



# Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

Adopted  
September 2020

approach and requirements as agreed in the Core Strategy. Its overall conclusion is that broadly that the distribution of growth in the Core Strategy can be supported by current and planned infrastructure. Schemes are identified which align with the spatial distribution of growth proposals in the Core Strategy and there are no significant constraints to the level of growth proposed. Given that the development requirements of the Local Plan are broadly consistent with those in the Core Strategy, it is proposed to carry forward the development approach.

### Development Principles

**6.10** This policy underpins the whole Local Plan and provides a fundamental set of criteria that will be applied to all development proposals to ensure that all development provides integrated solutions which meet social, economic and environmental objectives at the same time.

**6.11** It is considered that the broad thrust of the policy is in line with the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and the aims and objectives of the Local Plan. Detailed requirements concerning the management of development and specific designations are set out later in the Local Plan.

## Policy SS 1

### Development Principles

The Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities
- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers;
- easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community;
- increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce;
- a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment;
- development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings;
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations.
- support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.

All proposals for development will be considered in the context of the District-wide Spatial Strategy and with regard to both its direct and indirect cumulative impact over the longer term. New development will make effective use of land and the best use of previously developed land and buildings.

## Settlement Hierarchy

**6.12** The three towns of Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle are the largest settlements in the District accommodating 50% of the District's population and the majority of the District's services and facilities. The spatial strategy seeks to focus future growth in these settlements and to strengthen their role as significant service centres.

**6.13** The rural areas outside of the Peak District make up over two-thirds of the plan area in terms of land coverage and contain nearly half of the plan area's population. The majority of this area is undeveloped countryside which is of high landscape quality and has poor accessibility. However, the rural areas also includes a diverse mixture of large and small villages, hamlets and scattered development as well as some major developed areas.

**6.14** In order to properly deliver the spatial strategy at a local level it is proposed to establish a hierarchy of settlements reflecting the roles, function and capacity of individual settlements. This hierarchy will ensure that the aims and objectives of the Local Plan and the proposed development approach are properly met through an appropriate balance of development. It will also provide a spatial context for the co-ordination of the plans, strategies and initiatives of the various service providers and agencies with an interest in the Staffordshire Moorlands. This hierarchy is in line with the adopted Core Strategy. It should be noted that the designation of a settlement within the hierarchy reflects its planning status only and does not confer any other status as a town or village.

**6.15** The status of each category of settlement, a list of those settlements included within them and the development principles and levels of development which apply to each category are set out in policies SS 5 to SS 10. In considering sites for development regard should be had to the hierarchy to ensure that the appropriate scale and type of development is provided in each settlement and other rural areas.

**6.16** All development will need to be of a scale and nature appropriate to the character and role of each area within its hierarchy. For each town and the rural area categories there is an Area Strategy which sets out the various measures and actions which will be taken to address the needs of those areas. The Area Strategies are key policies which drive forward the Local Plan and help implement the strategies and plans of other organisations and service providers as well as establishing how settlements are to develop over the plan period.

**6.17** Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. This includes the settlement hierarchy as set out below. Neighbourhood Plans may wish to amend proposed settlement boundaries or create new boundaries where none are proposed. Such proposals could be supported subject to the settlement hierarchy, wider strategic Local Plan policies and national planning policy, including on Green Belt.

## Other Rural Areas Strategy

**6.60** The concept of sustainability argues in favour of concentrating most development in or adjoining existing built-up areas. However, there can be cases where some development and diversification of use in the countryside can be beneficial and sustainable. For instance, some farm businesses may benefit from diversification and an increased number of visits to the countryside can help the rural economy. However this needs to be appropriate to the character of the countryside which also needs to be sustained.

**6.61** Where development in the open countryside is justified, the preference will be for the re-use or redevelopment of existing buildings. All development in these areas will be strictly controlled, both in terms of its scale and type in order to ensure that the character and role of the countryside and the green belt is not undermined.

**6.62** Within these areas there are some smaller settlements and hamlets which are not identified in Policy SS 9 as 'Small Villages' because their predominantly open character, loose-knit nature and lack of services and facilities.

**6.63** The development of renewable energy sources will also often be in rural areas but such development will almost always have an environmental cost as well as benefits. Such proposals must be weighed against the continuing commitment to protect the environment. The scale and design of such schemes will therefore be of paramount importance and should accord with Policy SD 2.

