

# South Staffordshire Local Plan Review Publication Plan (Regulation 19) Consultation

Land South of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley

Representations on behalf of Miller Homes

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Author: JD/GL

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## Document Management.

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# 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Miller Homes are promoting the land located to the south of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley, South Staffordshire. This comprises 23.1 Ha of agricultural fields set across two parcels, split by a railway line, which is currently designated as Green Belt.
- 1.2. These representations are made in light of current national policy and guidance, based on the 2021 NPPF (and associated PPG guidance), and with only limited weight given to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill (as amended) and associated Written Ministerial Statement dated 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022, as these suggested amendments have not yet been formalised or consulted on; whilst this Publication Plan was signed off for consultation and submission to the SOS at a Full Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022.
- 1.3. These representations welcome and support the decision of the Council to allocate part of Miller's landholding at Holly Lane for housing development in the Publication Local Plan (**Site 536a / Development Option 1 – 4 Ha**), demonstrating that it is a sustainable location for development, within one of the district's top tier settlements.
- 1.4. The Indicative Masterplan clearly illustrates how this site can provide a provide the required mix of uses, including residential dwellings, specialist elderly homes, drop-off car park for the adjacent primary school and associated open space and landscaping.
- 1.5. Whilst we do not suggest that the plan is unsound, there is a clear case to be made for a wider allocation at this site to support sustainable housing delivery in the district. For the reasons set out, we also consider there to be justification to extend the allocation further to accommodate the parcel to the west (**Development Option 2 – 5.9 Ha**) as this increase in scale can offer additional benefits and infrastructure, with negligible additional impacts, given that the characteristics of the two parcels are very similar.
- 1.6. Furthermore, we reiterate our previous position that the full 23 Ha site south of Holly Lane (**Development Option 3**) is available, suitable and deliverable and would form a logical and sensitive extension to Great Wyrley. Due to its scale, the wider site offers scope to provide further benefits, including additional facilities for the adjacent school, and an increased and more integrated open space network to benefit future residents and the existing community. This will also help to mitigate any impacts on the Cannock Chase Conservation Area and help to relieve existing pressures.
- 1.7. Great Wyrley is a highly sustainable settlement, with its Tier 1 status fully justified, and the fact it is conjoined with another Tier 1 settlement in Cheslyn Hay, makes it an obvious location for additional growth, beyond the modest level it is ascribed in the current plan. Our previous critique of the Council's Green Belt and Landscape evidence also highlighted various methodological flaws and inconsistencies which have contributed overly negative assessment of the land around Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley.
- 1.8. In respect of housing need it is our view that whilst not unsound, the baseline housing requirement should be increased, above and beyond the standard methodology figure, given that several of the circumstances that support elevated growth, as set out in the NPPG, are present in South Staffordshire, including wider economic growth strategies, committed infrastructure improvement projects, and significant unmet need in the wider area.

- 1.9. Furthermore, whilst the additional dwellings proposed to meet unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area are welcomed, the 4,000 figure itself is lacking in justification and in our view does not go far enough given the acute and chronic level of unmet need combined with the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities.
- 1.10. The plan should also consider safeguarding land for longer term needs, to align with national policy and the approach taken in previous plans, and should consider the wider Holly Lane site for safeguarding at the very least.
- 1.11. Overall, we fully support the allocation of site 536a. However, for the reasons discussed in detail in these representations, we respectfully request that if the Council are required to identify additional sites through the EIP and main modifications process, they consider the full Holly Lane site for allocation, or an extension of site 536a to take in the land to the west as a combined first phase, with the wider site safeguarded, to assist meeting the district and wider region's longer term needs.
- 1.12. Whilst we support the plan as a whole and do not contest its overall soundness, Miller wish to make specific comments on relevant policies through these representations and the upcoming EIP process.
- 1.13. Set out below is a summary of the relevant planning policies we comment on in terms of their legal compliance, soundness, and duty to cooperate implications; and whether we wish to participate in the associated hearing sessions. This replicates the Council's own representation form and is intended to assist the Council and Inspector in succinctly identifying where we support or challenge the plan:

