officer, Canals and River Trust, Borough Parks and Open Spaces, and Environmental and Health Services (Affordable Housing).

4.53 We have reviewed the historic planning application in detail and seek to ensure any new proposals respond positively and sensitively to the issues raised. We deal in turn the key issues raised at in 2013/14 in the table opposite.



Above: 2013 planning application masterplan show an inward-looking development with limited green and blue infrastructure enhancements and a lack of appreciation for surrounding context.

Issue Raised	Officer Report Commentary	Positive Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Impact on the Green Infrastructure Network 	<p>The report acknowledges that the Green Network policy is not so prescriptive as to seek to prevent all development. However the construction of 80 houses within the overall site of 4.9 ha would fundamentally fail to maintain and enhance the Green Network and wedges and is not considered appropriate.</p> <p>The residential development that would extend unnaturally into an area of open land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The new proposals are green infrastructure-led, forming more than 58% of the gross site area (2.86 ha) and more sensitively designed. ✓ Existing key features such as the woodland will be maintained, significantly enhanced with new native planting and maintained in the long term to align with Staffordshire BAP priorities. ✓ Reduced from 80 dwellings to 60 dwellings with an outward-looking scheme. ✓ The existing woodland areas on-site have significantly matured, further enclose the site so that existing housing has a stronger relationship with it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Impact on canal conservation area 	<p>The wooded terrace features make a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area. The site would encroach into a valuable visual buffer of green space between the canal and housing to the east. Acknowledges that the setting of the canal varies along its length between suburban enclosed setting to more expansive views.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The existing woodland areas on-site have significantly matured and further conceal the site from the canal. ✓ There is limited visibility from the canal to the site. The proposed scheme will maintain the special interest of the conservation area and will enhance its appreciation by creating sensitive public access in accordance with NPPF (para. 206). ✓ Therefore there are no expansive views from the site, however the new proposals create an opportunity to provide new public access close to the canal to appreciate the character and appearance of the conservation area. ✓ A wide woodland landscape buffer between the canal and new dwellings will be maintained and enhanced (30-90 metres wide).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sub-standard highway access design 	<p>It was not considered that the traffic increases associated with 80 dwellings would exacerbate any existing problems. The detailed design of the access onto Radford Bank is geometrically sub-standard in that its position is too close to the existing controlled pedestrian crossing thereby increasing the risk to road users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We have undertaken highway assessments which confirms a standard 5.5m wide residential access, with 2.0m footways and 6.0m radii is achievable. ✓ In order to achieve acceptance distances from the pedestrian crossing the bus layby will need moving slightly in accordance with design standards. ✓ A 30m separation distance is provided between the access points and the pedestrian crossing. ✓ We are undertaking pre-application discussions with Staffordshire Highways to confirm precise designs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Potential effects on Cannock Chase SAC 	<p>Notes the proposal to provide 1.2ha of on-site green infrastructure/open space. Biodiversity Officer advises that a Habitat Regulation Assessment is required due to the proximity of the site to the SAC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A full ecological assessment and HRA will be provided in support of an application. ✓ The site is in close proximity to Wildwood Park with excellent recreational opportunities which would be attract new residents on the site away from designated sites. ✓ The majority of the site will be maintained and enhanced with new public accessibility, seating areas and interpretation boards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Potential impacts for wetland birds 	<p>Potential impact on Radford Meadows to the west of the site. The Biodiversity Officer considered that the scale of housing development on the proposed site would have the effect of reducing the open space area. The floodplain meadows to the west are managed for wetland birds which are prone to disturbance and require large open spaces. All key landscape features must be retained. Further survey is required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The site is not within a flood zone so no wetland areas exist. There is an opportunity for blue infrastructure via swales and ponds to be incorporated into the design to provide new wetland areas for birds. ✓ The site is physically separated from Radford Meadows by the canal. ✓ A large area of the site (2.86 ha), over 58% of the gross area, will be dedicated to enhanced open space along the western and southern areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Key landscape features will be retained and enhanced.

