



**The Plan for Stafford Borough –
Publication**

**Examination Statement –
Spatial Vision & Key Objectives**

October 2013

SPATIAL VISION & KEY OBJECTIVES

Key issue:

Are the Vision for Stafford Borough and the key objectives justified, effective, locally distinctive and appropriate, reflecting the Sustainable Community Strategy, community views and issues raised during the preparation of the plan, and do they provide a sound basis for the development strategy and strategic policies in the Plan?

- 1.1 The Borough Council considers that the vision and key objectives within the Plan for Stafford Borough – Publication (A1), hereafter referred to as “**The Plan (A1)**”, are sound as a basis for the development strategy and strategic policies within the Plan. The process of preparing a Vision and Key Objectives began in the Plan for Stafford Borough - Borough-wide Development Strategy (G9) at the start of the plan-making process in January & February 2008, in the context of the Stafford Borough Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020 (E105) which was the Sustainable Community Strategy at that time.
- 1.2 The Vision and Key Objectives were developed in the context of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020 (E105) and responses received to the Plan for Stafford Borough – Borough-wide Development Strategy (G9) as detailed in the Plan for Stafford Borough – Submission Consultation Statement (A14) and detailed in Appendix 3 of the Plan for Stafford Borough – Consultation Statement Appendices (A15).
- 1.3 A full version of the Vision and Key Objectives were first consulted upon through Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough – Issues and Options (G7) in February and March 2009 reflecting the Stafford Borough Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020 (E105) and the Staffordshire County equivalent, entitled Our County, Our Vision: A Sustainable Community Strategy for Staffordshire 2008-2023 (E104) produced by the Staffordshire County Partnership. The Vision and Key Objectives have subsequently been consulted upon throughout the plan-making process as part of the Plan for Stafford Borough – Draft Publication (G2) in September and October 2011, before their inclusion in the Plan (A1), published in January and February 2013. The Vision and Key Objectives have received a good level of support throughout the process of preparing the Plan (A1) with only minor amendments made following responses received and evidence base updates. Furthermore the Vision and Key Objectives reflects the Stafford Borough Community Action Plan (E103) which was published in 2011 by the Stafford Borough Partnership.
- 1.4 The Vision and Key Objectives evolved through the plan-making process to reflect the Sustainable Community Strategies, the evidence base and responses to the consultation documents, detailed in the Plan for Stafford Borough – Submission Consultation Statement (A14) and detailed in Appendix 3 of the Plan for Stafford Borough – Consultation Statement Appendices (A15). They provide a locally specific focus on the needs and planning solutions for the whole of the Borough, for Stafford and Stone, and for the individual villages and rural areas. Therefore the Council considers that the Vision and Key Objectives are a sound basis for the overall development strategy and the strategic policies in the Plan.

- 1.5 Chapter 4 of the Plan (A1) defines a series of key issues for Stafford Borough over the Plan period, derived from the locally distinctive evidence base developed throughout the plan-making process. The Vision and Key Objectives contained in Chapter 5 of the Plan (A1) provide the strategic direction of the development strategy and strategic policies to address these key issues. The remainder of the Plan, comprising the development strategy, which sets locally specific spatial principles, the area-based policies for Stafford and Stone, and a set of topic based policies, provides the mechanism to deliver and monitor achievement of the Vision and Key Objectives. Details of the monitoring framework are set out in Appendix E of the Plan (A1). Clearly the issues raised through the Sustainable Community Strategies for the Stafford Borough area are reflected through the monitoring process of the Plan by way of the indicators, targets, implementation and contingency framework for the Plan (A1) policies. Section 1.14 of the Plan (A1) sets out how the Vision and Key Objectives provide a sound basis for the development strategy and strategic policies, including the structure of how they are to be delivered, monitored and implemented.
- 1.6 As set out in the Plan for Stafford Borough – Submission Consultation Statement (A14), and detailed within the Plan for Stafford Borough Publication – Representations Received (A18), 26 representations were received to this section of the Plan (A1). The majority of representations supported the spatial vision and key objectives, provided that these are deliverable in infrastructure and transport terms. Particular support was given to the use of brownfield land, maintaining services and facilities at Key Service Villages through affordable housing and employment provision, as well as Ministry of Defence housing at Stafford to support the local economy. Clarification was sought in terms of avoiding floodplains in Stone, green space at Key Service Villages and restricting the Eastern Distributor Road to the first section. Objections were raised to mixed use development at Westbridge Park, Stone leading to loss of open space, although new health facilities were supported. The following sections of this Examination Statement address the representations made and the Council’s response.