*Figure 1.1 – Local Plan Policy Comments/ Hearing Attendance Summary*

Local Plan Policy/ Paragraph	Nature of comment (legal compliance, soundness, duty to cooperate)	Suggested Modification	Intention to participate in relevant hearing session / reason
SA5: Housing allocations (specifically site 536a – Land off Holly Lane)	Policy is sound in respect of its inclusion of allocation 536a. Wider policy could be amended as suggested to include some or all of the wider Holly site if additional land is required to meet the plans' needs.	As per comments in sections 3 and 4.	Yes – to support allocation 536a and highlight deliverability of wider site.
DS4: Development Needs	Policy is not positively prepared, justified and consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	That overall housing requirements and buffers within the policy are reconsidered to ensure it is positively prepared, as per comments in section 5.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss latest evidence on housing need at time of EIP
DS5: Spatial Strategy to 2039	Policy is not fully justified or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	That growth and distribution to Great Wyrley/ Cheslyn Hay is reconsidered, and provision of safeguarded land, as per comments in section 6.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss spatial strategy in light of latest supply and delivery evidence at time of EIP.



HC1: Housing Mix	Policy is not justified or effective as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Increased flexibility and removal of 70% threshold for 3 bedrooms or less as per comments in paras 7.5-7.11.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC2: Housing Density	Policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Increased flexibility and removal of single density target as per comments in paras 7.12 – 7.15.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP
HC3: Affordable Housing	Policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested	Increased flexibility on % requirement and tenure type, and more detail on any related SPD requirements, as per comments in paras 7.16 – 7.21.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC4: Homes for Older People and Others with Special Housing Requirements	Policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and requires further evidence, otherwise it should be amended as suggested.	Removal of 100% M4(2) requirement as per comments in paras 7.22 – 7.26.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC5: Specialist Housing	Policy is considered sound subject to our comments.	As per comments in section 3 and paras 7.27 – 7.29.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC8: Self-build and Custom Housebuilding	Policy is not justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.	Increased flexibility and removal of blanket self-build requirement on all large sites as per comments in paras 7.30 – 7.34	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC10: Design Requirements	Policy is not effective or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Additional detail added to criteria a and c, and criteria l can be removed, as per comments in paras 7.35-7.36.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest Design Guidance at time of EiP.
HC11: Protecting Amenity	Support policy.		No.
HC12: Space about Dwellings and Internal Space	Policy is neither justified nor consistent with national policy, and should be amended as suggested unless further evidence is provided.	Increased flexibility and removal of both NDSS internal standard requirement and external standards; as per comments in Paras 7.39 – 7.49.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC13: Parking Provision	Policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Amend EV charging point requirement in line with Building Regs standard as per comments in paras 7.50 – 7.54.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest viability evidence at time of EiP,



HC14: Health Infrastructure	Policy is not justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested unless further evidence provided.	Increased acknowledgment of need for any contributions to comply with CIL Reg 122, as per comments in paras 7.55 – 7.57.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC15: Education	Policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.	Removal of blanket requirement for contributions and acknowledgment that these must comply with CIL Reg 122, as per comments in paras 7.58 – 7.59.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC17: Open Space	Policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Increased flexibility to allow open space and play equipment provision to be considered on a site-by-site basis, as per comments in paras 7.60 – 7.62.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC18: Sports Facilities and Playing Pitches	Policy is considered sound subject to our comments.	As per comments in section 4 and paras 7.63-7.65	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest sports and playing pitch evidence at time of EiP.
HC19: Green Infrastructure	Policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Additional detail on tree lined streets to align with NPPF footnote 50 as per our comments in paras 7.66 – 7.68.	Yes – to speak to representations.
EC11: Infrastructure	Policy is considered sound subject to our comments.	As per comments in section 3 and 4 and paras 7.69 – 7.72.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
NB1: Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets	Support policy.		No.
NB2: Biodiversity	Policy is not unsound but could be improved with the amendments suggested.	Increased flexibility around delivery of BNG in conjunction with open space as per comments in paras 7.75 – 7.78	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
NB3: Cannock Chase SAC	Support policy.		No.
NB4: Landscape Character	Support policy.		No.
NB6: Sustainable Construction	Policy is not justified or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested unless further evidence is provided.	Further evidence required to justify optional standards in line with NPPF & NPPG otherwise they should be removed, as per paras 7.85- 7.93.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
NB8: Protection and Enhancement of the	Support policy.		No.



