

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2023-41 PUBLICATION PLAN

LAND AT FOUR ASHES ROAD



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APPENDIX 1: Vision Document



1. Introduction

1.1 This representation, submitted on behalf of Four Ashes Road Limited, responds to the revised Regulation 19 'Publication Plan' and accompanying published evidence, having regard to the national and local planning policy context. It relates specifically to Land at Four Ashes Road, Brewood where Four Ashes Road Ltd has secured land interests. A Vision Document is included at **Appendix 1** which highlights the extent of our client's interest (Site Ref: 617) and emerging proposal.

1.2 The representations are framed in the context of the requirements of Local Plans to be legally compliant and sound. The tests of soundness are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 35. For a Development Plan to be sound it must be:

- **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet objectively assessed needs, and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- **Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
- **Effective** – deliverable over the Plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
- **Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

1.3 These representations also give consideration to the legal and procedural requirements associated with the plan-making process.

1.4 Chapter 3 of these representations provides comment in respect of the proposed spatial development strategy, Chapter 4 provides support for the proposed allocation at Four Ashes Road, Chapters 5 – 10 provides views on the proposed theme-based policies and Chapter 11 provides an overview of the proposal and consideration of the Council's site selection process.

2. Planning Policy Context

2.1 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports South Staffordshire District Council in progressing with a review of the South Staffordshire District Plan as required by Policy SAD1. This provides the opportunity for the Council to comprehensively review the following matters:

- South Staffordshire's own objectively assessed housing need and the potential for housing supply within the District (including existing safeguarded land identified through the Site Allocations Document) to meet this need.
- The potential role of housing supply options within the District to meet unmet cross boundary needs from the wider Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (GBHMA), including from the Black Country.
- Employment land requirements for South Staffordshire
- South Staffordshire's potential role in meeting wider unmet employment needs through the Duty to Co-operate.
- The appropriateness of the existing settlement hierarchy and the strategic distribution of growth in light of new housing and employment needs.
- The need for further additional safeguarded housing and employment land for longer term development needs, and the role of safeguarded land in meeting housing shortfalls across the GBHMA, including South Staffordshire's own needs.
- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople provision.
- A comprehensive Green Belt Review undertaken jointly with the Black Country authorities, to inform any further Green Belt release to accommodate new development within the District.

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) requires local planning authorities to keep policies in their Local Plans up to date by considering a review at least once every five years.

2.3 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the Council's proactive approach in continuing with a review of the Local Plan to ensure that an up-to-date policy framework exists with the district to guide growth to 2041 and to ensure that development is genuinely plan-led.

- 2.4 The Preferred Options consultation document followed the identification of the Council's preferred spatial housing strategy in October 2019, which established a proposed settlement hierarchy and an approach to delivering infrastructure-led development in line with settlement hierarchy and larger urban extensions focused to the north of the Black Country conurbation.
- 2.5 The Publication Plan identifies proposed site allocations to meet the proposed housing requirement, including previously safeguarded land such as Land at Four Ashes Road which is included as a proposed housing allocation (Policy SA3 – Site Ref: 617).

Vision & Objectives

- 2.6 The Vision is clear and succinct, however as presently drafted it doesn't appear locally relevant and contains no spatially specific elements.
- 2.7 Support is offered to the strategic objectives identified. These are considered succinct, locally relevant and relate to the most important areas of change or protection within the district.

3. Development Strategy

3.1 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports his spatial development strategy which focuses development to the most sustainable settlements (tiers 1 & 2).

Policy DS4: Development Needs

3.2 The policy approach set out in Policy DS4 Development Needs is generally supported, however further commentary is set out below in respect of different components of the housing requirement arrived at.

Local Housing Need

3.3 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2021 set out a minimum housing requirement of 254 dpa based on the Government's standard method, utilising the 2018 Affordability Ratios. The publication of a SHMA update in 2024 is welcomed which reconsiders the minimum housing requirement having regard to the latest Affordability Ratios (2022) which results in a minimum net annual requirement of 227 dwellings.

3.4 The PPG is clear however that the standard method identifies a minimum annual housing need figure and does not produce a housing requirement figure recognising there will be circumstances where it is appropriate to consider whether actual housing need is higher than the standard method indicates.

3.5 Paragraph 010 of the PPG (ID: 2a-010-20201216) states:

"Circumstances where this may be appropriate include, but are not limited to situations where increases in housing need are likely to exceed past trends because of:

- growth strategies for the area that are likely to be deliverable, for example where funding is in place to promote and facilitate additional growth (e.g. Housing Deals);*
- strategic infrastructure improvements that are likely to drive an increase in the homes needed locally; or*
- an authority agreeing to take on unmet need from neighbouring authorities, as set out in a statement of common ground;"*

3.6 Other circumstances that should be considered in respect of South Staffordshire District include the balance between homes and jobs created over the plan period.

3.7 These circumstances are considered in further detail below.

Unmet Need from Neighbouring Authorities

3.8 The unmet housing need arising from within the wider Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area is well documented.

3.9 The Birmingham City shortfall was tested through the BDP EiP and an unmet housing need to 2031 of 37,900 homes was confirmed. Birmingham City Council has now commenced a review of the Birmingham Development Plan, with an Issues and Options consultation recently published. The Issues & Options document recognised that the BDP was unable to identify enough land to meet all of Birmingham's housing need and there is still a need to work with neighbouring authorities within the Housing Market Area (HMA) to deliver a housing shortfall. Birmingham City Council has identified a shortfall of around 78,415 dwellings following an assessment of potential capacity from all sources. While this figure will be refined through Birmingham's plan making process, the shortfall to 2042 will remain significant.

3.10 The Black Country LPAs, were until this Autumn, undertaking a review of the Black Country Plan which is aligned to the timescales of the South Staffordshire Local Plan review. Evidence that informed the emerging Black Country Local Plan included an urban capacity assessment. The Urban Capacity Review (2019) concluded that the amount of housing need which cannot be accommodated in the Black Country urban areas remained significant, at around 26,920 homes to 2038.

3.11 The Draft Black Country Plan 2018-2039, subject to consultation in 2021, identified a shortfall of 28,239 homes to be exported to neighbouring LPAs through the Duty to Co-operate.

3.12 The shortfall figures above did not take into consideration the 35% urban uplift introduced in December 2020 which would be applicable to both Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

3.13 The Black Country LPAs took a decision to abort the joint plan-making approach to instead progress separate Local Plans.

3.14 The individual Black Country Authorities are now preparing their own Local Plans. Wolverhampton City Council consulted on a Regulation 18 Consultation

Plan (dated February 2024) which identified a potential 11,413 dwellings shortfall. Sandwell Council held a Regulation 18 consultation ending in December 2023 which estimated around a 18,000 dwellings shortfall. Dudley Council also held a Regulation 18 consultation ending in December 2023 which estimated around a shortfall of 1,078 dwellings. It is Walsall Council's intention to proceed under new arrangements of plan making.

- 3.15 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the Council providing a contribution to assist in meeting these unmet needs, however, raises concerns that this is not evidence based. The capacity-led approach, resulting in a contribution of 640 home contribution to the shortfall, will need to be explored and tested through the Examination in Public with neighbouring LPAs.

