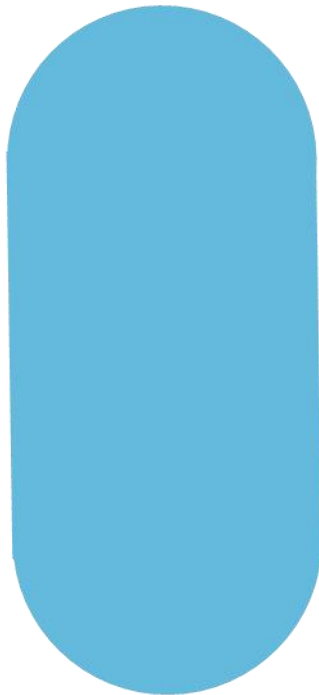
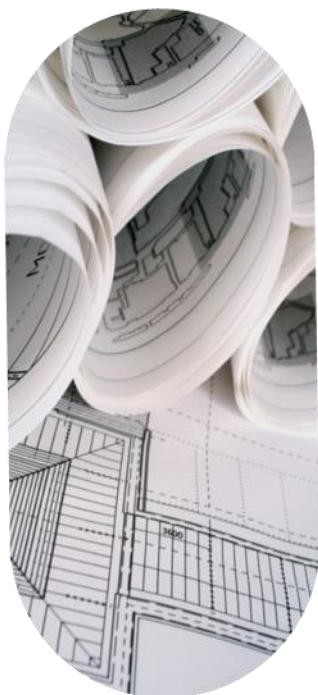


Representations

South Staffordshire Local Plan Review
Publication Consultation (Regulation 19)

L&Q Estates Limited

December 2022





1. The following representations are made in response to the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review (SSLPR) Publication document (November 2022) on behalf of L&Q Estates Limited ('L&Q Estates') in respect of their land interest off Bridgnorth Road, Wightwick (SHELAA site reference 260).
2. These representations should be read alongside the completed Representation Forms and Site Location Plan.

Strategic Policies and Allocations

Policy DS4: Development Needs

3. Draft Policy DS4 details the housing, employment and gypsy and traveller requirements to be delivered in the SSLPR Plan period from 2018 to 2039. An objection to draft Policy DS4 is made on the following grounds:
 - The length of the Plan period;
 - The contribution proposed to be made towards the unmet housing needs of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA), recognising the potential need for additional unmet housing needs to be dealt with;
 - The omission of a sufficient buffer in housing supply;
 - The inclusion of a high level of commitments within the housing supply without applying a lapse rate and without sufficient evidence of their deliverability; and,
 - The incorporation of a windfall allowance within the housing supply without the provision of compelling evidence to justify its inclusion.
4. As drafted, we consider Policy DS4 is not positively prepared, effective nor consistent with national policy and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework', July 2021)¹.

Plan Period

5. Draft Policy DS4 seeks to plan for South Staffordshire's housing, employment and gypsy and traveller needs to 2039. However, an objection is made to the Plan period

¹ Paragraph 35 of the Framework



running until only 2039, and the related limited requirements set out in draft Policy DS4, with particular reference to housing.

6. The Framework is clear that strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum of 15 years from adoption (emphasis added)². In order for compliance with the Framework to be achieved, the SSLPR would need to be adopted by 2024 at the latest. Whilst that may be achievable, it is considered that any delays to the Submission and subsequent Examination of the SSLPR could result in the Plan falling foul of the requirements of the Framework.
7. Given the Framework requirement for strategic policies to look ahead 15 years is a minimum expectation, and the potential for a prolonged Examination given matters such as the Duty to Cooperate which are likely to require significant consideration, the Plan period should be extended until at least 2041.
8. An extension to the Plan period to 2041 would increase the Council's Local Housing Need derived from the Standard Method by an additional 482 dwellings, with the potential for additional contributions required towards the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA too, as explored below.