Spatial Vision:

Does the Plan set out an appropriate, justified, effective and locally distinctive Spatial Vision for the future development strategy of Stafford Borough over the plan period in a clear and positive manner, providing a sound basis for the strategic policies in the Plan and giving sufficient strategic direction for the Borough to 2031?

- 1.7 The Vision is considered appropriate, justified, effective and locally distinctive as it sets out what should be achieved in the Borough by 2031 in a clear and positive manner, based on local evidence which highlights the key issues for Stafford Borough as set out in Chapter 5 of the Plan (A1). Therefore the vision provides a sound basis for the strategic policies in the Plan and provides strategic direction for the Borough to 2031. The Vision and the Key Objectives aim to deliver sustainable development across the Borough in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (F1), and its presumption in favour of sustainable development by balancing social, economic and environmental matters to manage and achieve positive change in the Borough over the Plan period. The

structuring of the Vision into four inter-related areas: Stafford Borough, **Stafford Town, Stone Town and the Borough's villages** aims to provide clarity and further detail to the vision and aims of the Sustainable Community Strategies for Staffordshire (E104) and Stafford Borough (E103 and E105). Furthermore the locally specific structure of the vision enables more detailed references to be made through the remainder of the Plan (A1) in terms of specific locations and policies linking back to the vision, further supporting the locally distinctive nature of the approach.

- 1.8 Four representations from two respondents, Bellway Homes and the Environment Agency, have suggested additional minor modifications to the Spatial Vision within the Plan (A1) for further consideration. Bellway Homes **called for the word 'local' to be deleted from criteria c of the Spatial Vision** under the Stafford Borough section as the Plan is delivering more than just local needs. The Borough Council considers that the Plan (A1) is sound but accepts that Spatial Principle 2 is indeed providing for full, objectively assessed local housing need and in-migration. Therefore the Schedule of Additional (Minor) Modifications (A26) identifies a proposed change, listed as M12. Two of the three Environment Agency representations called for clarification in terms of green infrastructure provision at Stafford Town and Stone Town. In addition a third representation called for new development to avoid flood risk areas in Stone. The Borough Council considers that the Plan (A1) is sound but would benefit from such clarification. Therefore the Schedule of Additional (Minor) Modifications (A26) identifies three proposed changes, listed as M13 to M15.
- 1.9 A number of other representations were made concerning the Spatial Vision within the Plan (A1) by the Garden Centre Group, Bellway Homes, the Harrowby Estate, J Ross Developments, the local office of the Council **for the Protection of Rural England, the Ministry of Defence's Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Mr D Bowers and Mrs S Moulton**. The Garden Centre Group generally agreed with the Spatial Vision but called for additional focus on business and investment provision particularly for tourism and leisure. The Borough Council does not accept that such an amendment is necessary as this is mentioned within the Spatial Vision as well as being addressed through the key objectives, spatial principles and Plan policies. Mr D Bowers called for the Spatial Vision not to refer to Stone having conserved and enhanced its local character, and not having achieved a vibrant local economy by 2031. The Council does not accept that an amendment is needed to the Spatial Vision in response to this representation as Stone is a key sustainable settlement within the Borough and this part of the Spatial Vision is fully supported as an aspiration by most parties. The Council notes support for the vision from the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Ministry of **Defence's Defence Infrastructure Organisation whilst Mrs S Moulton is promoting a site at Gnosall**. Bellway Homes, the Harrowby Estate and J Ross Developments called for reference to local need to be replaced by assessed needs of the Borough. The Borough Council considers that the Plan (A1) is sound but would benefit from further clarification concerning the reference to local need. Therefore the Council sets out in the Schedule of Further Additional Modifications (A27) that **criteria c of the Spatial Vision should be amended to read "c. a range of housing types and tenures to meet the needs of the Borough, including for the ageing population, affordable housing a provision for gypsies and travellers."** In addition **criteria q of the Spatial Vision should be amended to read "q. delivered a range of new housing at selected villages to provide for**

objectively assessed needs.” These further additional modifications are listed at FAM7 and FAM9 within the Schedule of Further Additional Modifications (A27).