**6.64** Historically development of a large scale has taken place in a number of areas in the countryside of Staffordshire Moorlands, often associated with past industrial activity or specific needs. These are brownfield sites and where these are no longer needed it is necessary to consider whether an alternative use would be appropriate. The complete or partial redevelopment of such major developed areas may offer the opportunity for environmental improvement without adding to their impact as well as helping to meet the needs of the rural areas and improve the rural economy. Two such areas were identified in the Core Strategy at Bolton Copperworks, Froghall and the Anzio Camp Blackshaw Moor. Policies DSR 5 and DSR 6 provide development criteria for these sites.

**6.65** The policy also places considerable emphasis on tourism. This is identified in the spatial strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy as a major opportunity to sustain the rural economy and strengthen the role of the District within the region and North Staffordshire.

**6.66** The District has a close link with the Peak District National Park in terms of tourism and the policy seeks to encourage and promote tourism opportunities that could ease pressures on the Park itself, provided this would not increase pressure on areas of biodiversity interest.

**6.67** The Green Belt serves a number of purposes which are derived from Government policy in the NPPF and the former Staffordshire Structure Plan. The Green Belt keeps land open and free from development over a long period, which extends beyond the plan period, in order to give assurance that its boundaries will endure. National policy on Green Belts is

set out in the NPPF and will apply to the whole of the Green Belt. The Green Belt Review assessed the Green Belt in the District against the five purposes of the Green Belt. The Green Belt boundary (as revised) is identified on the Policies Maps.

## Policy SS 10

### Other Rural Areas Strategy

The other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages.

These areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions:

1. Meet housing requirements and specific needs by:
  - Restricting new build housing development in the countryside to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in accordance with Policy H 1;
  - Allowing the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with Policy H 1;
  - Allowing extensions or additional domestic outbuildings to existing dwellings provided they are appropriate in scale and design and do not have a detrimental impact on the existing dwelling and the character of the rural area. The Council will assess schemes having regard to the original dwelling, in cases where cumulative change has occurred;
  - Allowing suitable development which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset in accordance with Policy DC 2;
  - Allowing rural exceptions housing (in accordance with Policies H 1 and H 3);
  - Allowing community facilities where that need cannot be met in a settlement within the hierarchy. In such cases the development should be in a sustainable location close to an existing serviced settlement.
2. Sustain the rural economy by:
  - Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified
  - Supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises
  - Supporting the development of appropriate ICT and new means of communications to enable homeworking and small businesses reliant on e-technology;

3. Enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by:

- Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape;
- Limiting uses which generate a substantial number of regular trips in areas that are not well served by public transport;
- Ensuring renewable energy schemes are of an appropriate scale, type and location;
- Recognising and conserving the special quality of the landscape in the Peak District National Park (in accordance with Policy DC 3);
- Encouraging measures which protect and enhance the biodiversity, geological resources and heritage of the District.

4. Regenerate underused major developed areas in the countryside including:

- Bolton Copperworks, Froghall and Anzio Camp, Blackshaw Moor (in accordance with policies DSR 5 and DSR 6).
- Development of these areas shall be complementary to and not undermine the role of the towns and larger villages nor shall it undermine wider strategic objectives. It shall also avoid or minimise environmental impacts and congestion and safeguard and enhance natural and cultural assets.
- Facilitating the appropriate redevelopment of other major developed areas where the proposed development brings positive benefits to the area and any resultant environmental or highways concerns could be adequately addressed and minimised. Such proposals will be expected to provide supporting information that demonstrates clearly that the redevelopment will complement the overall development strategy for the District.

5. Enhance tourist opportunities by:

- Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS 11 and the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD;
- Allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policy E 4);
- Establishing strong linkages between recreational and tourist resources;
- Recognising and developing the close linkages to the Peak District National Park.

6. Maintain the Green Belt within Staffordshire Moorlands. Strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

Any development proposal that might have the potential to affect a European or Ramsar Site must itself be subject to appropriate assessment.

### Churnet Valley Strategy

**6.68** The Churnet Valley, running from Rudyard Lake and Tittesworth Water through Leek, Cheddleton, Froghall and Oakamoor to Alton, is an area of significant landscape, wildlife and heritage value with a number of existing well-established tourist and visitor attractions. The Churnet Valley can provide a strong focus for sustainable rural regeneration across the District and a significant sub-regional asset as well as complementing and easing pressures on the neighbouring Peak District National Park. The Churnet Valley Masterplan was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2014. It provides a comprehensive framework for future development in the Churnet Valley. The extent of the area covered is defined in the Masterplan. It identifies opportunities and measures to help regenerate and manage this important rural area based around sustainable tourism in a manner which is sensitive to and enhances its important heritage, landscape and ecology.