Historic Environment and Heritage Assets			
Chapter 15: Monitoring	Generally supportive of the proposed framework but additional clarity requested.	Confirmation which policies are subject to monitoring and which are not.	Yes - to speak to representations and discuss monitoring issues.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. Pegasus Group are instructed by Miller Homes to make representations to the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review Publication Plan consultation in relation to their land interests south of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley. The consultation on the Publication Plan (Regulation 19) is taking place between 11<sup>th</sup> November until 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022.
- 2.2. These representations should be read alongside previous submissions by Pegasus Group on behalf of Miller Homes to the 'Preferred Options' consultation in December 2021; and earlier submissions on behalf of Wallace Land Investments to the 'Issues and Options' consultation in November 2018 and the 'Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure' consultation in December 2019. These relate to the same landholdings; however Wallace were acquired by Miller Homes in 2021.

### Miller Homes Land Interests

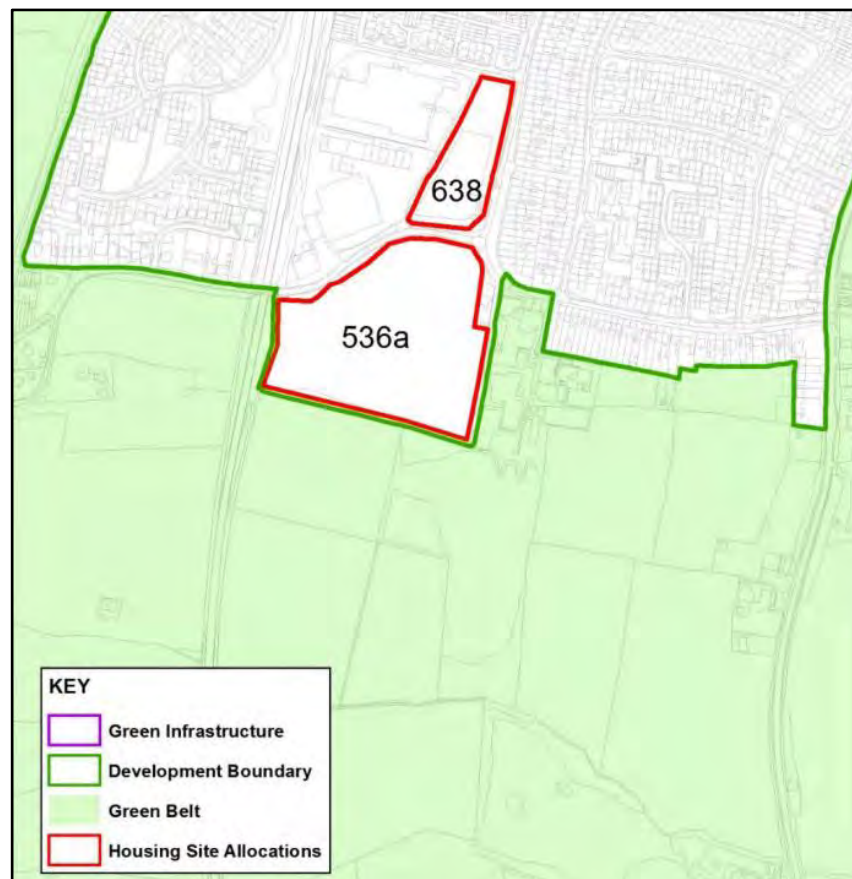
- 2.3. Miller Homes are one of the nation's most respected homebuilders having built over 100,000 homes since establishing in 1934. Miller operate across nine regions from Scotland down to Central and Southern England delivering to all sectors of the market, from apartments, and family homes to affordable housing and regeneration schemes.
- 2.4. Miller are currently completing over 3,000 plots a year with 17,000 plots in their strategic land pipeline. They have an excellent track record in terms of delivery and ensure sites are swiftly brought forward once secured through site allocations and planning applications.
- 2.5. Miller Homes are promoting the land located to the south of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley, South Staffordshire. This comprises 23.1 Ha of agricultural fields set across two parcels, split by a railway line, which is currently designated as Green Belt.

*Figure 2.1 – Miller Homes Land Control*



- 2.6. The north-eastern section of the Holly Lane site, measuring 3.97 Ha, was identified as a residential led allocation in the Preferred Options plan (Site reference 536a) and is retained within the Publication Plan (in the table within Policy SA5 and the associated pro forma at Appendix C/ page 190). The allocation has an indicative capacity of 84 dwellings, along with a requirement to provide drop off-parking for the adjacent Landywood Primary School, an element of specialist older persons housing.
- 2.7. The land on the opposite side of Holly Lane, known as the 'Loades PLC' site (Site reference 638) is also proposed for residential allocation for 29 dwellings across a 1.1 Ha site. This land is not controlled by Miller and is a former commercial/ industrial site within the urban area, but will provide a complimentary development to Holly Lane site by bringing a vacant brownfield site back into use.