Economic Uplift

- 3.16 The SHMA sets out the broad economic consequences of the projected growth in Chapter 5. This references the Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA). The EDNA Update 2024 forecasts an additional 5,326 net additional jobs in South Staffordshire over the period 2020-2041. This compares to the 4,824 jobs within the district between 2020 and 2040 identified in the previous EDNA. This forecast is based upon methodologies of two of three forecasting houses that do not provide the basis to identify significant growth in the transport and storage sector.
- 3.17 The number of jobs to be created within South Staffordshire is likely to significantly exceed the 5,326 jobs forecast by virtue of committed development at the West Midlands Interchange (WMI) which will provide significant growth in the transport and storage sector. The WMI itself is projected to create 8,500 jobs of which 40% will be higher skilled.
- 3.18 At present the SHMA assumes that the projected growth of the working age population in South Staffordshire will grow by just 1,012 people between 2023 and 2041. This is significantly lower than the forecast jobs growth outlined in the EDNA. Further consideration should therefore be given to whether the minimum local housing need figure derived from the standard method would support the necessary growth in the working age population to create a balanced community within South Staffordshire to support such jobs growth, even taking into consideration the 640 additional homes to meet unmet needs in the wider housing market area.
- 3.19 Further evidence is necessary to consider the balance between jobs and the working age population that would be necessary to satisfy the jobs demand. This may require an uplift in local housing needs identified.

Policy DS5: The Spatial Strategy to 2041

- 3.20 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the proposed spatial strategy to 2041 which recognises environmental capacity and seeks to make best use of existing infrastructure whilst recognising opportunities to delivery new infrastructure.

Settlement Hierarchy

- 3.21 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the settlement hierarchy which considers the relative sustainability of villages within South Staffordshire District. The Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements identified contain the widest range of services and facilities and by focusing new homes to these settlements would provide an opportunity to increase sustainability and self-containment. Brewood achieved one of the highest services/facilities rankings of all villages within the district despite it not benefiting from a railway station and Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the identification of Brewood as a Tier 2 settlement as a sustainable location for additional housing growth.

Spatial Distribution of Housing Growth

- 3.22 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the proportionate distribution of housing growth across the villages, with the most sustainable villoges to deliver a higher amount of growth.
- 3.23 Allowing growth in the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements provides an opportunity to meet locally arising housing needs and offers opportunity to deliver new services, facilities and infrastructure that would assist in addressing local issues and provide community benefit for residents.
- 3.24 Four Ashes Road Ltd considers that the proposed development strategy has due regard to where housing needs exist, including within the top tier sustainable villoges and locations close to jobs growth.
- 3.25 This strategy, which focuses growth to top tier settlements provides an opportunity to ensure that the necessary homes, along with supporting infrastructure, would be delivered in a timely and coordinated manner, to meet both the local needs arising from within the district.

4. Site Allocations

4.1 This representation relates to Land at Four Ashes Road.

Policies SA1 & SA2

4.2 Four Ashes Road Ltd notes the identification of two strategic housing allocations and the included housing trajectory at Appendix G of the Publication Plan. It is considered a more detailed housing trajectory should be included to ensure the reliance on these strategic sites does not undermine the timely delivery of housing against a non-stepped trajectory, recognising the assumed reduction in completions to 2028.

Policy SA3: Housing Allocations

4.3 This representation relates to Land at Four Ashes Road which is a proposed allocation for a minimum of 63 dwellings. This is supported as 'sound'.

4.4 The proposed allocation identifies the following key infrastructure requirements for site 617 which Four Ashes Road Ltd confirms can be delivered:

- Vehicular and pedestrian access via Four Ashes Road including extension of existing footway. Walking, wheeling and cycling access through to Stonebridge Road to be explored and provided if feasible;
- Any historic environment mitigation for the site, as identified in the Council's HESA Stage 2 (2022) including retention of tree and hedgerow boundaries bordering the site and any mitigation required as a result of archaeological investigations;
- Any relevant policy requirements including affordable housing, open space, education, health, sports and recreation, energy efficiency, climate change mitigation, flood risk mitigation, highways, sustainable transport, housing mix and green infrastructure, delivered in line with the relevant development plan policy standards; and
- Site specific Flood Risk Assessment which shows development to avoid the floodplain and finished floor levels 600mm above the 1 in 100 plus climate change flood level.

4.5 Four Ashes Road Ltd would question whether site the yield of 63 dwellings underestimates the capacity of the site. The illustrative masterplan included at **Appendix 1** demonstrates that a yield of around 73 dwellings is more accurate.

It is however noted that the yield of 63 dwellings is expressed as a minimum requirement.

5. Delivering the Right Homes

HC1: Housing Mix

- 5.1 The policy requires a flexible approach, recognising that the size and type of housing will change over the plan period and may be different across the district.
- 5.2 It is considered that the most appropriate housing mix should be guided by market signals, as defined within the most up-to-date assessment of needs. The assessment of needs should be routinely updated across the 20-year Plan period. This ensures that housing mix is reflective of market-driven need.
- 5.3 Four Ashes Road Ltd would wish to raise concerns that the proposed direction of travel appears overly prescriptive with all market housing proposals to include 70% of properties to comprise three bedrooms or less.
- 5.4 The SHMA utilises a long-term balancing housing market (LTBHM) model to determine future demand for housing. It is questioned whether this model does actually determine demand rather than need. The demand is often for a larger open market property than a household may need to provide additional flexibility e.g. working from home. Therefore, the approach to capping the percentage of larger homes, particularly open market homes, fails to provide a good level of flexibility to allow for changing market signals across the plan period or to address varying needs in different locations within the district.

HC2: Housing Density

- 5.5 The efficient use of land, in accordance with National Planning Policy and Guidance, is supported. The flexibility provided by Policy HC2 to allow sites to be considered on a site-by-site basis, having regard to the prevailing local character, context and other planning policy requirements or opportunities for supporting infrastructure, is welcomed.
- 5.6 Nevertheless, due to the size of the site at Four Ashes Road and the lack of identified constraints that are unmitigable, it is realistic to expect the delivery of an efficient scheme that could achieve a minimum average net density of 35dph. However, this would be achieved through the provision of areas of varying density and reflective of the character of surrounding development.

HC3: Affordable Housing

- 5.7 Four Ashes Road Ltd notes that for all major developments 30% of all homes are to be delivered as affordable housing. This appears to be broadly

supported by the Viability Study which determined the current affordable housing requirement of 40% affordable provision is very unlikely to prove supportable on larger schemes with significant infrastructure costs.

- 5.8 Viability is dynamic and the Council's evidence relates to a snapshot in time. Therefore, the mechanism within Policy HC3 is supported, which allows for the submission of a viability assessment at the application stage if it can be demonstrated that circumstances have changed. Such circumstances should include increasing infrastructure costs or changes to house prices or build costs.