Landscape Changes

5.1 The landscape context has also significantly changed since 2013. The woodland belt along the west of the site was young, gappy, with long range views to the west across Radford Meadows.

5.2 There are now virtually no visual links between the canal and the site. As a result, the site now has an even stronger visual relationship with the residential area immediately to the east and north and shown in the photographs and satellite imagery opposite.



Right: Satellite imagery in 2010 showing much of the western boundary is open.

Below: Photograph in 2012 showing visual openness to the west.



Left: Satellite imagery in 2022 showing trees along western boundary have matured and extended.

Below: Photograph in 2022 showing mature woodland boundary contains the site.



LOCAL PLAN 2040

6.0 Local Plan 2040

EHDNA Housing Scenarios

6.1 The Economic and Housing Development Needs Assessment (EHDNA) considered seven growth scenarios (A-G) and recommended that the future housing need in the Borough ranges from the minimum LHN of 408 dpa at the lower end, rising to 647 dpa (711 dpa PCU) at the upper end to align with the Regeneration Scenario (Scenario E) identified need. Scenario E considered growth projected to occur at a new garden community and Stafford Station Gateway, equal to around 12,500 jobs.

6.2 At this stage, the Council has chosen 545 dpa as the preferred option which would appear insufficient to support the level of future economic growth taking into account the new garden community at Meecebrook and development at Station Gateway.

6.3 The EHDNA notes that the Framework at paragraph 82c states that planning policies should “seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment” which retains the link between integrating economic growth and housing need. There is a clear risk that where the labour force supply is less than the projected job growth (as here), this could result in unsustainable commuting patterns and reduce the resilience of local businesses, resulting in a barrier to investment.

6.4 It goes on to say that “ensuring a sufficient supply of homes within easy access of employment opportunities represents a central facet of an efficiently functioning economy and can help to minimise housing

market pressures and unsustainable levels of community (and therefore congestion and carbon emissions). If the objective of employment growth is to be realised, then it will generally need to be supported by an adequate supply of suitable housing”.

6.5 The EHDNA identified an annual affordable housing need of 389 dpa based on 25% of income. This is a very significant need, representing 73% of the preferred option requirement figure of 535 dpa. Given the concerns related to viability of preferred allocations, it is very likely significantly fewer affordable homes will be delivered during the plan period than are needed.

6.6 In Stafford, the assessment finds that the propensity for younger people in the Borough to form a new household is lower than the national average. Lower quartile affordability in the Borough is particularly poor indicating that lower price houses may be unaffordable to those on lower incomes living in Stafford. Affordability ratios have increased over time, highlighting that properties have become less affordable. There is potential this could be exacerbated within Stafford town if inappropriate and/or insufficient sites are selected.

6.7 The EHDNA recommends that the Council should give further consideration to whether increasing housing provision could help address a greater proportion of affordable needs.