Key Objectives:

Does the Plan contain clear, specific, consistent and locally distinctive objectives, which will help to deliver the Spatial Vision in Stafford, Stone and the areas outside?

- 1.10 The Plan (A1) contains Key Objectives which are considered to be clear, specific, consistent and locally distinctive, and which are designed to support delivery of the Spatial Vision for Stafford, Stone and the areas outside Stafford and Stone, and to reflect the local evidence base and key issues highlighted through Chapter 5 of the Plan (A1). The Key Objectives aim to deliver sustainable development for Stafford, Stone and the areas outside of Stafford and Stone in line with the NPPF (F1) and its presumption in favour of sustainable development by balancing social, economic and environmental matters. The structure of the Key Objectives is locally distinctive, providing detail to the vision and aims of the Sustainable Community Strategies for Staffordshire (E104) and Stafford Borough (E103 and E105). Furthermore the locally specific structure of the key objectives enables more detailed elaboration to be made through the remainder of the Plan (A1) in terms of specific locations and policies linking back to the key objectives.
- 1.11 Three representations from RPS on behalf of the Barratts Group, Keep Westbridge Park Green and the Environment Agency have suggested additional minor modifications to the Key Objectives within the Plan (A1) for further consideration. RPS on behalf of the Barratts Group called for clarification in terms of the new road structure for land east of Stafford by replacing phase 1 of the Eastern Distributor Road with the Eastern Access Improvement Scheme with an amendment to Key Objective 11. The Borough Council considers that the Plan (A1) is sound but accepts that Key Objective 11 would benefit from such clarification. Therefore the Schedule of Additional (Minor) Modifications (A26) identifies a proposed change, listed as M16. Keep Westbridge Park Green called for clearer reference to Stone town centre developments and the River Trent through the town. The Borough Council considers that the Plan (A1) is sound but would benefit from such clarification. Therefore the Schedule of Additional (Minor) Modifications (A26) identifies the change, listed as M17. The Environment Agency called for Key Objective 19 to be amended to make specific reference to avoiding flood risk areas in Stone. The Borough Council considers that the Plan (A1) is sound but would benefit from this addition. Therefore the Schedule of Additional (Minor) Modifications (A26) identifies the change, listed as M18.
- 1.12 A number of other representations were made concerning the Key Objectives within the Plan (A1) by the Garden Centre Group, Bellway Homes, **the Ministry of Defence's Defence Infrastructure** Organisation, Mr D Bowers and Mr T Kelt. The Garden Centre Group stated that the key objectives generally accord with the NPPF (F1) but called for preference for the re-use of brownfield land. The Borough Council notes that this matter is referenced in the core planning principles in the NPPF (F1), para. 17. As this matter should be delivered across Stafford Borough, in suitable locations, the Borough Council set out in the Schedule of Further

Additional Modifications (A27) a further proposed modification to the Spatial Vision with an additional criterion to read **“delivered new development, where possible through the re-use of brownfield land and land not of high environmental value, in sustainable locations at Stafford, Stone and the Borough’s selected villages.”** This further additional modification is listed at FAM8 within the Schedule of Further Additional Modifications (A27).

- 1.13 Mr D Bowers called for Key Objective 16 and 17 to be amended, considering that green infrastructure cannot be delivered on private land, and proposing that retail provision should be made on an out-of-town site at Stone. The Borough Council does not accept that Key Objective 16 should be amended as green infrastructure can be identified within private ownership and a change to Key Objective 17 would be contrary to evidence in the Stafford and Stone Town Centre Retail Capacity – Update Final Report (D15) and the Stafford and Stone Town Centre Capacity Assessment – Final Report (D16). Mr T Kelt called for Key Objective 14 to be removed as there is no proposal for a new health centre at Stone included in the Plan (A1). The Borough Council does not accept this change as a new health centre could be delivered within or adjacent to Stone town centre during Plan period, although no specific proposal is currently included in the Plan. The Council notes the support for the Key Objectives 1, 10, 13, 15, 19, 21, 22, 24 & 25.
- 1.14 The Key Objectives within the Plan (A1) have been tested through the Sustainability Appraisal process as plan-making has progressed. The Revised Sustainability Appraisal Report (A10) assesses the key objectives in terms of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework and concludes that the two sets of objectives are compatible with each other or have no effects. Furthermore it identifies where mitigation may be required to avoid any inconsistency in the delivery and implementation of the key objectives through the Plan (A1).