**6.69** To reflect the aims of the strategy for the Churnet Valley and the Churnet Valley Masterplan the policy seeks to manage opportunities for further appropriate visitor accommodation and tourist facilities with an emphasis on increasing overnight stays with visitors staying for longer and throughout the year and on further developing the visitor experience of the Churnet Valley through the development of its heritage, nature based and outdoor recreation products, improving and developing links between existing facilities and activities so that they are benefiting from each other, and maintaining and establishing links with regional tourism facilities. This will be supported by measures to improve access by public transport, walking and cycling into the countryside.

**6.70** Sustainable tourism is tourism which takes account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, balancing the needs of visitors, the economy, the environment and host communities. Tourism development must not be at the expense of the special qualities of the Churnet Valley which draw so many people to the area. A very sensitive approach to the provision and expansion of facilities and accommodation will therefore be required to ensure that it is of an appropriate scale and design and compatible with the nature of the local area and enhances the heritage, landscape and ecology of the Churnet Valley. The appropriate redevelopment of existing brownfield sites in the Churnet Valley can also provide overlapping ecological, green infrastructure, flood risk mitigation, landscape impact and remediation benefits eg sensitive redevelopments involving river renaturalisation and landscaping. Flood risk and remediation Policies are set out elsewhere in the Plan.

**6.71** The principal purpose and role of the existing green belt should also not be undermined by development which can still take place provided it is of an appropriate use, scale and form in accordance with national green belt policy.



materials, and site orientation aspects of the scheme, and where possible the feasibility of integrating micro-renewables. The degree of detail expected will depend on the scale/complexity of the proposal.

6. The Council will encourage developers to investigate the potential for re-using construction or construction waste materials, especially those sourced locally (which can include those minerals available on site, as appropriate) and integrates where possible on-site waste management facilities.

### **Renewable/Low-Carbon Energy**

**7.11** In recent years the UK has committed itself to legal obligations stemming from EU Directives, relating to both the reduction of future greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (including carbon); and the meeting of a greater proportion of the UK's future demand for energy through renewables - which have been reflected in more recent legislation. The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the UK to reduce GHG emissions by 80% between 1990 and 2050; with a requirement that UK CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduce by 26% between 1990 and 2020. EU Directive 2009/28/EC requires the UK to source 15% of its energy from renewables sources by 2020 (the target for 2015-16 was 7.5% – actual uptake in 2015 was 8.3%). The NPPF reflects this with support for transition to a low carbon economy; and its support for greater uptake of renewables. LPAs can also continue to develop an evidence-based understanding of renewables opportunities in their areas. As a response to the above legislation and Policy, in 2009 the Council, along with other Staffordshire planning authorities, commissioned consultants CAMCO to produce a Staffordshire-wide study examining in detail the opportunities for stand-alone renewables in general. The study included energy opportunity mapping, and was published in 2011.

**7.12** In line with National Policy, Policy SD 2 gives support to new renewable energy development generally without differentiating between forms, as the District has natural characteristics (e.g. river flows) which could make this viable – either now, or due to future technology. In the case of wind energy proposals, the Policy clarifies that recent Government NPPG Policy (in particular Ministerial Statement HCWS42) will be applied, as the Local Plan does not currently designate any "areas identified as suitable for wind energy development". Policy SD 2 also recognises that the siting and design of all stand-alone renewables installations requires careful consideration, to protect the natural and built environment, and other amenities, without precluding the supply of any type of renewable energy. Renewables schemes can also impact upon heritage assets such as Listed Buildings; it is understood Historic England are preparing an Advice Note, which developers should review where appropriate. The viability of different forms of renewable energies, within different areas of the District, is examined in the CAMCO work (which may in future be informed by further local evidence). Note that non-renewable energy schemes not covered by this policy (such as fossil fuel generators), will be assessed against all relevant policy, including the National Policy Statements.