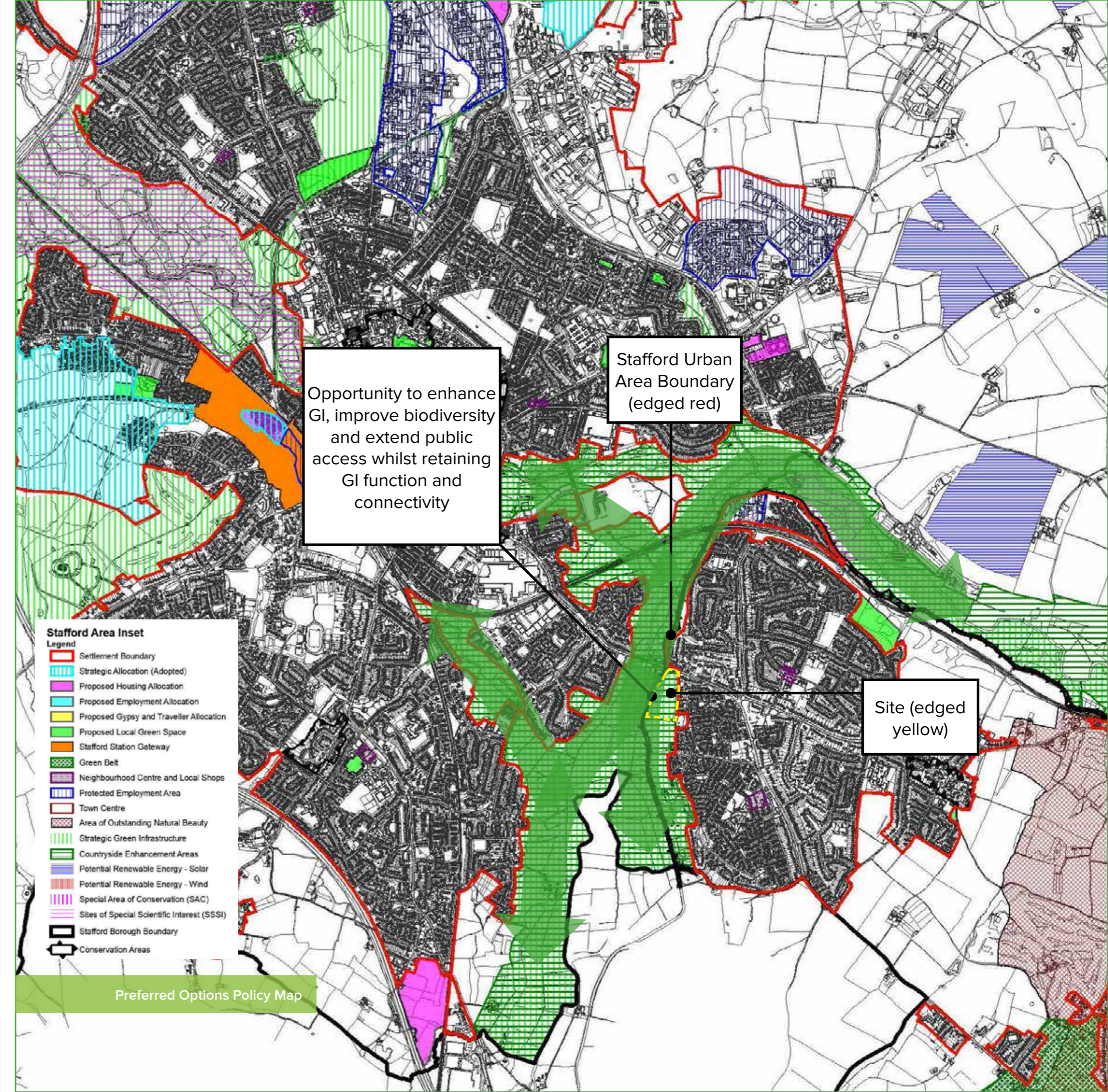
Sustainability Appraisal

6.8 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) states that Stafford is suited to receive a significant proportion of growth on account of being the largest town in the borough, with a vibrant town centre and a series of large employment areas. It notes that the aim of the plan is to “allocate sites to meet needs in full for the entire plan period, and with a high degree of delivery certainty”. It states that there is a need to support a mix of site types, and a degree of dispersal (mindful of the settlement hierarchy), in order to ensure a robust housing supply trajectory.

6.9 It highlighted a number of tensions with sustainability objectives as well as drawbacks to the preferred option due to:

- Imbalances between housing and employment growth leading to unsustainable commuting patterns;
- A lower growth scenario compared with the higher options meaning a reduced opportunity to meet locally arising needs, affordable housing and more unmet needs from adjoining authorities.