Unmet Needs of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area

9. Draft Policy DS4 seeks to include 4,000 dwellings of unmet needs from the GBBCHMA into the SSLPR Housing Requirement, in recognition of the significant shortfall in supply in Birmingham and the Black Country and the need for neighbouring authorities to accommodate additional growth in Local Plans in such circumstances, in order to be considered positively prepared and thus sound³.
10. The 4,000 dwellings contribution being made by South Staffordshire to unmet needs of the GBBCHMA was recognised in the now disbanded Black Country Plan Review. The Issues and Options version of the Black Country Plan Review (July 2021) identified a shortfall in housing supply totalling some 28,239 dwellings for the period to 2039. A maximum of 8,000 dwellings in contributions was proposed to be made

² Paragraph 22 of the Framework

³ Paragraph 35 a) of the Framework



towards this substantial shortfall by neighbouring authorities, including up to 4,000 from South Staffordshire. Thus, a significant shortfall in housing supply in the Black Country remains and will need to be considered further as each of the four Local Planning Authorities develop their individual Local Plans.

11. This is particularly noteworthy for Wolverhampton, which South Staffordshire directly borders and has a strong economic and functional relationship with, given it is one of the largest 20 urban areas and thus is subject to the 35% uplift in Local Housing Need derived from the Standard Method as set out in National Planning Practice Guidance ('National Guidance')⁴. Reviewing the identified supply for each Local Planning Authority set out in the Black Country Plan Review Issues and Options document indicates that Wolverhampton had the second highest level of projected shortfall in supply compared with need in the Black Country (after Sandwell) at circa 7,000 dwellings shortfall in the period to 2039. Indeed, Wolverhampton's Local Housing Need derived from the Standard Method calculation has since increased further with a worsening affordability ratio published by the Office for National Statistics in March 2022⁵, thus likely increasing the gap in shortfall in supply.
12. Further, there are significant unmet needs arising from Birmingham which require attention. Consultation on the Birmingham Local Plan Issues and Options was conducted in October to December 2022. It set out a Local Housing Need derived from the Standard Method for the city in the period 2020 to 2042 of some 149,286 dwellings, with total identified housing supply in the same period of just 70,871 dwellings. This results in a huge shortfall of some 78,415 dwellings to 2042, with no defined contributions to this shortfall made as yet and likely significant difficulty to accommodate these in neighbouring authorities given the existing housing land supply limitations.
13. On the basis of the above, it is considered that the substantial unmet needs of the GBBCHMA should be addressed. Whilst the SSLPR goes some way to try to assist with the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA, such unmet needs are so significant and

⁴ Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 2a-004-20201216 of National Guidance

⁵ [House price to workplace-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)



increasing that it is considered the SSLPR must accommodate further growth in order to be considered positively prepared and thus sound at Examination.

Buffer

14. Draft Policy DS4 reports a buffer of approximately 13% in housing supply, providing for 10,188 dwellings in supply as set out in Table 7 against a Housing Requirement of 9,089 dwellings.
15. However, it is considered that a 13% buffer is insufficient to afford the appropriate level of assurance and flexibility in housing supply for the Plan period. The Local Plans Expert Group recommended to Government in 2016 that a further allowance should be made, equivalent to 20% of the Housing Requirement, in developable reserve sites to provide extra flexibility to respond to change⁶, with the introduction of the Standard Method for calculating Local Housing Need not invalidating nor inherently taking account of this advice.
16. A 20% buffer will provide flexibility across housing supply to ensure local housing needs can be met even in circumstances where assumed supply does not come forward as anticipated. We consider that it is appropriate to incorporate a buffer into the Housing Requirement, as opposed to being reported on based on the level of identified supply as is the case in the SSLPR Publication document, to ensure this flexibility is taken into account in determining the most appropriate strategy to meet the level of need.

Commitments

17. Draft Policy DS4 identifies that a significant proportion of the identified housing supply is made up of commitments, i.e. sites with planning permission.
18. We note in the supporting Housing Site Selection Topic Paper (November 2022) that a significant number of sites with planning permission that have not yet commenced are included in the housing supply, without any account taken of the potential for such planning permissions to lapse if unimplemented. It is considered that a minimum 10%

⁶ [Local-plans-report-to-governement.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/111111/local-plans-report-to-government.pdf)



lapse rate should be applied to commitments not started, to ensure the supply is robust.

19. Moreover, commitments not started and commitments under construction should be interrogated to ensure they can be considered developable, deliverable and capable of being relied upon in line with the Framework. This is likely to reduce the amount of housing supply that can be included to help meet the Housing Requirement set out in draft Policy DS4.