## Policy SD 2

### Renewable/Low-Carbon Energy

The Council will strive to meet part of the District's future energy demand through renewable or low-carbon energy sources (which could be through a variety of technologies, for example solar energy, biomass etc), in line with current evidence which identifies the feasibility of these forms of energy across the District. The Council will assess wind turbine schemes in line with the Government's specific policy on wind turbines. For all other forms of renewable energy the Council will support small- and large- scale stand alone renewable or low-carbon energy schemes subject to the following considerations:

- the degree to which the scale and nature of a proposal impacts on the landscape, particularly having regard to relevant Landscape Character evidence and impact on the Peak District National Park (taking into account both individual and cumulative effects of similar proposals);
- the degree to which the developer has demonstrated any environmental/economic/social benefits of a scheme, as well as how any environmental or social impacts have been minimised (e.g. visual, noise or smell);
- the impact on designated sites of European (or successor), national and local biodiversity and geological importance in accordance with policy NE 1;
- the impact on the amenity of residents and other interests of acknowledged importance, including the historic environment;
- the degree to which individual proposals reflect current local evidence regarding the feasibility of different types of renewable or low-carbon energy at different locations across the District;
- in the case of solar energy proposals that are not affixed to buildings or structures, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have examined whether previously developed land is available before greenfield land. Where agricultural land is proposed, poorer quality land should be utilised before higher quality agricultural land.

### Sustainability Measures in Development

**7.13** A consequence of recent Governments' commitment to mitigating climate change has been a tightening of the building regulations with respect to environmental performance of new dwellings (including thermal efficiency/ water consumption efficiency/ minimisation of surface water run-off etc), according to a trajectory aimed at attaining "zero carbon" status for new dwellings, by 2016 (though this trajectory was subsequently cancelled in July 2015 as part of the Government's Productivity Plan: Fixing the Foundations: Creating a More Prosperous Nation). Previously under the Planning and Energy Act 2008, Councils could set policy requirements that exceeded building regulations; however the Deregulation Act 2015 has since removed this power, as part of the Government's intention to streamline housebuilding standards and remove financial liabilities upon developers. The NPPF is clear

indicators. The majority of units are relatively small and will be more susceptible to the impact of larger-scale retail development outside of the town centres. This threshold provides an appropriate mechanism with which to protect the vitality and viability of the District's town centres. The requirement for qualifying proposals to provide evidence around impact should not be onerous; a proportionate approach in terms of the scoping and extent of information required can be applied through pre-application dialogue with applicants. It is considered appropriate to apply the same threshold to the sequential test requirement.

### Policy TCR 3

#### Retailing and other Town Centre uses outside Town Centres

In determining proposals for retail and other town centre uses of 200m<sup>2</sup> or more (net sales for A1) on sites outside town centres and not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan a Sequential Assessment will be required. Preference will be given to town centre and then edge of centre sites. Where there are no sequentially preferable sites available, sites outside Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle in highly accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre will be considered.

An Impact Assessment will be required on proposals for town centre uses of 200m<sup>2</sup> or more (net sales for A1) located outside of the town centres and not in accordance with the Local Plan. Developer contributions may be sought to mitigate identified impacts on defined centres where appropriate. Proposals with a significant adverse impact will be refused.

## 7.5 Design and Conservation

### Design Considerations

#### Spatial Objectives

**SO7.** To support and enhance the tourism, cultural, recreation and leisure opportunities for the District's residents and visitors.

**SO8.** To promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the District.

**SO9.** To protect and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, biodiversity and geological resources.

**SO10.** To deliver sustainable, inclusive, healthy and safe communities.

**7.75** Good design is a key element of sustainable development, so the Council will promote a high standard of design which is locally distinctive and reinforces the unique character of its individual settlements. A high quality, well designed, development can enhance the sense of place and identity of an area and can bring significant benefits to the local environment and economy. In this way, new development can have a positive impact on the lives of local

people and visitors to the District. To this end, the Council operates a 'Design Review Panel' where larger planning applications and other development proposals are considered by a design team and recommendations made to inform the decision on the application or masterplan etc. The 'Building for Life' toolkit is also a useful resource.

**7.76** Guidance on those features and characteristics which make the Moorlands so unique and how design can complement and reflect this will be provided through the Design Guide SPD. All developers and applicants will be required to provide a Design and Access Statement to accompany planning applications for major developments or proposals in designated areas (refer to <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/595/article/9/made>) which addresses, as appropriate, the issues set out in Policy DC 1 and the Design Guide SPD. A Design and Access Statement will be required to accompany proposals for development including an accurate illustration of the proposal and its relationship with its surroundings and crime prevention considerations.