6.10 The SA concluded that these drawbacks will require further consideration prior to plan finalisation. By comparison, growth scenarios involving more housing growth in Stafford town (such as 8 and 8a) performed very well, and out-performed the preferred option (6a) on air quality, housing and transport. The plan identifies a key issue as being the need to reduce the need to travel, supporting and enhancing access to services and facilities and to locate more development in locations which are more accessible to a



range of transport nodes (public transport, walking and cycling). Indeed, the SA comments that ***“it will be important to ensure that opportunities to locate development where there will be greatest potential to minimum the need to travel, and enable modal shift away from the private car, are being realised prior to plan finalisation”***. The site performs very well against these aims and it is important that there is not a missed opportunity for the site to deliver housing while still achieving the objectives on enhanced green infrastructure.

6.11 In addition, the SA noted a concern that the emerging housing requirement of 535dpa is significantly lower than would be needed to match the employment growth proposed in the plan.

6.12 The SA also noted that a new important consideration for growth since the emergence of the COVID pandemic is access to indoor and outdoor space. It states that ***“green infrastructure is more valued than ever as a recreational/well-being resource and the importance of addressing spatial imbalances in accessibility - both to green infrastructure and quality housing - has come to the fore”***.

6.13 The SA concluded that ***“there is a need to take a strategic approach to planning for green infrastructure...and the potential for growth in proximity to such areas, to help fund or deliver strategic enhancements”***.

6.14 The SA notes a range of issues and constraints on sites within Stafford town, with concerns about the viability of schemes and delivery of affordable housing. Other than Meecebrook, ***“the proposed allocations are predominantly in sub-areas where there is the potential to set a requirement for only 20% affordable housing, due to lower development viability”***. There is potential that on the chosen growth scenario and proposed

allocations chosen to-date, there will be a limited supply of affordable homes within the Stafford town area where needs are likely to be greatest.

SHELAA

6.15 The site is assessed in the HELAA under reference site number STAFMB22 (South of Radford Bank). The assessment makes a high level assessment of deliverability and concludes:

- The necessary infrastructure is considered to be available within the locality;
- There are no known legal or ownership issues;
- The site is available immediately;
- The site is situated adjacent to the currently recognised Local Plan settlement of Stafford;
- The site is classified as CIL typology STA1, which is considered financially viable;
- The site is available and achievable.

6.16 However, the site is assessed in the SHELAA as being unsuitable due to it currently being designated within the Green Infrastructure policy area. It is unclear why the existing local Green Infrastructure policy is considered such an overriding constraint to development particularly as it is not a national policy that protects areas or assets of particular importance recognised by the Framework (e.g. Green Belt, Local Green Space, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural Park or Site of Special Scientific Interest).

6.17 The SHELAA (2022 Update) document recognises that ***“the presence of a suitability constraint does not necessarily render it***

automatically unsuitable”. The SHELAA also considered that ***“in order to inform the Council’s understanding of how much supply could potentially be delivered during the new Plan period, sites which may be considered ‘unsuitable’ under the existing planning policy regime will now be assessed in the context of preparing the new development strategy”***.

6.18 It is therefore unclear why the site was discounted only because of the existing Green Infrastructure policy. Some proposed allocations impact on Tree Preservation Orders, Public Rights of Way and heritage assets, but these were not automatically discounted.

6.19 The SHELAA was an opportunity to re-assess the potential some housing development on existing green infrastructure designations where its purposes and objectives can be protected and enhanced.

6.20 With the benefit of the information in this Vision Document in support of the site, the local planning authority will be able to see that there are no constraints significant enough to make the site unsuitable and that with mitigation and enhancements some sustainable housing development can be accommodated in this location.



OPPORTUNITIES

7.0 Opportunities

Site Considerations

7.1 The findings of initial survey and appraisal work undertaken to date have established there are no known overriding constraints which would preclude development of the site for green infrastructure enhancements and up to 60 dwellings. The site is largely a grassland field which is separated physically from Radford Meadows by the canal. Careful and sensitive consideration was also given to comments from the planning authority which arose in the previous historic planning application in 2013/14.