Windfall Allowance

20. Draft Policy DS4 seeks to incorporate a windfall allowance of 600 dwellings on small sites in the housing supply, which equates to 5.8% of the total housing supply identified. No evidence has been provided to justify the windfall allowance, contrary to the requirements of the Framework which requires compelling evidence that windfall sites will provide a reliable source of supply⁷.
21. We have concerns with the inclusion of any windfall allowance in South Staffordshire, particularly where no evidence has been provided setting out historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends. The Council's supporting Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA, November 2022) is highly detailed and contains a significant number of land holdings, including those small enough to be considered only suitable to deliver a single dwelling. As all sites identified in the SHELAA cannot be considered to meet the definition of a windfall site as set out in the Framework⁸, there is considered to be significantly limited opportunities for windfall development in the District. This is particularly noteworthy in the context of substantial Green Belt coverage in South Staffordshire, tightly drawn Development Boundaries and a policy framework in the emerging SSLPR which seeks to heavily restrict Green Belt and open countryside residential development.
22. As such, we consider the windfall allowance should be removed from the housing supply in draft Policy DS4.

⁷ Paragraph 71 of the Framework

⁸ Glossary of the Framework



Conclusions on Housing Requirement and Supply

23. Bringing together all of the points above, it is considered that there is likely to be a significant shortfall in housing supply planned for in the draft SSLPR. This is before any additional contributions to the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA are considered, and without any reductions to the level of commitments is made, both of which are queried in these representations without being quantified. This is also without detailed analysis of carried forward, safeguarded land and proposed new allocations, which could further reduce the level of supply and increase the shortfall, as set out in part in response to draft Policy DS5 later in these representations.
24. This is illustrated in Table 1 below, which adopts and adapts the approach taken in the SSLPR to calculating Housing Requirement in Paragraph 5.17 of the Publication document to take account of the above concerns:

Table 1: Housing Requirement and Supply Analysis

Housing Requirement	
Standard Method 2022-2041 (19 x 241)	4,579
Completions 2018-2022	992
GBBCHMA Contribution	4,000*
<i>Housing Requirement</i>	<i>9,571</i>
Buffer (20%)	1,914
<i>Housing Requirement including 20% Buffer</i>	<i>11,485</i>
Housing Supply	
Planning Permissions and Carried Forward Allocations (minus windfall allowance)	2,724*
Safeguarded Land	1,604*
New Allocations	5,260*
<i>Housing Supply</i>	<i>9,588</i>
Balance (no buffer)	17 dwellings supply balance
Balance (20% buffer included)	1,897 dwellings supply shortfall



25. For completeness, it should be noted that we consider the approach to calculating to the Housing Requirement in the SSLPR is unfounded. We consider that the Local Housing Need derived from the Standard Method should be the starting point, with the Council's contribution to the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA added to form the Housing Requirement. The Local Housing Need calculation should be applied from the start of the SSLPR Plan period with any completions taken account of in the supply, or the Local Housing Need calculation should be applied from 2022 with no account taken of any completions since 2018.
26. These scenarios are set out in Tables 2 and 3 below, incorporating commentary provided elsewhere in these representations (buffer and windfall allowance), and again before any additional contributions to the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA are considered, without any reductions to the level of commitments, and also without detailed analysis of carried forward, safeguarded land and proposed new allocations.

Table 2: Housing Requirement and Supply Analysis Adopting Alternative Approach to Calculating Housing Requirement (1)

Housing Requirement	
Standard Method 2018-2041 (23 x 241)	5,543
GBBCHMA Contribution	4,000*
<i>Housing Requirement</i>	<i>9,543</i>
Buffer (20%)	1,909
<i>Housing Requirement including 20% Buffer</i>	<i>11,482</i>
Housing Supply	
Completions 2018-2022	992
Planning Permissions and Carried Forward Allocations (minus windfall allowance)	2,724*
Safeguarded Land	1,604*
New Allocations	5,260*
<i>Housing Supply</i>	<i>10,580</i>
Balance (no buffer)	1,037 dwellings supply balance
Balance (20% buffer included)	902 dwellings supply shortfall



Table 3: Housing Requirement and Supply Analysis Adopting Alternative Approach to Calculating Housing Requirement (2)