**7.77** Assessment of potential impacts from new developments at the earliest possible stage of the design process will assist in identifying problems to be overcome. Detailed guidance on issues of security and public safety in the public realm can be found in 'Secured by Design' ([www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)) produced by the police. A further useful reference point is the 'Streets for All Manual: West Midlands' produced by the Department of Transport and Historic England. This contains guidance on the retention and conservation of historic street furniture, rationalisation of existing signage, minimisation of street markings, use of appropriate surfacing and associated highway improvements. The principles of active design set out by Sport England promote opportunities for sport and physical activity in the design and layout of development.

**7.78** Sport England have produced new 'Active Design' (2015) guidelines to promote the role of sport and physical activity in creating healthy and sustainable communities. This document sets out the ten principles of active design and how these can be incorporated into new development.

**7.79** New developments which are located adjacent to existing sports facilities or playing fields should consider the location of housing and gardens within the scheme and/or the erection of ball netting/fencing. For example, new housing developments located next to sports pitches can raise the issue of ball strike including damage to property and vehicles and potential danger to residents. New housing built close to artificial turf pitches can cause issues about the use of floodlights and noise generated. If mitigation is required it should be the duty of the developer to provide and fund measures to ensure there is no indirect negative impact.

**7.80** In line with the Council's Sustainability Appraisal, the policy includes a requirement for developments to be well integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle use as well as other sustainable transport links. It also includes a requirement for the creation of healthy environments (to address potential impacts of air pollution).

**7.81** The 'green infrastructure' can be defined as a network of multi-functional open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside. It performs a valuable role in the District's towns and villages. The Council has produced a Green Infrastructure Strategy to consider how the green spaces relate to one another in the District and where there may be opportunities to extend them. Where possible, opportunities will be sought to undertake river restoration and enhance natural river corridors as part of a new development in line with the Water Framework Directive.

**7.82** Residents of new housing sites and occupiers of new business premises generally expect to be able to access high speed broadband. The Broadband Delivery UK programme does not cover new development sites. New sites should be planned so that these vital services are designed into the development from the outset, and should not require a public subsidy to make them commercially viable. Access to high speed broadband should enhance the sale-ability of both residential units and businesses premises alike. The failure to supply such access to high speed broadband services could prove to be a real barrier to selling or letting the completed premises. If the developers engage with the network operators at the start of the planning process, they will generally be amenable to supplying access to the required infrastructure at little or no cost to the developer.

## Policy DC 1

### Design Considerations

All development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should:

1. be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
2. be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;
3. create, where appropriate, attractive, active, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate public spaces, green infrastructure including making provision for networks of multi-functional new and existing green space (both public and private), landscaping, public art, 'designing out crime' initiatives and the principles of Active Design;
4. incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the impact of the development;
5. protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution;
6. promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate;
7. provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use;
8. require new developments to be well integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle use as well as other sustainable transport links;
9. ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed;

10. ensure, where appropriate, equality of access and use for all sections of the community;
11. be served by high speed broadband (>30mbps) unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with Next Generation Access Network providers that this would not be possible, practical or economically viable. In all circumstances during construction of the site sufficient and suitable ducting should be provided within the site and to the property to facilitate ease of installation at a future date.

## The Historic Environment

**7.83** The historic environment of Staffordshire Moorlands is a resource for which the District is renowned. It includes a range of buildings, gardens and structures many of which are statutorily protected. The historic environment also extends beyond individual assets to the historic character of the wider landscape. Historic farmsteads are a particular feature of the Staffordshire Moorlands countryside. This policy seeks to ensure that sites and areas of particular heritage value are both safeguarded for the future and, where possible, enhanced both for their own heritage merits and as part of wider heritage regeneration proposals. The policy requirements apply to all types of development.

**7.84** The NPPF uses the term 'heritage asset' which can be designated or non-designated. Examples of these are Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Historic Farmsteads, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and archaeological remains. There are just under 1,000 Listed Buildings and structures, 16 Conservation Areas and a number of Scheduled Monuments within the District outside the Peak District National Park. Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings are protected by national legislation and guidance. Additionally the Council has adopted an SPD 'Staffordshire Moorlands Local Heritage Register' which outlines procedures for identifying local buildings not statutorily protected but considered worthy of recognition (local listing). In addition, Government Guidance (NPPF) requires the Council to consider any impacts arising from a development proposal on non-designated heritage assets.