HC4: Homes for Older People

- 5.9 The proposed policy requires a range of specialist housing to be delivered on site, both within market and affordable sectors. It is not clear whether this is a continuation of the Council's current approach of requiring 10% of all homes to be delivered as bungalows or other ground floor accommodation.
- 5.10 It is considered that a specific requirement for bungalows is not appropriate if instead the Council pursues a policy of requiring 100% of all homes to meet optional M4(2) requirements. M4(2) dwellings are described as making:

"reasonable provision for most people to access the dwelling and incorporate features that make it potentially suitable for a wide range of occupants, including older people, those with reduced mobility and some wheelchair users."

- 5.11 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2022 (SHMA) includes an assessment of the need for specialist accommodation for older people and the potential requirements for housing to be built to M4(2) and M4(3) housing and technical standards.
- 5.12 The SHMA concludes that, in general, South Staffordshire District has an older age structure (in terms of older people) compared with the wider region and nationally. It is recognised that the older person population is likely to increase over the plan period, however an ageing population affects the whole country and is not an issue specific to South Staffordshire. The Government has consulted on raising accessibility standards for new homes but the requirement for all homes to meet M4(2) standards is yet to be mandated. If the Council intends to pursue a policy in respect of M4(2) standards this must be evidenced.

5.13 The SHMA published in 2021 identified a need for 1,793 accessible and adaptable general homes for those over 65 and 1,235 for those under 65 to 2038. The latest SHMA (2022) increases this identified need to 2,172 accessible and adaptable general homes for those over 65 and 851 for those under 65 to 2040. It is not clear why these figures have altered so significantly in such a short space of time. The latest SHMA (2024 Update) does not appear to provide an updated figure. However, the need equates to less than 50% of the planned housing supply to 2041. Four Ashes Road Ltd considers that whilst there may be justification for implementing optional M4(2) standards, the 100% requirement is not justified. The Policy should be amended to require a maximum of 50% of all new homes to be delivered to meet the optional M4(2) standards, especially where this could be in addition to other homes for older people and others with special housing requirements required by Policy HC4.

HC8: Self & Custom Build Housing

5.14 National Planning Policy Guidance notes a responsibility for 'relevant authorities' to maintain a self-build and custom housebuilding register. In understanding the need for self and custom build the PPG recognises the role of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment in understanding the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups including people wishing to self-build or custom build their own homes.

5.15 The 2022 SHMA identifies 30 applicants on the self-build register as of Spring 2022, recognising that 10 of these applicants are also on a register within another LPA. This demonstrates a very low level of demand. No update is presented in the 2024 SHMA.

5.16 Policy HC8 provides a justified and proportionate approach to meeting this specific need, which requires the consideration of the Council's Self Build Register on major developments but falls short of requiring a specific percentage of provision.

6. Design & Space Standards

HC10: Design Requirements

- 6.1 The introduction of a new set of requirements to ensure high quality design and the creation of beautiful places in line with Government guidance is supported.
- 6.2 It should be noted that Four Ashes Road Ltd has entered into pre-application discussions to inform the emerging proposal for land at Four Ashes Road.

HC12: Space About Dwellings & Internal Space

- 6.3 Four Ashes Road Ltd has limited comment in respect of the external space standards that reflect existing policy which are generally considered appropriate.
- 6.4 However, if bungalows are to be provided within a scheme, it would seem logical to relax garden sizes or allow for the provision of communal/shared gardens to ensure efficient use of land and to reflect any desire from the market for low-maintenance external amenity areas. This approach is also likely to align to any appropriate space about dwellings requirements which should reduce the necessary distance between principal facing windows for ground floor windows, where intervening boundary treatments would interrupt views.
- 6.5 Four Ashes Road Ltd do however object to the internal floorspace policy requirement for all homes to meet Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS).
- 6.6 The NDSS were published by the Department of Communities and Local Government on 27 March 2015. Its publication was accompanied by a Planning Update issued as a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament by the Rt. Hon. Sir Eric Pickles MP on 25th March 2015.
- 6.7 In introducing the standards, the Written Ministerial Statement outlines:

"New homes need to be high quality, accessible and sustainable. To achieve this, the government has created a new approach for the setting of technical standards for new housing. This rationalises the many differing existing standards into a simpler, streamlined system which will reduce burdens and help bring forward much needed new homes."

- 6.8 However, the Written Ministerial Statement is also clear that the standards are optional, and that compliance cannot be required outside of a relevant current Local Plan policy:

“From 1 October 2015: Existing Local Plan, neighbourhood plan, and supplementary planning document policies relating to water efficiency, access and internal space should be interpreted by reference to the nearest equivalent new national technical standard. Decision takers should only require compliance with the new national technical standards where there is a relevant current Local Plan policy.”

- 6.9 This is to ensure that the need for the application of the standards through planning policy is fully evidenced and that the impact on viability is considered alongside all of the other policies contained in the Plan:

“The optional new national technical standards should only be required through any new Local Plan policies if they address a clearly evidenced need, and where their impact on viability has been considered, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Guidance.”

- 6.10 The reference to the National Planning Policy Framework relates to paragraph 135 which states planning policies should:

“create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.”

- 6.11 Footnote 52 makes it clear that use of the Government’s optional technical standards should be used where this would address an identified need for such properties and the need for an internal space standard can be justified.

- 6.12 National Planning Guidance states:

“Where a need for internal space standards is identified, local planning authorities should provide justification for requiring internal space policies. Local planning authorities should take account of the following areas:

need – evidence should be provided on the size and type of dwellings currently being built in the area, to ensure the impacts of adopting space standards can be properly assessed, for example, to consider any potential impact on meeting demand for starter homes.

Viability – the impact of adopting the space standard should be considered as part of a plan’s viability assessment with account taken of the impact of potentially larger dwellings on land supply. Local planning authorities will also need to consider impacts on affordability where a space standard is to be adopted.

Timing – there may need to be a reasonable transitional period following adoption of a new policy on space standards to enable developers to factor the cost of space standards into future land acquisitions.”

- 6.13 The Guidance is therefore clear that the application of the NDSS requires a Local Plan policy which has been fully evidenced, including identification of need and the consideration of any impact on viability.
- 6.14 The SHMA 2021 and 2022 Update provide limited commentary in respect of NDSS. The SHMA 2024 provides no further commentary. The focus of this commentary, contained within the Accessible and Adaptable Housing section on page 84 of the 2022 Update relates to M4(2) and M4(3) standards and provides no justification for the requirement of NDSS on all new dwellings. It appears to imply that the NDSS is a national standard that should automatically apply. As set out above, this is incorrect. It also highlights that any requirements should be assessed to determine whether they are viable and should not impose any further requirements beyond building regs.
- 6.15 It is clear that the evidence does not currently support the imposition of the optional NDSS within South Staffordshire. To the contrary, the evidence highlights a number of potential risks if such a policy were to be introduced. The Council must provide adequate evidence of need if it is to require the application of NDSS in the Local Plan 2023-41 in addition to the separate M4(2) requirements.

HC13: Parking Standards

- 6.16 The proposed parking standards contained within the Publication Plan are supported.
- 6.17 In respect of EVCPs, The Department of Transport Consultation Response: Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) in Residential & Non-Residential Buildings dated November 2021 sets out that from 15th June 2022 new dwellings with associated parking within the boundary of the dwelling) will have at least 1 EVCP per dwelling. Therefore, it is no longer necessary for the Council to have a proposed policy requirement for EVCPs.