Housing Requirement	
Standard Method 2022-2041 (19 x 241)	4,579
GBBCHMA Contribution	4,000*
<i>Housing Requirement</i>	<i>8,579</i>
Buffer (20%)	1,716
<i>Housing Requirement including 20% Buffer</i>	<i>10,295</i>
Housing Supply	
Planning Permissions and Carried Forward Allocations (minus windfall allowance)	2,724*
Safeguarded Land	1,604*
New Allocations	5,260*
<i>Housing Supply</i>	<i>9,588</i>
Balance (no buffer)	1,009 dwellings supply balance
Balance (20% buffer included)	707 dwellings supply shortfall

27. In conclusion, we consider that the SSLPR Plan period should be extended until at least 2041 to ensure compliance with the Framework. Consideration should also be given to an increase in the level of contributions being made to the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA, recognising the significance of the identified shortfall in supply against need. In addition, a buffer of 20% should be applied to include sufficient flexibility in housing supply. Further, a reduction to the level of commitments through a 10% lapse rate on sites not started should be applied, and evidence of the deliverability of commitments not started and under construction should be provided, in addition to the removal of a windfall allowance, to understand the genuine supply and prospects of meeting the Housing Requirement.

28. Considering all of these elements collectively, we identify a significant shortfall in supply as set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3 above. This should be rectified through the allocation of additional sites, including Land off Bridgnorth Road, Wightwick.



Policy DS5: The Spatial Strategy to 2039

29. Draft Policy DS5 details the Spatial Development Strategy proposed to be adopted by the SSLPR, and sets out the associated Settlement Hierarchy. An objection to draft Policy DS5 is made on the following grounds:

- A disproportionately low level of growth being directed to the edge of Wolverhampton, in recognition of the SSLPR's contribution to assisting to meet the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA;
- An lack of diversity in the scale of allocations being directed to the edge of Wolverhampton and the impact on short-term delivery; and
- Ambitious assumptions for delivery of the strategic sites on the edge of Wolverhampton.

30. As drafted, we consider Policy DS5 is not justified, effective nor consistent with national policy and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the Framework⁹.

Growth Proposed on the Edge of Wolverhampton

31. As set out in draft Policy DS4, the SSLPR is seeking to make a contribution of 4,000 dwellings to the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA. It would be expected that opportunities to deliver unmet needs would be done so bordering the HMA where such needs have arisen, where suitable sites are available to do so, however the draft SSLPR only seeks to allocate 2,790 dwellings adjacent to the edge of Wolverhampton's administrative boundary.

32. Moreover, all three proposed allocations which border Wolverhampton's administrative boundary are of a significant scale, at 1,200 dwellings, 1,200 dwellings and 390 dwellings respectively. Given none of these sites have any planning status at this stage and due to their scale, they are unlikely to make any contribution to the delivery of dwellings to help meet unmet needs of the GBBCHMA for a number of years.

⁹ Paragraph 35 of the Framework



33. With regard to Land at Cross Green (draft Policy SA2) and Land north of Linthouse Lane (draft Policy SA3), doubts are raised as to the deliverability of the full quantum of residential development of each site within the proposed Plan period to 2039.
34. It is noted that a Housing Trajectory has not been produced, so detailed analysis of the proposed timetable for delivery of these sites is not possible. However, consideration and determination of any planning applications, including the signing of a Section 106 agreement, is likely to be a prolonged process, and subsequent delivery of the sites is likely to be delayed due to the collaboration required between a number of landowners and substantial infrastructure requirements as set out in draft Policies SA2 and SA3.
35. This assertion is supported by Lichfield's Start to Finish Report (second edition, February 2020)¹⁰ which concludes that the average time from the validation of a planning application to first completion on a scheme of between 1,000 and 1,500 dwellings is 6.9 years, and that the average number of completions on a scheme of between 1,000 and 1,500 dwellings is 107 per annum. On that basis, first completion is unlikely to take place until at least 2030, at an average rate of 107 dwellings per annum. As a result, it is considered that only around 963 dwellings can be delivered on each of Land at Cross Green and Land north of Linthouse Lane in the proposed SSLPR Plan period to 2039.
36. Clear delivery evidence should be provided to support the allocation of Land at Cross Green and Land north of Linthouse Lane, including a delivery programme which sets out when submission and granting of planning permissions is anticipated, any pre-commencement infrastructure delivery requirements, when first completions are expected, the number of developers likely to be on-board once each site is fully up and running, and the annual delivery rates projected. This is to ensure the proposed allocations meet the definition of developable as set out in the Framework¹¹.