7.2 Contextually, the site is influenced by a suburban environment from existing development to the north and east. The woodland trees and shrubs are also a significant feature of the site along the west and south which enclose the site. This results in the central area of the site have a strong visual connection to the surrounding residential area. A modest scale of residential development would not be so out of character for the area. Shrubs and trees which align the boundaries of the site provides community and foraging habitats for animals and these elements should be retained and integrated into a green and blue infrastructure network.

7.3 The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, adjacent to the site, and the public right of way which runs along the west side of the canal, should be sensitively respected with an enhanced green buffer. This will also ensure that the core green infrastructure network to the west is not severed and the character is maintained, particularly in views from Radford Bridge.

Opportunities

7.4 There is a clear opportunity to meet wider GI and biodiversity objectives on a site within private ownership and with no other realistic mechanisms to deliver enhancements on the site. A range of other opportunities have been identified:

- Create a green infrastructure-led development with biodiversity net gains by protecting existing green infrastructure on-site along the western and southern boundaries and enhancing provision for the benefit of the wider network with native spaces landscaping;
- Create new significant open spaces with pedestrian access and informal recreation within the site in a local area where there are identified open space deficiencies. This will help in diverting impacts away from the SAC which is an objective of the Stafford BAP;
- Provision of up to high quality, modest scheme of 60 dwellings including a policy-compliant proportion of affordable housing in an area where affordable housing delivery has been poor;
- An outward looking development will create safer open spaces and a more attractive public realm;
- Ensuring design respects sensitivities along the canal and conservation area via a wide green buffer which minimises artificial light along the canal.
- Public access close to the canal could

facilitate information interpretation boards for communities to learn about the conservation area and Radford Meadows;

- The creation of new wetland habitats such as ponds for the benefit of birds and other animals to complement habitats along the River Penk. These areas will be sensitively designed to allow quiet areas for bird nesting by creating marshy land and deep ponds/swales to avoid excessive public/pet access;
- Creation of sustainable drainage solutions such as swales and attenuation ponds will help to meet objectives of the Stafford Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Avoid habitat fragmentation and create permeable habitat corridors through which species can move and create foraging and shelter for birds;
- Provide semi-natural habitats such as native broadleaved woodland, lowland meadow;
- Maintain extent of existing hedgerow and shrubs, and achieve net increase in length of hedgerow;
- Potential to expand local priority BAP habitats close to the site;
- Ensure linkages to existing pedestrian and cycleway network along the east;
- Creation of informal natural pocket parks or 'doorstep play' for recreation which would be a suitable local alternative to recreation at the SAC



Opportunities & Constraints Plan

8.0 Design Vision

Emerging Proposals

8.1 The proposed Vision Layout comprises:

- Over 58% of the site dedicated to open space, green and blue infrastructure enhancements, equivalent to 2.86 hectares, with new tree planting, ecological corridors and natural equipped children's play areas;
- Mitigation and significant enhancements to biodiversity to provide a net gain with long-term management;
- Provision of new ponds and wetland habitats for birds and other wildlife;
- A new safe and suitable vehicular access point off Radford Bank with 5.5m road and 2m footways on each side;
- An orbital walking route within the site for dog walking and short strolls to provide a suitable local recreational route away from the SAC;
- A residential development comprising approximately 60 dwellings satisfying local housing needs and supporting economic aspirations;
- An overall net development area of approximately 2.0 hectares, equating to an average moderate density of around 30 dwellings per net hectare;
- A balanced range of housing comprising a mix of types and sizes;
- Affordable housing provision on-site, in line with the requirements of local planning

- policy and in an area with high demand;
- Provision of sustainable drainage systems which also provide blue infrastructure for wildlife.

Design Principles

The scheme creates a sensitively designed, high-quality and green infrastructure-led scheme adjacent to the Stafford/Weeping Cross urban area which is in a highly sustainable location.

