

**Statement of Common Ground**

**between**

**Stafford Borough Council  
English Heritage  
Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd  
Bellway Homes Ltd  
Lord Stafford's Estate  
St Gobain**

**Plan for Stafford Borough**

**Policy 3: Western Strategic Development Location**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Statement of Common Ground is to establish the main areas of agreement, and identify any main areas of dispute / disagreement between the parties and Stafford Borough Council and the approach to taking development forward to the planning application stage.

**Location:**

Land West of Stafford (Burleyfields), Stafford.

**Proposal:**

Land west of Stafford is identified in the Submission Plan for Stafford Borough for a residential-led, mixed use new neighbourhood of approximately 2,200 homes.

The site lies to the west of Stafford and is a mix of greenfield and previously developed land.

To the south of the site lies Stafford Castle, a scheduled monument.

**Joint working**

Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd, Bellway Homes Ltd, Lord Stafford's estate and St Gobain have been working collaboratively with Stafford Borough Council and other partners in relation to the West Stafford SDL for a number of years.

Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd has an option over approximately 69.3 hectares owned by Lord Stafford's estate. Lord Stafford's estate owns a further 7.2 hectares of land comprising Stafford Rugby Club and training ground. Bellway has an option over approximately 19.5 hectares owned by St Gobain.

Taylor Wimpey and Bellway are two of the UK's leading housebuilders and are committed to the delivery of a high quality, mixed use new neighbourhood along with the supporting infrastructure and homes to make the scheme a sustainable urban extension to Stafford.

In order to deliver the SDL a Major Projects Team has been established, working with the support of the HCA's Advisory Team on Large Applications (ATLAS). The approach being taken follows the ATLAS model approach and establishes a series of working structures. The structures established includes a Project Steering Group comprising Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council and representatives of Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd, Bellway Homes Ltd, St Modwen Properties PLC, Lord Stafford's estate and St Gobain. The Steering Group oversees the management of the project and provides a forum for the resolution of issues.

Series of Project Working Groups have been established to take forward thematic work on elements of the scheme. These working groups are instructed by the Steering Group and undertake work on particular issues. The Groups feedback to the Steering Group and make recommendations. Work in relation to the historic environment has proceeded under the Environment Working Group, with the work on heritage issues begin closely linked to the work on green infrastructure.

The parties remain committed to partnership working to bring forward a planning application following the adoption of the Local Plan.

**Evidence base**

In 1991 the Archaeology Section of Stafford Borough Council (SBC) undertook an assessment of five landholdings that were being considered for allocation for residential and industrial development within the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 (*Local Plan Housing and Industrial Allocation: An Archaeological Assessment Archaeology Section Report 1*, SBC 1991).

The area west of Stafford was described within that report as Area 1. A zone of maximum archaeological constraint was defined in order to protect not only the physical remains of Stafford Castle, but also its setting and surrounding contemporary landscape.

In bringing forward these development proposals key stakeholders have met regularly, creating an Environment Working Group, to properly inform proposals and ensure proper consideration has been given to matters of heritage, open space, ecology and flood risk and drainage etc.

During discussion within the Environment Working Group, English Heritage advised of new guidance on assessing the setting of archaeological assets: *The setting of heritage assets: English Heritage guidance* (2011). It was agreed that further work would be commissioned to supplement the local plan evidence base.

EDP undertook further assessment in their report, *Burleyfields, Stafford, Historic Environment Assessment*, EDP, September 2013, of the setting of Stafford Castle in accordance with that 2011 guidance. That work has been submitted to Stafford Borough Council to supplement the local plan evidence base.


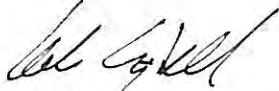
Through the process of compiling additional evidence on the setting of the Castle, a set of agreed principles have been developed.

### **Agreed Historic Environment Principles**

The following place shaping principles are recommended to ensure development is appropriate to the setting and significance of Stafford Castle, taking advantage of the opportunities to enhance its appreciation as an important historic and cultural feature of the landscape.