¹⁰ [start-to-finish_what-factors-affect-the-build-out-rates-of-large-scale-housing-sites.pdf \(lichfields.uk\)](#)

¹¹ Glossary of the Framework



Conclusion on Spatial Strategy

37. Taking the above points together, we consider that the importance of delivery of housing adjacent to Wolverhampton should be recognised, and further growth be allocated on the edge of Wolverhampton as a consequence. This should include smaller sites which are deliverable in the early part of the SSLPR Plan period, including Land off Bridgnorth Road, Wightwick.
38. This action will help balance housing supply with housing needs, specific to the location in which such needs are arising, and will also help to offset the supply shortfall which we have identified and that will likely further deteriorate as a result of the strategic sites taking longer and delivering at a slower rate than anticipated.

Policy DS6: Longer Term Growth Aspirations for a New Settlement

39. Draft Policy DS6 identifies a longer term growth aspiration for a new settlement in South Staffordshire to deal with future development needs.
40. Whilst we support the Council's recognition that future growth will be required in South Staffordshire, particularly in the context of the GBBCHMA shortfall discussed in response to draft Policy DS4 above, and whilst the Council may wish to consider a new settlement as part of the next Local Plan Review, it is considered inappropriate to include such a Policy in the SSLPR given it is not making any contribution to the development needs of the Plan period set out in the SSLPR. The next Local Plan Review will be subject to the Local Plan process, and contemplation of growth options will have to be considered in the context of the growth requirements identified and in line with an up-to-date Sustainability Appraisal.
41. As such, we consider that draft Policy DS6 should be deleted. Draft Policy DS6 is not positively prepared, justified, effective nor consistent with national policy and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the Framework¹².

¹² Paragraph 35 of the Framework



Policy SA5: Housing Allocations

42. Draft Policy SA5 sets out the non-strategic housing allocations proposed in the SSLPR. An objection to draft Policy SA5 is made due the omission of Land off Bridgnorth Road, Wightwick as an allocation for housing.
43. Land off Bridgnorth Road abuts the urban edge of Wolverhampton, with existing residential development to the north, east and south. The site is relatively flat and has no major on-site constraints aside from Green Belt designation, which covers a significant proportion of South Staffordshire in any case.
44. The site is well placed to access a number of key services and facilities, including Wightwick Hall Secondary School and Sixth Form which is directly adjacent to site and is easily accessible by active travel modes via Bridgnorth Road and Tinacre Hill (circa 500m). Castlecroft Primary School is within 1 mile of the site, and there are a number of Local Centres offering a range of services and facilities within 2 miles of the site. In addition, the site is within 3 miles of Wolverhampton City Centre, accessible by public transport with regular bus services from stops at Bridgnorth Road's junction with Tinacre Hill which are within 300m of the site, with a typical journey time into Wolverhampton City Centre being around 15 minutes.
45. Land off Bridgnorth Road has been assessed in the SHELAA at site reference 260. The assessment of the site is set out in the Housing Site Selection Topic Paper at Appendix 3 (November 2022).
46. The assessment of Land off Bridgnorth Road is generally positive, recognising the site's location on the western border of the Black Country and the lack of on-site constraints, with County Highways support in principle subject to highway improvements. However, a number of concerns are raised in the assessment of Land off Bridgnorth Road; these are discussed in turn in the following paragraphs of these representations.