6.18 The EVCP standards set out in Appendix H of the Publication Plan are supported in respect of dwellings as this position aligns to Requirement S1 and Regulation 44D.

7. Promoting Successful & Sustainable Communities

HC17: Open Space

- 7.1 The proposed approach in respect of open space which proposes a reduced open space requirement of 0.006ha per dwelling compared with the existing standard of 0.01ha set out within the adopted Site Allocations Document (SAD) is supported.
- 7.2 Concern is raised that the emerging requirements appear to provide no flexibility with regards to a site's context. For example, the assumption that all on-site open space should include equipped play provision as a default is unreasonable where good quality, accessible equipped play is already located within the immediate vicinity of a site. Further flexibility should be incorporated within any policy to have regard to existing or proposed publicly accessible open space in the vicinity of the site.
- 7.3 Four Ashes Road Ltd wishes to raise concerns that distance/accessibility isochrones are not identified within the policy for different open space typologies such as LEAPs and LAPs to ensure open space infrastructure and are presumably left to a future Open Space, Sport and Recreation SPD. Accessibility standards should be established through the Local Plan to provide certainty and not displaced to supplementary guidance which is not intended to establish policy.

HC18: Sports Facilities & Playing Pitches

- 7.4 The Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch Assessment/Strategy that forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan are noted.
- 7.5 It is recognised that a financial contribution to sports facilities and playing pitches may be necessary from new major development to meet needs arising from the development, but this should only apply where evidence recognises there is a shortfall in capacity to meet the generated demand from the development.

HC19: Green Infrastructure

- 7.6 The policy approach to protecting, maintaining and enhancing where possible a network of interconnected, multi-functional and accessible green and blue spaces is supported.

7.7 The illustrative masterplan included within the Vision Document at **Appendix 1** demonstrates the delivery of multi-functional, interconnected, accessible green and blue spaces as part of the comprehensive proposal for Land at Four Ashes Road.

8. Community Services, Facilities & Infrastructure

EC11: Infrastructure

- 8.1 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the Council's proposed infrastructure led strategy which seeks to focus development towards larger and better-connected settlements and where appropriate deliver new infrastructure benefits alongside new development.
- 8.2 Four Ashes Road Ltd is committed to engaging with the District Council, and other stakeholders to explore all infrastructure requirements to inform future iterations of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the emerging proposal for Land at Four Ashes Road, Brewood.
- 8.3 In line with para 122 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, any financial contributions sought in respect of infrastructure must be:
- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - (b) directly related to the development; and
 - (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

9. Protecting & Enhancing the Natural Environment

NB2: Biodiversity

- 9.1 The intention of Policy NB2 is recognised. Any policy should require a 10% net gain in line with latest Government legislation.

10. Climate Change & Sustainable Development

NB6A: Net Zero New Build & NB6C: Embodied Carbon & Waste

- 10.1 Changes to building regulations (Part L) to deliver the Government's 'Future Homes Standard' means that from mid-2022, new homes will have a 31% reduction in CO² when compared to previous standards. Further changes are due in 2025 that will mean a 75% reduction in CO² when compared to today, along with a new focus on rating primary energy efficiency as well as CO².
- 10.2 It is noted that proposed Policy NB6 has been amended since the Publication Local Plan in 2022. These changes are proposed to deal with the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) made by the Minister of State for Housing and Communities in December 2023.
- 10.3 The Bioregional report published by the Council recognises the WMS places severe new limitations on the ability of LPAs to establish local energy and carbon performance targets. The WMS recognises the balance between moving towards the net zero goal and ensuring housing is built in sufficient numbers to support need.
- 10.4 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports a national approach to carbon reduction set out in the WMS recognising the proliferation of multiple, local standards by local authority area adds further costs to building new homes by adding complexity and undermining economies of scale.
- 10.5 The WMS states that any planning policies that propose local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current or planned building regulations should be rejected at examination if they do not have a well-reasoned and robustly costed rationale.
- 10.6 Four Ashes Road Ltd considers Policy NB6A and NB6C, as currently drafted, to be overly complex, adding a non-standard level of assessment that sits outside that required by building regulations. There appears to be no locally specific evidence to suggest a deviation from the national approach, with the only rationale being linked to precedents in other parts of the Country, where plans were introduced prior to the WMS and, in some cases, the Future Homes Standard.
- 10.7 The Council's proposed policy approach seeks carbon reduction measures over and above those being introduced by the Government. The Sustainable Construction & Renewable Energy Topic Paper 2022 refers to clear evidence and recommendations contained within the Staffordshire Climate Change

Study 2020 providing a clear and compelling case for the Local Plan Review to set carbon reduction standards for new buildings that go beyond building regulations and the current trajectory for implementing the Government's Future Homes Standard. Four Ashes Road Ltd does not accept this view.

- 10.8 The Climate Change Study was published prior to introduction of the latest changes to Part L of the Building Regulations and the Study recognised that its recommendations would be affected by the Government's consultations on the Future Homes Standards. The Study also recognised that any standards established would need to be subject to viability assessment.
- 10.9 A locally specific CO² reduction requirement is unnecessary and without justification for deviation from Government the requirement is adding unwarranted additional burdens beyond those established through current and planned building regulations. It is the Government's clear intention to set standards for energy efficiency through the building regulations. The key to success nationally is standardisation and avoidance of individual Council's specifying their own policy approach to energy efficiency, which undermines economies of scale for product manufacturers, suppliers and developers. The Council does not need to set local energy efficiency standards to achieve the shared net zero goal because of the higher levels of energy efficiency standards for new homes set out in current Building Regulations and proposals for the 2025 Future Homes Standard.
- 10.10 This policy is unsound and should be removed.

11. Land at Four Ashes Road

- 11.1 This chapter sets out a brief description of the site, followed by an assessment of the site against each of the Council's site selection criteria, as defined within the Housing Site Selection Topic Paper 2024 and preceding site assessments in 2021 and 2022.

Site Description

- 11.2 Four Ashes Road Ltd has current land interests at Four Ashes Road, Brewood (Site 617) as shown within the Vision Document appended to this representation (see Appendix 1).
- 11.3 This site comprises part of a single large field in agricultural use. There are no Public Rights of Way that cross the site.
- 11.4 The sites lie outside the Green Belt and was safeguarded through the 2018 SAD to meet longer-term housing needs. The Housing Site Selection Topic Paper recognises that Brewood contains this safeguard site that needs to be proactively explored for its potential to assist in meeting the district's proposed housing requirement. The assessment concludes there are no unmitigable constraints to the delivery of this site, other than the distance of part of the site from local schools.
- 11.5 The reference to the distance of part of the site from the local schools is due to an error in the Sustainability Appraisal considered further below.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Findings

- 11.6 The Council's Sustainability Appraisal (2024) provides an assessment of sites both pre and post mitigation and provides assessment of reasonable alternatives against the SA Objectives.
- 11.7 Four Ashes Road Ltd would wish to raise concern that the Sustainability Appraisal assesses the proposed allocation as part of a far larger parcel of land that extends to both sides of Four Ashes Road to the north-east of the village. This is likely to have skewed the assessment of the site against a number of the SA Objectives. This has subsequently fed into the Council's site selection assessment.