**7.85** Ten of the designated Conservation Areas have adopted character appraisals. These can be found on the District Council's website at <https://www.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/article/1358/Character-appraisals>. The appraisals assess the particular qualities and needs of each Conservation Area and will act as tools in defining the character of the areas and as an aid in considering development proposals. The character appraisals produced include recommendations for enhancing the Conservation Area, for example, introduction of Article 4 Directions.

**7.86** The built heritage of the plan area is rich and varied - containing a valuable resource of surviving high quality vernacular and industrial architecture. Whilst this resource has escaped the alterations and interventions typically found elsewhere, they often, today, suffer from under-use and dereliction. The plan area's rural hinterland was once prosperous, as is evident by the number and quality of the historic farmsteads. Unfortunately, these have fallen on harder times and many now are in need of repair and a diversification of uses. In response to this, therefore, the plan seeks to create a more sustainable local economy that can better support its built heritage. The Authority will continue to monitor its Listed Buildings at Risk and will be proactive in bringing about their repair and reuse. In relation to 'Heritage Assets at Risk', the Council maintains a local register of all listed buildings which are

instance, and any other documents such as listing, conservation area appraisals, historic landscape characterisation etc. This should be carried out by an appropriate qualified professional and may require detailed supporting documents such as historic phasing plans, photographic survey, structural survey, detailed analysis of views and setting or archaeological field evaluation. To assess impact, detailed drawings will be required and photomontages can be particularly useful to demonstrate the impact of a new development on the asset and its setting. Further useful information such as Good Practice Advice Notes (GPA) 2 and 3 and Conservation Principles, as well as the variety of Historic Environment Advice Notes (HEAN's) (of which the Heritage Statement will be one) can be found on the Historic England website.

## Policy DC 2

### The Historic Environment

1. The Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.
2. Protection will be given to designated heritage assets and their settings and non-designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF.
3. All applications likely to affect heritage assets will require the submission of a heritage statement, including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate.
4. Where development is likely to affect archaeology, both designated and undesignated, the Council requires the submission of a desk based assessment, and where appropriate, field surveys and trench evaluation by a qualified professional.
5. Where the loss of significance is unavoidable, recording should take place and this should be added to the Historic Environment Record as a minimum, held by Staffordshire County Council.
6. The Council will continue its proactive approach to heritage assets at risk and welcomes development proposals which would result in the sympathetic reuse of these assets in line with NPPF policy.
7. The Council will promote development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests of acknowledged importance through the use of Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guidance and Statements, Archaeological Assessments, Characterisation Studies and Masterplanning.

### Landscape and Settlement Setting

**7.93** The Staffordshire Moorland's natural environment is one of the District's greatest assets. National guidance set out in the NPPF identifies the need for Council's to produce policies that maintain and enhance the value of the countryside.

**7.94** The Council has developed robust landscape character evidence by undertaking a Landscape Character Assessment in order to identify character features in the District which should be used to inform planning decisions taking into account Staffordshire County Council's Historic Landscape Characterisation Study and earlier Planning for Landscape Change:



Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, 1996 – 2011 (2000). This identifies a range of 10 different landscape character types across the District.

**7.95** Policy DC 3 provides protection for local landscape character which includes features, qualities and views that can make a valuable contribution to the landscape quality. This will be achieved through resisting development that would have a detrimental impact on landscape features, qualities and views.

**7.96** The setting of settlements is also considered important to the character of the Moorlands and the special qualities of its towns and villages. This policy seeks to ensure that new development respects and reinforces these qualities. The Landscape and Settlement Character Study is seen as a positive way of identifying and highlighting the importance of an area and its setting which will form a significant piece of evidence to support both the allocation of sites and the day-to-day control of development.

**7.97** The Landscape, Local Green Space and Heritage Impact Study (2016) assesses the landscape impacts of sites that have been identified for development in the Local Plan. The Assessment also identifies appropriate landscape mitigation measures for development on these sites which should be incorporated into development schemes where appropriate.

### Policy DC 3

#### Landscape and Settlement Setting

The Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence;
2. Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence;
3. Supporting developments which conserve or enhance the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds;
4. Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape;
5. Ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.