Green Belt

47. The assessment of Land off Bridgnorth Road identifies that development would likely have high Green Belt harm.



48. The supporting Green Belt Review (2019 and 2022 Addendum) categorises the site as falling within parcel S59 which measures a total of 487.8ha. Parcel S59 is considered to perform strongly against the Green Belt purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Parcel S59 is broken down into sub-parcels, with Land off Bridgnorth Road falling within S59C which measures 143.8ha in total and is also identified as performing strongly against the Green Belt purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
49. However, it is considered that an individual assessment of Land off Bridgnorth Road, which measures circa 7.8ha and is thus far less significant in terms of the scale of assessments undertaken in the Green Belt Review in this location, would identify the site as being able to be developed without having a significant impact on the purposes of the Green Belt.
50. With regard to checking unrestricted sprawl, the Green Belt Review assessment of parcel S59C finds that “land is adjacent or close to the large built-up area, contains no or very limited urban development, and has strong openness. It retains a relatively strong relationship with the wider countryside”.
51. Whilst Land off Bridgnorth Road does not contain urban development, aside from the existing dwelling known as Cherringham, it is effectively surrounded by built development to the north, east and south. In turn, the level of openness of Land off Bridgnorth Road is considered to be far more limited than the wider S59C parcel. The same can also be said with regard to the site’s relationship with the urban area which is considered to be far stronger than with the wider countryside. Thus, the contribution of Land off Bridgnorth Road to checking unrestricted sprawl cannot be considered strong, more likely weak or moderate at most.
52. In terms of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, the Green Belt Review assessment of parcel S59C finds that “land contains the characteristics of open countryside (i.e. an absence of built or otherwise urbanising uses in Green Belt terms) and does not have a stronger relationship with the urban area than with the wider countryside”.



53. Again whilst Land off Bridgnorth Road does not contain urban development, aside from the existing dwelling known as Cherringham, it is effectively surrounded by built development to the north, east and south. In addition, given the location of the site it is clear that its relationship with the urban area is far stronger than with the wider countryside. Thus, the contribution of Land off Bridgnorth Road to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment also cannot be considered strong, more likely weak or moderate at most.

54. The above assessment of the contribution of Land off Bridgnorth Road to the purposes of the Green Belt, with a comparison to the summary set out in the Green Belt Study assessment of parcel S59C, is set out in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Green Belt Assessment Comparison

<u>Green Belt Purpose</u>	<u>SSLPR Green Belt Study Assessment</u>	<u>Marrons Planning Assessment</u>
P1. Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Strong	Weak / No Contribution (Moderate at most)
P2 .Preventing the merging of neighbouring towns	Weak / No Contribution	Weak / No Contribution
P3. Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Strong	Weak / No Contribution (Moderate at most)
P4. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Weak / No Contribution	Weak / No Contribution
P5. Assist urban regeneration, by encouraging recycling of derelict and other urban land	Strong	Strong

55. On the basis of the above, it is considered that the contribution of Land off Bridgnorth Road to the purposes of the Green Belt is far more limited than the wider assessment of parcels S59 and more specifically S59C. As such, concerns relating to the release of Land off Bridgnorth Road from the Green Belt and allocation for development in the SSLPR are deemed to be unfounded.



Landscape Impact

56. The assessment of Land off Bridgnorth Road identifies that the site is in an area of moderate landscape sensitivity.
57. The supporting Landscape Study (2019 and 2022 Addendum) categorises the site as falling within parcel SL29 which measures a total of 187.1ha. Parcel SL29 is considered to have moderate landscape sensitivity overall, with specific concerns raised in relation to the open land which falls between the southern edge of Perton and Wightwick; this does not include Land off Bridgnorth Road.
58. It is considered that an individual assessment of Land off Bridgnorth Road, which measures circa 7.8ha and is thus far less significant in terms of the scale of assessment undertaken in the Landscape Study, would not raise significant concerns in terms of impact on landscape given the nature of the site and its location. In any case, it is considered any landscape impacts could be sufficiently mitigated through detailed design and masterplanning.
59. On the basis of the above, it is considered that concerns relating to landscape impact with specific reference to Land off Bridgnorth Road are unfounded, and not a constraint that renders the site unsuitable as an allocation for residential development.

Trees

60. The assessment of Land off Bridgnorth Road identifies that the site is separated from the highway by a dense tree belt which is subject to Tree Preservation Orders.
61. Whilst this is accurate, it is important to note that there is an existing access from Bridgnorth Road to serve the existing dwelling known as Cherringham. Further, it is considered that a suitable access to the site could be achieved with minimal impact on the existing tree belt, which would be either entirely or majority retained, with further tree planting able to be made elsewhere in the site to negate for any loss and to assist with the achievement of Biodiversity Net Gain.



62. As such, it is considered that concerns relating to trees are unfounded and not a constraint that render Land off Bridgnorth Road unsuitable as an allocation for residential development.

Conclusion

63. Given the context of a shortfall in housing supply and concerns raised with the Development Strategy as set out in response to draft Policies DS4 and DS5 above, Land off Bridgnorth Road should be allocated in the emerging SSLPR.