Green Belt Harm

- 11.8 Sites 617 does not lie within the Green Belt.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 11.9 The landscape impact of Site 617 was considered through the formulation of the Site Allocations Document.
- 11.10 It is contended that the proposed allocation at Four Ashes Road is able to accommodate the proposed residential led development without causing undue harm to the landscape character and visual amenity of the site and surrounding countryside.

Impact on the Historic Environment

- 11.11 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the findings of the HESA which confirms there are no designated assets located on Site 617. It is agreed that direct and indirect potential harm to the historic environment is low in respect of the sites.

Impact on Flood Risk

- 11.12 It is noted the site assessment confirms the LLFA's view that a Flood Risk Assessment is recommended at application stage to investigate possible watercourse.

Highways (Accessibility to the Site)

- 6.15 It is noted that SCC Highways are satisfied that access can be satisfactorily achieved, subject to the provision of a footway connection and the lowering of the existing speed limit. This can be achieved via a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).
- 6.16 Four Ashes Road Ltd can ensure a footway connection can be achieved to provide connectivity into the wider village, including Stonebridge Road.

Suitability

- 11.17 The information set out above and contained within the Council's Housing Site Selection Topic Paper, demonstrates that Land at Four Ashes Road is a suitable site. The suitability of site 617 was considered by an independent inspector through the Site Allocations Document Examination in Public.

Deliverability

- 11.18 Four Ashes Road Ltd holds a land interest in the site and can facilitate the development of the site.

- 11.19 Technical work has been undertaken to demonstrate the deliverability of land at Four Ashes Road, which concludes that there are no physical or other constraints likely to render the site undeliverable within the proposed Plan period to 2041. The site is available now.
- 11.20 The site is deliverable and immediately available and subject to the proposed allocation of the safeguarded land, could start to deliver homes within 5 years.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 This representation is made by Evolve Planning on behalf of Four Ashes Road Ltd to the South Staffordshire Publication Local Plan (Regulation 19) consultation. This representation relates to Land at Four Ashes Road (Site 617); a proposed housing allocation, which is promoted for residential-led development.
- 12.2 Four Ashes Road Ltd supports the Council's proposed spatial development strategy, which focuses growth to the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements. This provides a sound approach to distributing housing growth.
- 12.3 This strategy provides the opportunity to ensure that the necessary homes, along with supporting infrastructure, would be delivered in a timely and coordinated manner, to meet both the local needs arising from within the district, alongside an element of unmet needs arising from the wider GBBCHMA.
- 12.4 Four Ashes Road Ltd considers that a number of development management policies are not justified by evidence. This includes Policies HC1, HC4, HC12, HC17, EC3, NB6A and NB6C.
- 12.5 The information contained within this representation, read in conjunction with the appended Vision Document, demonstrates that Land at Four Ashes Road is a suitable and deliverable site for residential development.
- 12.6 It is therefore submitted that Four Ashes Road, Brewood represents a sound housing allocation.

APPENDIX 1

Vision Document



Vision Document.

Land at Four Ashes Road, Brewood



Section 01.

Introduction.

Introduction.

The sustainable growth of Brewwood can be delivered through the development of Land at Four Ashes Road, balancing the historic character of the village, the extent of Green Belt in the area and the relative level of services and facilities in Brewwood.

Document Purpose

South Staffordshire Council is currently in the process of reviewing the existing Local Plan to inform growth within the District to 2041. This review is currently at Publication Plan stage (Regulation 19).

The site is being promoted by Four Ashes Ltd and this Vision Document demonstrates that the land at Four Ashes Road represents a suitable, available and achievable housing development opportunity. To achieve this, the document presents a high level analysis of the site and its surroundings.

This document also sets out a vision for the site, informed by the identified constraints and opportunities, which has informed a Concept Plan supported by design principles to demonstrate how a high quality, well-designed scheme can be achieved.

Overall, this Vision Document presents a sustainable proposal to support the site's allocation through the Local Plan Review process.





Section 02.

Planning Policy Context.

Local Plan Review.

The South Staffordshire Local Plan is currently in the process of being reviewed with an updated Publication Plan published in Spring 2024.

The new Local Plan will set out how much development is required in the District to 2041 and allocates a range of sites to deliver the identified level of development. The Local Plan sets out the overall spatial strategy for growth and guides where development will, in principle, be supported.

One strategic objective of the Local Plan seeks to provide housing to meet the needs of different groups in the community, including a good range of both market and affordable homes of various sizes and to provide specific provision for older persons.

The updated Publication Plan identifies a housing target of 4,726 new homes between 2023 and 2041 (263 per annum), meeting the district's own needs (4,086 homes) and a small contribution to the unmet needs of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area shortfall (640 homes).

Growth is proposed to be directed to the most accessible and sustainable locations within the District. Brewood is identified as a Tier 2 village in the Publication Plan, offering a wide range of services of facilities. The Plan seeks to sustainably grow these villages through appropriate housing allocations. Brewood holds a wider range of services and facilities than other smaller villages in the rural area.