The development will be offset from the western boundary to allow for a 30-90m wide green buffer which retains the integrity of the wider GI network. This buffer will also help to respect the importance of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal which is a conservation area.

Existing key features such as the woodland will be maintained, significantly enhanced with new native planting and managed in the long-term to align with the Staffordshire BAP priorities and the aims and objectives of emerging policy.

The proposed housing design will mirror existing and consented development character and densities so that there is a moderate density overall with the majority of the site retained for green infrastructure.

Existing landscape components are proposed to be retained, bolstered and integrated into an accessible network for the community.

The proposed development will have outward facing housing frontages to overlook open spaces.

Public seating and interpretation boards will help this local asset to be better appreciated with new views created from the edge of the site.

The development will open up the site to public access and offers a range of recreational benefits, including children's informal play spaces such as a high-quality LEAP and 'play-on-the-way' designed along footpaths.

The proposals will reserve site low points for sustainable drainage systems, incorporating features for wildlife, new ponds and swales.

Larger homes near Radford Bank to imitate existing character.



How do the proposals 'fit-in' with the emerging Local Plan 2040?

Location

8.2 The site is located adjacent to the urban area, the Stafford urban settlement boundary, which is the highest ranking tier of settlements for sustainability. In locational terms, the site is in one of the most sustainable locations in the Borough.

8.3 The emerging Local Plan seeks development to be located and designed to minimise the need to travel and prioritise sustainable travel by facilitating safe connections to infrastructure for walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The Sustainability Appraisal recognises the risk of an imbalance between housing and employment growth leading to unsustainable commuting patterns. It suggested this needs further consideration prior to plan finalisation.

8.4 The proposals align with emerging policy objectives better than other proposed allocations which are located further away from Stafford town (where the main hub of jobs, services and facilities are found) with limited or no existing sustainable transport options.

Cannock Chase SAC

8.5 The emerging Local Plan seeks to ensure Cannock Chase SAC is not harmed and that all new housing development within 15km should take necessary steps to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects upon the SAC's integrity. This may include contribute to habitat management, provision of additional recreation

space, measures to encourage sustainable travel and education and awareness. The proposals align with these objectives.

Green and blue infrastructure and Countryside Enhancement Areas

8.6 The emerging Local Plan seeks for existing green networks to be enhanced by:

- creating and improving connectivity for people and nature, enabling communities to make regular contact with the natural environment, by encouraging walking and cycling;
- maximising opportunities for street tree planting and landscaping to assist with urban cooling;
- creating high-quality open spaces that are robust and adaptable;
- providing long-term maintenance and management;
- retaining existing green infrastructure unless any loss will be replaced by enhanced provision by providing 32 metres squared of open space per person;
- the function and connectivity of GI network is retained

8.7 The Stafford Borough Nature Recovering Network Mapping (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, 2020) highlights the rivers Penk and Sow as a wetland opportunity area, stating "the area around the confluence of the Rivers Sow and Penk present a potential opportunity for habitat enhancement and flood risk attenuation".

8.8 The proposals can deliver these objectives on a privately-owned site where

enhancements cannot otherwise be delivered without some development.

Historic Environment

8.9 The site is outside but adjoins the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal which is a conservation area. The existing woodland helps to provide a buffer within the site which can be enhanced. The woodland currently limits any views to and from the canal.

8.10 The proposals seek to further enhance the woodland edge, ensuring a 30-90m wide buffer, with public access and interpretation boards, as well as biodiversity enhancements. The design will be sensitive and respect the importance of the conservation area.

Urban Design

8.11 The emerging Local Plan seeks to ensure development proposals accord with the National Design Code and Design Guide, will suit their context by responding to locally distinctive patterns of development, and will create places with distinctive identity which is influenced and well-related to the positive characteristics of the area.