64. There are no technical or environmental reasons why Land off Bridgnorth Road cannot be allocated, with the only concerns raised in the assessment of the site in the Housing Site Selection Paper either considered to be unfounded or able to be dealt with through detailed design and masterplanning.

65. It has been demonstrated that Land off Bridgnorth Road is developable, and the site is easily deliverable within the early part of the SSLPR Plan period. As such, we request the allocation of Land off Bridgnorth Road in draft Policy SA5. An appropriate minimum housing figure would be 125 dwellings.

Detailed Strategic and Non-Strategic Development Management Policies

Policy HC1: Housing Mix

66. Draft Policy HC1 seeks to ensure that residential development proposals contribute towards the provision of mixed, sustainable and inclusive communities.

67. It is recognised that the draft Policy is particularly seeking to increase the stock of 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings in South Staffordshire, however the imposition of a minimum of 70% dwellings with 3 bedrooms or less on new residential development will not deliver mixed, sustainable and inclusive communities. Whilst the policy provides some flexibility recognising that the specific mix breakdown should be determined on a site by site basis, it is considered that such consideration will be limited by the imposition of a minimum 70% requirement for dwellings with 3 bedrooms or less.

68. It is recommended that draft Policy HC1 is amended to remove reference to a minimum requirement for dwellings with 3 bedrooms or less, and to include scenarios



where a mix which varies from that desired would be considered acceptable. This should include where updated or area specific market evidence is available, landform, design and local character, density considerations, on-site constraints such as heritage, viability, and market factors.

69. As drafted, Policy HC1 is not justified and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the Framework¹³.

Policy HC2: Housing Density

70. Draft Policy HC2 seeks to require housing developments achieve a minimum net density of 35 dwellings per net developable hectare.

71. Although the draft Policy does seek to provide some flexibility, and whilst it is recognised that the Framework seeks to make efficient use of land¹⁴, as written draft Policy HC2 is unduly onerous.

72. In some cases, a lower density than 35 dwellings per net developable hectare will be appropriate when considering any on-site or off-site constraints, such as the historic environment, or where the related settlement character requires a lower density in order for good design to be achievable. This is particularly noteworthy given the other policy measures which the SSLPR seeks to impose on residential development including in draft Policies HC8 and HC12.

73. As such, it is considered that draft Policy HC2 should be amended to set out that the net density of 35 dwellings per net developable hectare is a target which should be assessed on a site-by-site basis taking account of on-site and off-site constraints, impact on the related settlement character and the influence of any other SSLPR policy measures which reduce achievable net density.

74. As drafted, Policy HC2 is not justified and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the Framework¹⁵.

¹³ Paragraph 35 of the Framework

¹⁴ Chapter 11 of the Framework

¹⁵ Paragraph 35 of the Framework



Policy HC4: Homes for Older People and Others with Special Housing Requirements

75. Draft Policy HC4 seeks to provide support for housing to suit the needs of older people and others with special housing requirements.
76. The fourth paragraph of draft Policy HC4 seeks to require all major residential developments to fully comply with Building Regulations Part M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings. The Council's evidence for implementation of such higher standards is an increase in the ageing population which is projected to continue to rise.
77. Whilst the Local Plan Viability Study may conclude that the introduction of such measures would not have an impact on development viability, we consider that the introduction of such standards is contrary to the Framework¹⁶ which is clear that optional technical standards for accessible and adaptable housing should only be introduced where this will address an identified need for such properties.
78. In the absence of such evidence, we consider that the fourth paragraph of draft Policy HC4 should be amended to encourage inclusion of dwellings which meet the requirements of Building Regulations Part M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings, or be deleted.
79. As drafted, Policy HC4 is not justified or consistent with national policy and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the Framework¹⁷.

Policy HC8: Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding

80. Draft Policy HC8 seeks to support the provision of self-build and custom housebuilding schemes in South Staffordshire.
81. The second paragraph of draft Policy HC8 seeks to require major developments to take account of the need for self-build and custom build plots and make provision to reflect such a need as appropriate. However, it is that considered this policy requirement is ambiguous and does not provide sufficient clarity with regard to the

¹⁶ Paragraph 130 f) and Footnote 49 of the Framework

¹⁷ Paragraph 35 of the Framework



expectation of an applicant for a major development proposal, particularly given the Council does not publish its Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register or any data relating to it publicly.