3) Applications to improve the use and availability of existing outdoor sports and recreation provision such as the creation of artificial grass pitches and introduction of ancillary facilities such as changing rooms, artificial surfaces or floodlighting will be permitted provided that they :

- a) are directly related to the needs of the facility and are proportionate in scale;
- b) can be satisfactorily and economically serviced;
- c) do not have an unacceptable impact on existing neighbours;
- d) meet the above criteria for new sport, recreation and open space facilities; and
- e) are acceptable in other respects e.g. design, landscape impact, not inappropriate in Green Belt

4) The Council will encourage securing community access to schools to maximise the use of existing sports provision outside of the school day and the co-location of community infrastructure wherever possible.

Any of the above development should be consistent with the updated Open Space Study, Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sports Facilities Assessment and the guidance in the Developer Contributions SPD.

## Green Infrastructure

**7.109** Green Infrastructure is the network of green spaces and natural elements that lie within and connect our towns, villages and countryside. It is the open spaces, waterways, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, wildlife habitats, street trees, natural heritage and open countryside.

**7.110** Green Infrastructure provides multiple benefits for the economy, the environment and people. A high quality environment has a key role in delivering the spatial strategy. It is important for the quality of life of local residents and improves the perception and attractiveness of the area for visitors and investment. Green infrastructure also has a role in our adaption to climate change and contributing to carbon neutral development.

**7.111** Staffordshire Moorlands contains a wide range of existing and potential green infrastructure assets, which can benefit from a strategic approach to ensure adequate protection is given to key features, to identify areas where new linkages and assets need to be created and to guide and manage development which may impact on such areas. The Local Plan recognises the cross cutting function that green infrastructure has, and the benefits of integrating green infrastructure with social and economic priorities, which will help contribute to the development of sustainable communities.

**7.112** This policy is supported by a 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' which will seek to create functional and physical connectivity between green spaces, identify opportunities to provide additional green routes, consider how land can help to alleviate flooding through providing storage areas at times of flooding, consider opportunities to adapt to climate change and importantly make recommendations for how new development should be designed and how it can contribute to the wider green infrastructure network.

**7.113** The provision of green infrastructure is also recognised as benefiting biological and geological resources. Defra has produced 'Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing Biodiversity Duty' which states 'The creation and improvement of Green Infrastructure in urban and rural areas and the countryside in and around towns can help to deliver multiple benefits for biodiversity, landscape, and health and recreation.' Sport England have produced new 'Active Design' (2015) guidelines to promote the role of sport and physical activity. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) have also produced guidance 'Planning for a Healthy Environment – Good Practice Guidance for Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity'. Policy C 3 therefore sets out the Council's policy for developing an integrated network of green infrastructure which is informed and supported by a Green Infrastructure Strategy.

## Policy C 3

### Green Infrastructure

The Council will, through partnership working with local communities, organisations, landowners and developers, develop an integrated network of high quality and multi-functional green infrastructure that will:

- a) Support and improve the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities for local communities and enhance the settings of neighbourhoods;
- b) Link existing and potential sites of nature conservation value and historic landscape features, create new wildlife habitats, increase biodiversity, and increase tree cover where it is appropriate to the landscape;
- c) Enhance the natural, man-made and cultural features that are crucial to the local landscape and create opportunities for the restoration of degraded landscapes and the enhancement of the urban fringe;
- d) Mitigate the negative effects of climate change and maximise potential climate change benefits including effective flood risk and waterways management;
- e) Create appropriate access for a wide range of users to enjoy the countryside, including improved linkages to and provision of formal and informal recreation opportunities and accessible woodland areas, encouraging walking, cycling and horse riding;
- f) Contribute to the diversification of the local economy and tourist development through the enhancement of existing, and provision of new facilities.

The Council will identify, protect and enhance Green Infrastructure assets through the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

## 7.7 Natural Environment

### Natural Environment Policies

#### Spatial Objectives

SO9. To protect and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, biodiversity and geological resources.

#### Biodiversity and Geological Resources

**7.114** Biodiversity enhancement has the potential to aid in addressing climate change by having more and better connected habitats, through providing valuable green infrastructure and helping reconnect people and nature, especially if local communities are encouraged to help establish or maintain new and existing habitats.