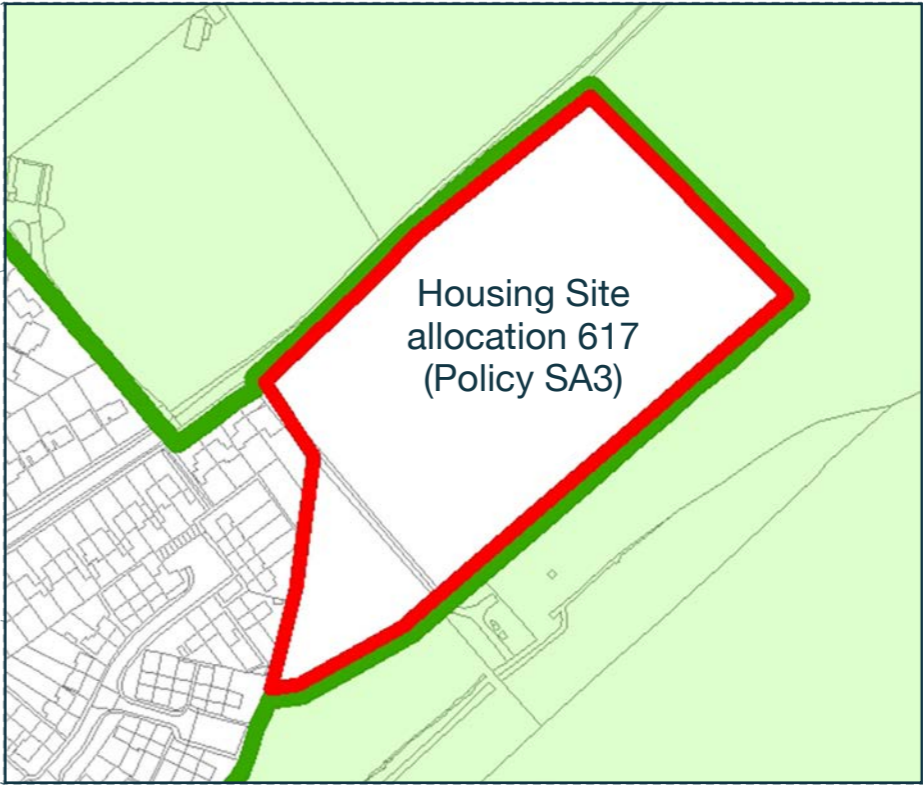
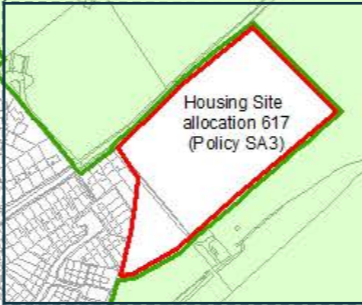
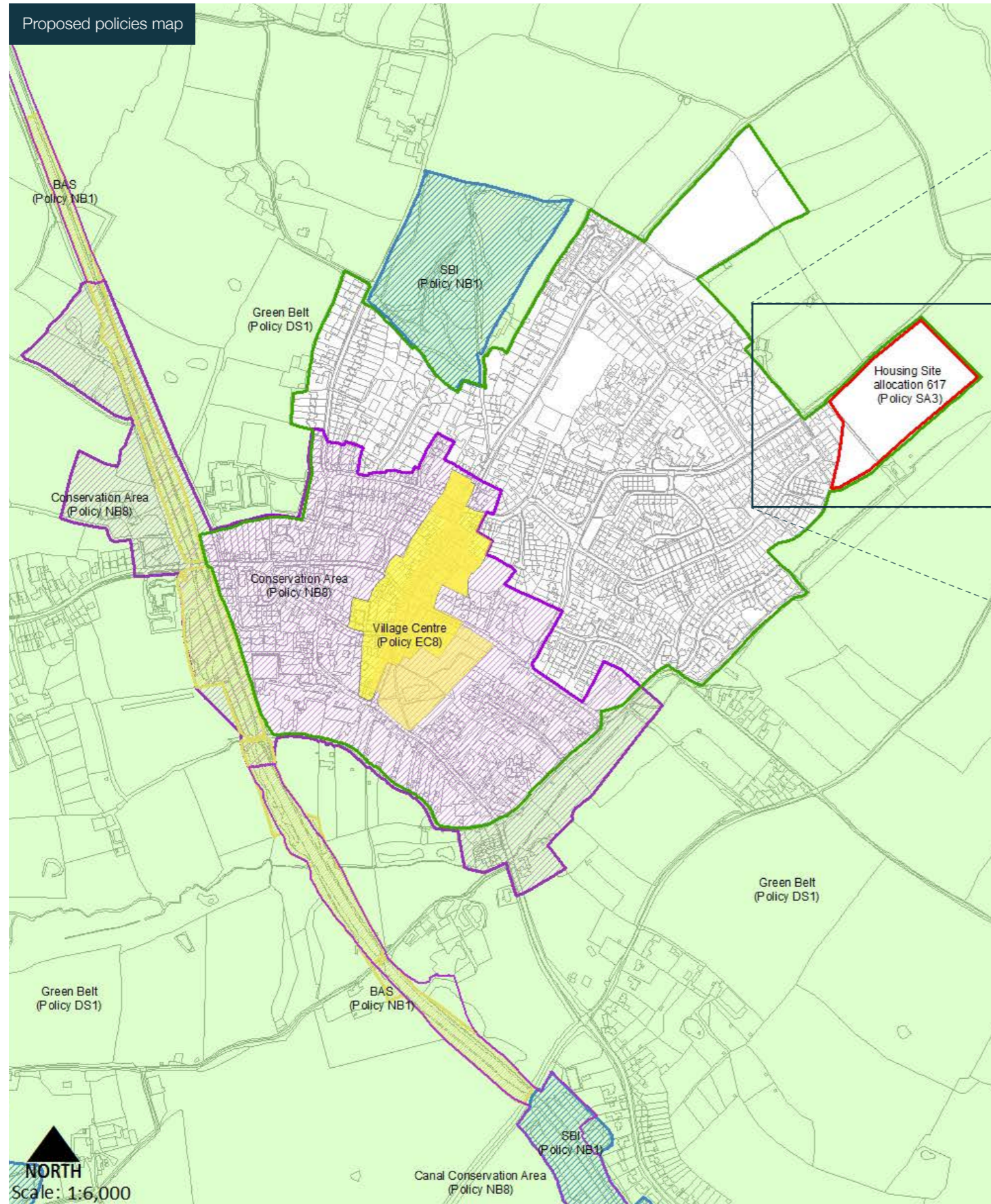
There are four Tier 1 villages in the district, identified as the most sustainable locations, followed by five Tier 2 villages, being the next most sustainable. The spatial housing strategy directs 60.6% of housing growth to the Tier 1 villages and 17.6% to the Tier 2 settlements (913 homes), including Brewood. Of the 913 homes directed to these villages, 299 already have the benefit of planning permissions with the remaining 614 homes to be delivered on previously identified safeguarded land. No new Green Belt release is proposed in these villages. Brewood is to

deliver just 1.2% of the district's housing requirement through development of land at Four Ashes Road. This site was removed from the Green Belt and identified to meet longer term housing needs in 2018 through the Site Allocations Document (SAD).

Land at Four Ashes Road is therefore identified as a proposed housing allocation (Site 617) in the Publication Plan. Emerging Policy SA3 requires the site to deliver a minimum of 63 homes alongside a range of other requirements.

Information contained within this Vision Document is intended to demonstrate the suitability and availability of this site for residential development, to inform the Local Plan Review process and to support the proposed allocation of the site to meet future needs.

Four Ashes Road is committed to providing further technical information, if required, to demonstrate the suitability, availability and deliverability of the proposal.





Section 03.

The Site.

The Site.

The site comprises a flat agricultural field extending to approximately 3ha on the north eastern edge of Brewwood.

The site is bounded to the north by Four Ashes Road, residential development along Oak Road, Rowan Grove and Ash Grove to the west and open countryside to the south and east. The field is bound by hedgerow to the north and west with no physical features marking the extent of the southern and eastern boundaries of the allocated area. Trees are limited to within the hedgerows along field boundaries.

There are no Public Rights of Way (PROW) that cross the site. Existing footway connections are available along Four Ashes Road.

The proposed allocation extends to 3 hectares of land, however there is an opportunity for additional land adjacent to the allocated area to also come forward to assist with Green Belt release proposed elsewhere within the district as a result of the emerging Local Plan. This is discussed further on in this Document.





Site Context

The site is located on the north east edge of the village of Brewwood. Brewwood benefits from a number of services and facilities including convenience stores, primary schools, private secondary school, library, community centre, post office, nursery, pharmacy, public houses and other retail.

The closest bus stops are located to the west of the site on Four Ashes Road (813 Service) and at Market Place (877 and 878 Services) providing connections to Wolverhampton, Stafford and Penkrige.