8.12 The proposed policies suggest a range of good urban design principles which the proposals can deliver.

Affordable Housing

8.13 Emerging policy seeks to deliver 20% affordable housing on sites in the Stafford town area. Stafford town has pockets of high deprivation and affordable housing is particularly needed in the area. Some existing and proposed housing allocations have viability issues so there is a concern that meeting affordable housing will be significantly hindered



Visualisation of the proposals maintaining the function & enhancing the GI network

unless SME sites such as this are allocated.

8.14 The NPPF recognises the importance of SME sites to the delivery of housing as they can deliver quickly.

The 'do nothing' scenario

8.15 Whilst emerging and existing policy and objectives seek enhancement on the site, the potential for this without any funding is highly unlikely and thus unrealistic. The site would continue to be managed for grazing, with limited/no positive intervention in terms of biodiversity improvements or new woodland planting and wetland habitats.

8.16 The site would remain private land with no public access. The aims and objectives sought by the planning authority, Council and stakeholders for biodiversity and green infrastructure enhancements would be unfulfilled.



Above: The site would remain in private ownership with no public access, no biodiversity or green infrastructure enhancements, without any realistic policy intervention for some modest development.



Example of some natural play proposed within the woodland area on site

CONCLUSION

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 The Vision Plan demonstrates that the site can accommodate a high quality, sensitively-designed green infrastructure-led development which will respond positively to its urban and landscape surroundings.

9.2 Consistent with patterns of urban growth in this area, a new development at land off Radford Bank would create a logical and sustainable addition immediately adjacent to the Stafford Urban Area which aims to provide a range of public benefits.

Key Benefits

9.3 This Vision & Delivery Statement has demonstrated the following:

- Over 58% of the site dedicated to open space, green and blue infrastructure enhancements, equivalent to 2.86 hectares, with new tree planting, ecological corridors and natural equipped children's play areas;
- A sensitive, high-quality residential development comprising approximately 60 dwellings satisfying local housing needs and supporting economic aspirations, in a highly sustainable location;
- Affordable housing provision on-site, in line with the requirements of local planning policy and in an area with high demand and pockets of deprivation. It will also assist with meeting affordable needs not being met by allocations;
- New green infrastructure planting will help provide cleaner air next to a residential

area;

- Mitigation and significant enhancements to biodiversity to provide a net gain with long-term management, to include provision of new ponds and wetland habitats for birds and other wildlife;
- Sensitive public access close to the canal with seating, natural play and interpretation boards for communities to learn and appreciate the importance of the conservation area and Radford Meadows in accordance with NPPF (para. 206);
- New recreational public green spaces such as an orbital walking route within the site for dog walking and short strolls and natural play areas to provide suitable local recreational activities away from the SAC. This helps improve public enjoyment of nature, health and well-being and overall quality of life;
- An overall net development area of approximately 2.0 hectares, equating to an average moderate density of around 30 dwellings per net hectare;
- A balanced range of housing comprising a mix of types and sizes, First Homes and homes for older people to downsize to;
- Provision of sustainable drainage systems which also provide blue infrastructure for wildlife.
- The site is in a highly sustainable and accessible location where there are a wide range of services, facilities and recreation available within walking distance from the site.

- The site is in a highly sustainable and accessible location where there are a wide range of services, facilities and the area has excellent public transport links with future households of the development helping to sustain these services and provide bus stop upgrades.
- The site is considered an SME site which the NPPF states makes an important contribution to housing supply and can be built-out quickly;
- A strong landscaping and environmental approach to the design can provide significant ecological benefits through the creation of new habitats and wildlife corridors as a way to deliver and support emerging policy objectives;
- The site is a viable, sustainable site and deliverable early in the Local Plan 2040 period to provide homes for local people over the next several years;
- There are no constraints which would prevent development coming forward immediately, helping to ensure a healthy future housing supply of small and medium-sized sites and contributing to the soundness of the emerging Local Plan 2040.

This document promotes the identification of the site as a residential allocation in the Stafford Local Plan 2040 for green infrastructure and 60 homes in a sustainable location whilst bringing a range of significant public benefits.





Artist's Impression