**7.115** The District has a wealth of biological and geological resources many of which are statutorily protected. Government guidance states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and local planning authorities should 'set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.' The NPPF requires that distinctions are made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites. These sites are protected under separate legislation with ODPM Circular 06/2005 outlining how statutory obligations impact within the planning system and policy NE 1 will seek to reinforce their protection through the planning process. In addition the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act states that planning authorities must in their Planmaking, have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity; and the Council will seek to produce net gains and enhance biodiversity having regard to the objectives and priorities for the various ecosystems identified within the Staffordshire Moorlands in the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

**7.116** The Council published a number of Phase 1 Ecological Studies for potential development sites across the District since 2015, which have been used as part of the site allocations process. This evidence assessed not only the ecological / nature conservation characteristics presently on-site, but also those immediately adjacent and within 2km of the site, including ancient woodland; and includes an assessment of 'local wildlife site' (LWS) criteria for each site, for the purposes of the NPPF.

**7.117** The Staffordshire Moorlands Biodiversity Opportunity Map has been produced by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust in conjunction with other nature conservation bodies to highlight areas of biodiversity importance. The Map and associated objectives are published as part of the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy.

**7.118** The policies map shows the concentration of significant nature conservation sites within and around the District, which includes Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The policies map also identifies the location of designated sites of international, national, regional and local biological and geological importance and ancient woodlands.

## Policy NE 1

### Biodiversity and Geological Resources

The biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development (and having regard to relevant ecological evidence) by:

1. By ensuring all development schemes have regard to the surveys and actions recommended by the Council's Extended Phase 1 Habitat Surveys and Local Wildlife Assessment, and include measures for protection and enhancement of site biodiversity and protection of any geodiversity as appropriate.
2. Resisting any proposed development that could have an adverse effect on the integrity of an International site (or successor designation) alone or in combination with other plans or projects unless it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect such sites can be fully met. Any development with a potential to adversely affect a European site/s through construction activities should ensure that Ciria construction guidelines are followed including environmental good practice on control of dust and water pollution.
3. The Council will not normally permit any development proposal which would directly or indirectly (either individually or in combination with other developments) have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest features is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
4. Conserving, and enhancing regional and locally designated sites. The Council will not permit any development proposal which would directly or indirectly result in significant harm to geological and biodiversity conservation interests, unless it can be demonstrated that:
  - a) there is no appropriate alternative site available; and
  - b) all statutory and regulatory requirements relating to any such proposal have been satisfied; and
  - c) appropriate conservation and mitigation measures are provided; or if it is demonstrated that this is not possible
  - d) the need for, and benefit of, the development is demonstrated to clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site and compensatory measures are implemented.
5. Expecting all development where possible seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development. In circumstances where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with suitable compensation

measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative. Where any mitigation and compensation measures are required, they should be appropriately scheduled and managed according to the nature, size and scale of the development so as to minimise impacts that may disturb protected or important habitats and species.

6. Supporting opportunities to improve site management and increase public access to wildlife sites including supporting the objectives of the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
7. Ensuring development promotes the appropriate maintenance, enhancement, restoration and/or re-creation of biodiversity through its proposed nature, scale, location and design. The Staffordshire Moorlands Biodiversity Opportunity Map, in conjunction with the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan, will be used to guide biodiversity enhancement measures to be included in development proposals as appropriate to the nature and scale of development proposed and other environmental interest, in particular supporting opportunities to increase grassland and heathland habitats including supporting targets in the UK and Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.
8. Protecting and enhancing habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity as identified in legislation, and recognising and implementing appropriate measures, including landscape-scale conservation management, to take account of the fact that the distribution of habitats and species will be affected by climate change.
9. Recognising the value of the natural environment for sport and leisure activities and the need to manage such activities to ensure there is no conflict.
10. Ensuring the provision and protection of green infrastructure networks in line with Policy C 3.

### Trees Woodland and Hedgerows

**7.119** Woodlands, trees and hedgerows are important to both the quality of life and environment, and are essential to life. Trees will play a role in mitigating the effects of climate change through carbon storage, flood mitigation and urban cooling; and encouraging and supporting woodland creation helps to manage flood risk. They are also an important feature in creating a high quality local environment. The Case for Trees – Forestry commission, (2010) and 'Trees in Townscape', (2012) produced by the Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG) bring together research, case studies and policy background with regards to the benefits of trees, particular in built up areas.

**7.120** In January 2013 DEFRA published its *Government Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement*. This explains the Government's policy of seeking to protect, improve and expand existing public and private woodland assets, to improve and restore native and ancient woodlands, and to improve the biodiversity of woodlands. It states that increasing woodland cover by 12% across England by 2060 is deliverable.