Landscape

There are no PROWs within the site or in the immediate vicinity, the nearest being located to the rear of Stonebridge Road. Bounded by hedgerow, the site is well screened from the public highway. The site is well contained when viewed from the existing urban area, with limited views looking east from the edge of Brewwood on Four Ashes Road. The presence of intervening trees and mature hedgerow reduces this intervisibility.

The enclosed nature of the site would suggest a relatively low level of sensitivity to built development. A landscape strategy provides an opportunity to retain existing hedgerows and trees along the road and to strengthen planting to the eastern and southern boundaries to ameliorate landscape impact.



Looking east across site from existing access



Looking south across site from Four Ashes Rd



Looking south across existing track to pumping station



Looking south west along Four Ashes Road (site to the left)

Heritage & Archaeology

No Listed Buildings are within or directly adjacent to the site. The nearest is the Grade II listed Somerford Bridge located approximately 300m to the east. The Grade II listed Brewood Hall is located approximately 500m to the south west.

The Brewood Conservation Area is also located approximately 500m to the south west and west, focussed around the historic core and Market Place of the village.

There is significant intervening built development of varying ages between Land at Four Ashes Road and the Conservation Area.

Ecology

The site is not covered by any statutory designations for nature conservation. Three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lie within 5km of the site. The closest of these is the Belvide Reservoir SSSI which is situated approximately 2.2km to the north west of the site.

Five non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest are present within 2km of the site. The site area is not designated as a non-statutory site of nature conservation interest.

The site itself is largely dominated by an arable field of negligible ecological importance. Habitats of highest ecological importance are limited to:

- Hedgerows at field boundaries
- Broadleaved trees within boundary hedgerows

There are opportunities to protect habitats of highest ecological importance and enhance the site's importance for ecology and deliver biodiversity net gain through creation of new habitats in line with Local BAP targets within a robust landscape scheme.

Flood Risk & Drainage

The EA Flood Map for Planning identifies that the site is located within Flood Zone 1. Flood Zone 1 (Low Probability) is land defined as having less than a 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding.

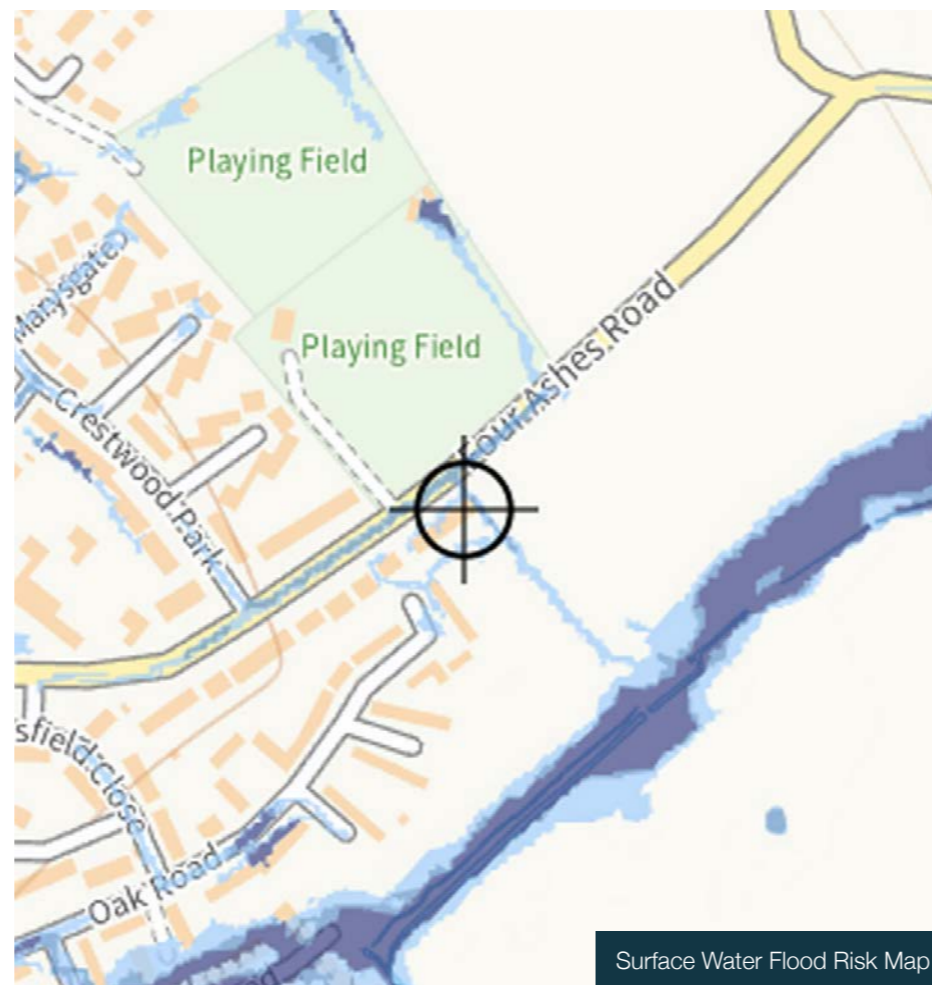
Beyond the south eastern boundary of the site is an area of Flood Zones 2 and 3 associated with a small watercourse. This higher risk area lies beyond the proposed allocation area.

Risk of flooding from surface water mapping has been prepared by the EA. This shows the potential flooding which could occur when rainwater does not drain away through the normal drainage

system or soak into the ground but lies on or flows over the ground instead. The majority of the site is at very low risk of surface water flooding.

Based upon a review of readily available information, flood risk from all sources is not considered to pose a significant risk to development.

An Indicative Drainage Strategy can be produced to demonstrate how a drainage solution could be achieved within the site, in line with local and national guidance.



Surface Water Flood Risk Map



Rivers and Sea Flood Risk Map



Section 04.

Site Vision.

Site Vision.

Quantum / Use

- Approx. 75 dwellings at an average density of approx. 27 dwellings per hectare
- Provision of affordable housing (30%)
- Older persons accommodation, including bungalows and maisonettes
- New publicly accessible, centrally located green space providing opportunities for recreation, including possible play provision, as well as biodiversity enhancements
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Access

- Proposed main vehicular access via Four Ashes Road
- Improved pedestrian connectivity into Brewood via Four Ashes Road and Stonebridge Road, as well as to the wider PROW network
- Hierarchy of roads within the site served off a primary street, to include secondary streets and private drives



Landscape & Visual Strategy

- Retention of existing trees and hedgerows
- Strengthening the eastern and southern boundaries through new tree lined hedgerows
- New tree and hedgerow planting throughout the site, including on-site open space, placed at the rural edge of the site to the north and east



- Opportunity for compensatory improvements to adjacent Green Belt land, including:
 - New walking and cycling connection to Stonebridge Road and in turn to the wider PROW network
 - New area of Green Infrastructure on land to the south west and also to the north east of the development, including areas of potential amenity green space, attenuation feature, and biodiversity improvements

Design Principles

The proposal aims to provide a subtle and leafy rural extension to Brewood.