1. A masterplan, and subsequent development, will be informed by the Burley Fields Historic Environment Assessment (EDP, September 2013) to secure a high quality contextual design and the appropriate integration of development within the sensitive historic landscape.
2. The layout of development, its density, form, massing and height will vary in response to the visual sensitivity, topography, landform and existing character of different parts of the site allowing a balance between built and 'green areas' with a more permeable and lower density of development in the southern part of the site nearest to Stafford Castle.
3. Development of the southern portion of the site on the plateau above the ridgeline/false crest will be of a lower density. There will be a careful assimilation of development here to ensure a gradual transition from the built form to a more open scene within proximity of the scheduled monument.
4. A strategic landscape plan will be prepared to guide development and associated infrastructure, roads and pathways to ensure the informal integration within the existing network of fields, green corridors and strategic landscaping, with additional planting supplementing existing landscape features, hedgerows and trees. Street trees will be expected to break the appearance of roofscapes and provide a high quality street scene.
5. Landscaping will be integrated with the adjacent golf course and where possible this standard golf course planting will be reviewed and adapted to help secure a more coherent and comprehensive design.
6. Opportunities will be taken to retain and enhance the public right of way network to maintain connections to the castle, town and adjacent settlements. The historic significance of the southern footpath route (processional route) on the edge of the site should be acknowledged in conjunction with the closer and prominent views of the Castle from within the south eastern corner of the site.
7. The importance of long distance views to and from Stafford castle and from the M6 should be recognised. From within the site, vistas and glimpses of the castle may be of equal importance. Key views to and from Stafford Castle should be retained and supplemented where appropriate. Development in the south east corner of the site should ensure views are maintained from the Castle toward St Mary's Church.

8. Intrusive highway infrastructure, junctions, roads and on street car parking should be avoided on the more sensitive upper slopes of the site.
9. Street lighting should be designed to minimise light pollution and sky glow.
10. Electricity pylons crossing the site should be removed where possible.
11. As part of the development proposal a conservation management plan for the Castle should be prepared and where appropriate fund improvements including the management of the surrounding woodland. At key viewpoints and open spaces interpretive material/boards may be introduced to develop an appreciation of the cultural association of the castle and the wider historic landscape.

 <p>Alex Yendole for Stafford Borough Council</p>	<p>Rohan Torkildsen English Heritage</p>	 <p>Colin Campbell (Savills) for Tylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd, Bellway Homes, Lord Stafford's Estate and St Gobain</p>
--	--	---



# Stafford West Concept Diagram

A Masterplan to secure a high quality contextual design and integration of development within the sensitive historic landscape. The layout of development, its density, form, massing and height will vary in response to visual sensitivity, topography, landform, and existing character of different parts of the site.

A strategic landscape plan will be prepared to guide development and associated infrastructure, roads and pathways to ensure the informal integration within the existing network of fields, green corridors and strategic landscaping with additional planting supplementing existing landscape features, hedgerows and trees. Street trees will be expected to break the appearance of roofscapes and provide a high quality street scene.

Retain and enhance the public right of way network to maintain connections to the castle, town and adjacent settlements. The southern footpath route (processional route) on the edge of the site acknowledged with the closer and prominent views of the castle.

Development of the southern portion of the site on the plateau above the ridgeline / false crest will be of a lower density to ensure a gradual transition from the built form to a more open scene within the proximity of the scheduled monument.

Landscaping will be integrated with the adjacent golf course and where possible this standard golf course planting will be reviewed and adapted.

The importance of long distance views to and from Stafford Castle and from the M6 should be recognised. Key views to and from Stafford Castle should be retained and supplemented where appropriate.

Intrusive highway infrastructure, junctions, roads and on street car parking should be avoided on the more sensitive upper slopes of the site.

Street lighting should be designed to minimise light pollution and sky glow.

Electricity pylons crossing the site should be removed where possible.

- Strategic Development - Housing
- Existing Urban Area
- Strategic Development - Mixed Use
- Existing Employment Area
- New Green Infrastructure
- Existing Green Infrastructure
- Transitional Area
- Stafford Castle
- Local Centre and New School
- Proposed New Road
- Access Links
- Roads
- Motorway
- Rail
- Existing School