82. Further, it is considered the Council's Register couldn't be relied upon as clear evidence to support such a policy intervention in any case given the ability for an individual to enter their details on to multiple Registers, skewing the data derived, when that individual may have no means or desire to carry out such a project in reality in any case.
83. In addition, the delivery of self-build and custom build plots on larger residential schemes are unlikely to be desirable to those on the Councils' Register given the majority of self-builders and custom builders tend to seek standalone plots in the open countryside. Moreover, there are practical issues with delivery of self-build and custom-build homes on larger residential schemes which require consideration, along with the potential for impact on development viability.
84. It is also considered that the requirement for developers to actively market plots at a reasonable price for a minimum period of 12 months as set out in the third paragraph of draft Policy HC8 is unreasonable. 12 months is a significant marketing period and could delay bringing forward sites with planning permission that are otherwise deliverable, impacting the Council's short-term supply.
85. As such, it is considered that clarity and flexibility should be incorporated into draft Policy HC8, to provide support for the provision of self-build and custom build plots on major residential development sites where appropriate, and to reduce any marketing period to a maximum of 6 months. Alternatively, the second and third paragraphs of draft Policy HC8 should be deleted.
86. As drafted, Policy HC8 is not justified and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the Framework¹⁸.

¹⁸ Paragraph 35 of the Framework



Policy HC12: Space about Dwellings and Internal Space

87. Draft Policy HC12 seeks to require residential development to create a place that people find attractive through internal and external space requirements.
88. The fourth paragraph of draft Policy HC12 seeks to implement, as a minimum, the requirements of the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) for all new residential development in South Staffordshire.
89. We are supportive of the NDSS being used to influence the standard of housing developments, however there may be instances where greater flexibility is required in order to meet need. Further, we consider that the introduction of such standards is contrary to the Framework¹⁹ which is clear that optional technical standards for accessible and adaptable housing should only be introduced where this will address an identified need for such properties. We consider that if the Government had expected all properties to be built to NDSS, that they would have made such standards mandatory and not optional requiring sufficient evidence.
90. In the absence of such evidence, we consider that the fourth paragraph of draft Policy HC12 should be amended to encourage consideration of the NDSS against need and the local market, or be deleted.
91. As drafted, Policy HC12 is not justified or consistent with national policy and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the Framework²⁰.

Policy NB6: Sustainable Construction

92. Draft Policy NB6 seeks to encourage carbon reduction and water efficiency measures in new development.
93. For residential development proposals, draft Policy NB6 seeks to require achievement of net zero regulated carbon emissions through an energy hierarchy, to attain a minimum 63% reduction compared to the baseline set by Building Regulations Part L

¹⁹ Paragraph 130 f) and Footnote 49 of the Framework

²⁰ Paragraph 35 of the Framework



including a 10% improvement on the target for Fabric Energy Efficiency, and provide on-site renewable energy generating technologies.

94. However, this policy imposition is considered to be unnecessary given it seeks to go further than current Building Regulations and given the Future Homes Standard which is due to be implemented in 2025 (around the time the Plan is likely to be adopted); this will update Part L of Building Regulations and require new build dwellings to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency²¹.
95. Further, draft Policy NB6 seeks to ensure all residential development proposals show compliance with a water efficiency standard of 110 litres/person/day. The Building Regulations require all new dwellings to achieve a mandatory level of water efficiency of 125 litres per day per person, which is a higher standard than that achieved by much of the existing housing stock. This mandatory standard represents an effective demand management measure. The Optional Technical Housing Standard is 110 litres per day per person, so in order for the SSLPR to adopt this it must be justified by robust and proportionate evidence; this has not been provided.
96. As such, draft Policy NB6 should be revised to encourage the provision of renewable and low carbon energy generating technologies within new development, and remove reference to compliance with a water efficiency standard of 110 litres/person/day, or be deleted entirely.
97. As drafted, Policy NB6 is not justified or consistent with national policy and therefore cannot be considered sound in line with the Framework²².

²¹ [The Future Homes Standard: changes to Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations for new dwellings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-homes-standard)

²² Paragraph 35 of the Framework