The site entrance is envisaged to be located off Four Ashes Road with a variety of streetscapes, including a simple but clear hierarchy of streets. The primary road is planned to take a loop arrangement sweeping around a central area of open space to rejoin Four Ashes Road at a second access point further to the east.

The existing footway along Four Ashes Road would link into the development, providing a continuous pedestrian link into the village.

The existing tree and hedgerow boundaries will be retained with additional planting along the eastern and south eastern edges of the site to create strong defensible Green Belt boundaries, screening views of the development from the wider landscape.

Generous publicly accessible open space will be provided with opportunities for tree and hedgerow planting as well as informal walking routes and possible play provision.

The development area would not encroach into the areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 which are located beyond the site to the south, alongside the Brook. All built development would be contained within Flood Zone 1.

Concept Plan



KEY	
	Pumping Station Access
	Connection Point to Existing Pedestrian Links
	Key Focal Intersection
	Single Storey Dwellings
	Focal Property
	Overlooking
	New pedestrian routes
	Existing Pedestrian Link
	Allocation Boundary
	Key Outward Frontage
	Key Internal Frontage
	Site Entrance
	Potential Leap
	Primary Route
	Secondary Route
	Tertiary Route
	Private Drive
	New Hedgerow & Trees
	Retained Hedgerow & Trees
	Pumping Station
	Attenuation Basin Indicative
	Pedestrian Link to Stonebridge Road

A 30m Cordon Sanitaire around a nearby sewage pumping station would be accommodated as part of any proposed development.

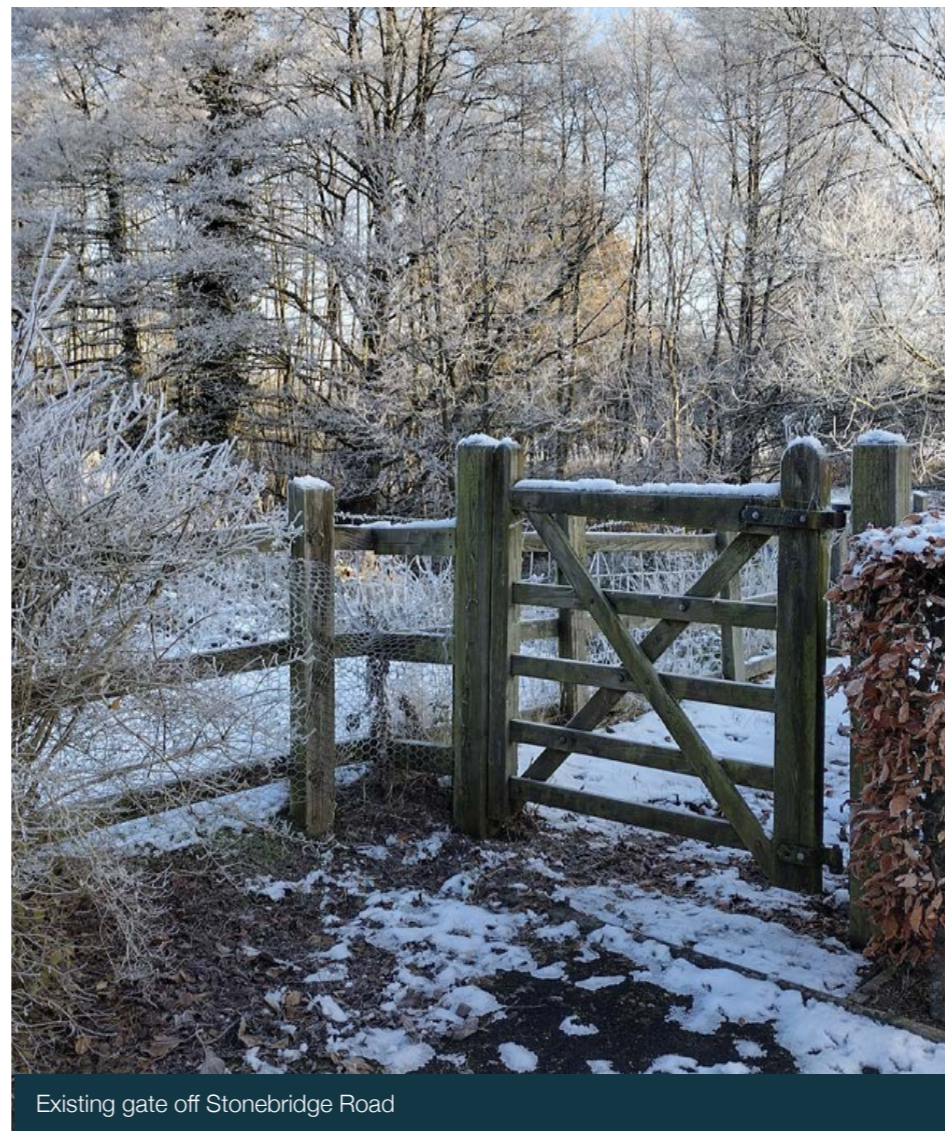
Within the additional parcel of land to the south west up to Stonebridge Close, there is an opportunity to provide a footway to link the proposed development to Stonebridge Close and in turn, the wider public right of way network located further to the west and south. Open space would surround this footpath, with opportunities for additional planting and biodiversity improvements.



Potential land for Green Belt compensation, viewed from Stonebridge Road



Stonebridge Road



Existing gate off Stonebridge Road

In addition, there is an opportunity to utilise an additional parcel of land located directly to the north east of the allocated site as potential open space. Part of the additional land to the north east would include an attenuation pond serving the development.



Attenuation area and open space provided at Engleton Lane development

It is envisaged that the housetypes would take a similar design to the new homes recently delivered in Brewood at Engleton Lane, with a visual variety of architectural styles and variability of roofscapes that will be complementary to the local vernacular.

There are opportunities for a range of enhanced architectural detailing, such as eaves types from deeper exposed rafter to traditional boxed eaves, as well as use of enhanced projections on structures such as window bays, deepened gable features, plinth details and dormer windows.

A variation in roof heights and massing will seek to provide the development with an interest to users and visitors reflective of the character of Brewood. A range of boundary treatments will be employed to further enhance the different character areas, street-scape, and development identity.







Section 06.

Summary.

The Site Vision and Concept Plan demonstrate the following benefits of the site:

- Delivery of approximately 75 homes
- Delivery of much needed affordable homes
- A housing mix to align with identified housing needs including older persons accommodation and adaptable and accessible dwellings
- Integration with the wider landscape through implementation of a Landscape Strategy to reinforce and strengthen eastern and south eastern edges

- Provision of new multifunctional Green Infrastructure, with on-site public open space including new hedgerow and tree planting and possible play provision
- Compensatory improvements to the Green Belt on adjacent land, including open space with improved accessibility and biodiversity enhancements
- New pedestrian connections, including to the nearby public right of way network via Stonebridge Close

The site is considered sustainable with good access to a range of services, facilities and employment opportunities. There are no physical constraints that would prevent built development and the site could be delivered quickly.

South Staffordshire Council is in the process of reviewing the adopted Local Plan. This document demonstrates that Land at Four Ashes Road, Brewood represents a suitable, available and achievable housing allocation.



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