*Figure 2.2 – Proposed Allocation*



- 2.8. At the outset, we fully welcome and support the decision of the Council to allocate part of Miller’s landholding for housing development, demonstrating that it is a sustainable location for development, in one of the district’s three top tier settlements. Whilst we do not contest that the plan has not been positively prepared, there is a clear case to be made for a wider allocation to support sustainable housing delivery in the district.
- 2.9. These representations detail our support for this draft allocation, commentary on the supporting evidence base and also commentary on the proposed housing target, spatial strategy and development management policies.



## National Policy Context

- 2.10. These representations are made in light of current national policy and guidance, based on the 2021 NPPF (and associated PPG guidance), and with only limited weight given to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill (as amended) and associated Written Ministerial Statement dated 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022, as these suggested amendments have not yet been formalised or consulted on; whilst this Publication Plan was signed off for consultation and submission to the SOS at a Full Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

## Representation Structure

- 2.11. Following this introductory section, our representations are structured as follows:
- In **Section 3** we provide a site-specific assessment of the draft 536a housing allocation including commentary on the supporting evidence base documents;
  - In **Section 4** we provide a site-specific assessment of the wider Holly Lane site (which is not currently allocated), including commentary on the supporting evidence base documents;
  - In **Section 5** we review the proposed housing requirement and needs within South Staffordshire and the wider Greater Birmingham Region (as per Policy DS4 and supporting paragraphs 5.8–5.17 in Chapter 5 of the plan);
  - In **Section 6** we provide commentary on the proposed Spatial Strategy, with particular reference to proposed growth in Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley (as per Policy DS4, Table 8 and supporting paragraphs 5.18 – 5.50 in Chapter 5 of the plan
  - In **Section 7** we consider the relevant Development Management policies (in Chapters 6–14 of the plan); and
  - In **Section 8** we provide a summary of our overall conclusions.



### 3. Site Assessment: Land South of Holly Lane (Policy SA5 – Chapter 6)

3.1. Chapter 6 of the Publication Plan sets out the proposed housing allocations which will assist in meeting South Staffordshire’s housing requirements to 2039. Under Policy SA5: Housing Allocations, the table confirms that the land south of Holly Lane site is proposed to be partially allocated for housing development, with a site area of 4 Ha (confirmed in the associated pro forma at page 190) and an indicative capacity of 84 dwellings (which is a standard calculation based on 70% developable area and density of 30 dph):

*Figure 3.1 – Proposed Site Allocation*

Village/ Town	Site Ref No.	Use	Site location	Minimum Capacity (dwellings)	Proforma Page Number
<b>Tier 1 Settlements</b>					
Great Wyrley	536a	Residential (including specialist housing and school parking)	Land off Holly Lane	84	190

3.2. Page 190 (Appendix C) then provides a more detailed pro-forma of the Miller site, confirming that this relates to the north-eastern extent of the Holly Lane land parcel and setting out the following key infrastructure that the site will be expected to deliver:

- Deliver on site drop off parking to serve Landywood Primary School;
- Deliver on site specialist older persons housing;
- The tree and hedgerow boundaries that border the site should be retained. In addition, the boundary to the south of the site should be strengthened through additional planting (this criteria has been added since the previous version of the plan); and
- 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.

3.3. The proforma also confirms the proposed vehicular and pedestrian access should be via Holly Lane.

3.4. Miller fully support the identification of this site for housing allocation. Indeed, we have continually advocated in our previous representations that the Holly Lane site is available and highly suitable for Green Belt release and housing development; and is under the control of a national housebuilder. Allocation 536a is assessed within the ‘Housing Site Selection



Topic Paper 2022' (at para 5.4.9) which demonstrates the sites sustainability, lack of constraints and limited Green Belt Impact:

*"3.95ha of land at the northern end of the site is on land considered to be of high harm to the Green Belt, which is similar to much of the larger land parcels in this broad location, and is also of a similar landscape sensitivity to other parcels around the village. Unlike other potential Green Belt sites around the settlements, the site is free from significant constraints (e.g. highly distinctive habitats, Highways Authority concerns, potential significant heritage impacts, loss of employment uses, constrained site layouts and brick clay safeguarding areas). A more limited development on this part of the site may be able to provide additional parking needed for the adjacent school whilst avoiding Highways Authority concerns that overdevelopment of the site may raise regarding surrounding junctions. Limiting the allocation to 3.95ha of land would also allow the area of 'very high' harm Green Belt to the south of the site to be avoided, reducing the allocation's impact on the Green Belt. The sites proximity to local shops and public transport means it may also be a suitable opportunity to address the acute local need for specialist elderly housing in Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley."*

- 3.5. The site's sustainability is also highlighted as an opportunity to meet local need for specialist elderly housing in Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley. We explore this matter in further detail below with reference to the latest 'Homes for Older and Disabled People Paper 2022'.

## **Homes for Older & Disabled People Topic Paper – November 2022**

- 3.6. This Paper assesses specialist housing needs in South Staffordshire, focussing on older people and people with disabilities and provides an update to the 'Specialist Housing – Local Need and Site Allocations Topic Paper 2021' that supported the Preferred Options consultation, taking account of updated demographic data from the 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update October 2022'.
- 3.7. Figures 9 and 10 of the report summarise the findings of this assessment, in terms of the need for 'sheltered/ retirement units' and 'extra care/ supported living units' respectively, by settlement area, and this is replicated at Figure 3.2 over the page.
- 3.8. Paragraph 3.22 of the Topic Paper explains how these figures are calculated. In summary, it uses an average prevalence rate for both 'sheltered/retirement' housing (64 per thousand head of population aged 75 or over) and 'extra care/supported living' (24 per thousand head of population aged 75 or over) derived from the SHMA using the Housing Learning and Improvement Network's (Housing LIN) Strategic Housing for Older People (SHOP) tool, and maintained over the plan period, as recommended in para 7.13 of the SHMA.
- 3.9. This average is then compared against the level of existing provision in each settlement to confirm whether there is a shortfall or overprovision.
- 3.10. The findings suggest that Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay needs 24 'sheltered/ retirement' units and 24 'extra care/supported living' units to maintain the district average.

Figure 3.2 – Prevalence rate of specialist housing compared to district average

	No. of people aged 75+	No. of sheltered/retirement units	Prevalence rate	Difference with district rate (64)
Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley	2,157	86	40	-24
Codsall/Bilbrook	2,001	118	59	-5
Penkridge	1,092	106	97	+33
Brewood	209	19	37	-27
Huntington	377	37	98	+34
Kinver	923	94	102	+38
Perton	848	49	58	-6
Wombourne	2,017	208	103	+39

Figure 9: Prevalence rate of sheltered/retirement housing compared to district average

	No. of people aged 75+	No. of extra care/supported living units	Prevalence rate	Difference with district rate (24)
Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley	2,157	0	0	-24
Codsall/Bilbrook	2,001	13	6	-18
Penkridge	1,092	82	75	+51
Brewood	209	0	0	-24
Huntington	377	0	0	-24
Kinver	923	0	0	-24
Perton	848	54	64	+40
Wombourne	2,017	100	50	+26

Figure 10: Prevalence rate of extra care/supported living housing compared to district average

- 3.11. Interestingly, these figures have changed significantly since the 2021 Paper, which indicated a need for 37 ‘sheltered/ retirement’ units and 22 ‘extra care/supported living’ units.
- 3.12. Unfortunately, the findings from the 2021 paper are set out differently so it is not easy to make a direct comparison, although we do note the following:
- The prevalence rate for extra care/supported living has reduced very slightly from 24 to 22; however the prevalence rate for sheltered/ retirement units has reduced from 86 to 64.
  - The level of existing sheltered/ retirement units in Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay (86) has not changed since 2021.
  - However, the population of over 75s in Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay has increased from 1,767 to 2,157 in the space of a year, an increase of 22% (which will have a significant impact on the results, but is unlikely to have had a material impact on actual need, as just means large number of 74 year olds turning 75).
- 3.13. These fluctuations over the past year highlight the inherent limitations and uncertainty of applying the current average rate across the full plan period (and of using arbitrary age brackets for classifying people); albeit we recognise that projections are inherently unpredictable and that these are accepted metrics and methodologies.
- 3.14. It is also pertinent using an average figure across the district does not necessarily translate to an accurate and demonstrable case for need on a settlement/site by site basis, a fact the paper does acknowledge at paragraph 3.24 noting that:

*“The comparison to districtwide prevalence rates purely provides an indication of where locating specialist homes may be most effective in meeting local need, to provide a guide for site allocations.”*

- 3.15. This is because it only confirms the relative amount of specialist provision compared to the number of people over 75, rather than the actual number of elderly people that are seeking specialist accommodation, as many over 75s prefer to remain in their existing homes and adapt them as appropriate as their needs change. Indeed, this point is acknowledged at paragraph 7.11 of the SHMA:

*“It should be noted that this tool is only driven by demographic changes and does not consider people’s choices or aspirations as to what form of accommodation they would prefer.”*

- 3.16. The 2021 SHMA also provided some additional commentary on this at paragraph 7.14, accepting that this methodology has the potential to overestimate demand:

*“Whilst the SHOP tool advocates increasing the prevalence rate of both forms of housing to the national ideals that it has defined, feedback from the stakeholder consultation indicated that, across the county, the Housing LIN model outputs have **overestimated demand**, and also that, within South Staffordshire, there are instances of reports of low demand for the facilities that have been newly built to meet this need.”*

- 3.17. It follows that in many cases the reason for there being a high proportion of over 75s in a settlement will be because the existing (non-specialist) housing stock and level of services is suited to them, and this is very much the case in Landywood which has a high proportion of bungalows and good level access to local shops and services. As such a higher proportion of older people in an area, could have an inverse relationship with the amount of specialist accommodation required.

- 3.18. We also note that the ‘sheltered/ retirement’ and ‘extra care/ supported living’ categories do not directly align with the definitions of older peoples housing in the PPG/ and footnote 65 of 2022 SHMA, although we understand they cover the following, which will require further clarification through the EIP process:

- **Sheltered/ retirement** – relates to individual homes with on-site support/ warden; and
- **Extra care/ supported living** – comprises more of a retirement community/ village, with individual flats/ bungalows but with 24 hour care on site and communal areas.

- 3.19. The paper goes on to recommend specific allocations to meet the needs of individual settlements at Figure 11 (replicated at figure 3.3 over the page), with Great Wyrley/ Cheslyn Hay earmarked for 40 specialist units on the Holly Lane site, with supporting paragraph 3.29 noting this could comprise any of the accommodation types noted above.

Figure 3.3 – Proposed allocations for specialist housing

Village/Town	Site Ref No.	Site location	Total site min. capacity	Proposed specialist housing units
Bilbrook/Codsall	519	Land East of Bilbrook	848	40
North of the Black Country	646a & b	Land at Cross Green	1,200	40
North of the Black Country	486c	Land at Linthouse Lane	2,000	80
Penkridge	420, 584 & 010	Land North of Penkridge	1,129	40
Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley	536a	Land off Holly Lane	84	40
Brewood	079	Land south of Kiddemore Green Road	43	20

Figure 11: Proposed allocations of Specialist Housing

- 3.20. Total allocations for specialist housing total 260 dwellings, with the majority within large strategic allocations where they only comprise a small proportion of the wider development (3.3% to 4.7%), whereas on the ‘Holly Lane, Great Wyrley’ and ‘Kiddemore Green Road, Brewood’ sites the specialist element is close to 50% (47.6% and 46.5% respectively).
- 3.21. Whilst we accept that these allocations are driven by local need in specific locations, it still generates an uneven distribution across the borough, with a disproportionate expectation for specialist housing placed on two smaller sites, placing an additional burden on delivery relative to many much larger sites, particularly the Holly Lane site which is being promoted by a national market housebuilder.
- 3.22. To be clear, we are not suggesting that there is not demand for elderly accommodation in this location or that it cannot be provided on this site (indeed we confirm below that it can), however we ask that the above comments and concerns are considered through the EIP process before the proposed mix for the Holly Lane site is finalised.

## Historic Environment Site Assessment (HESA) – 2022

- 3.23. In terms of the supporting evidence, it is also pertinent the Stage 2 assessment within the 2022 HESA has reduced the predicted heritage impact of proposed allocation 536a with the reasoning set out below, which we fully endorse:

*"It therefore recommended that care be taken to protect the setting of the farmhouse, although it acknowledged the intervening presence of the railway line. For this reason, a precautionary Amber score was predicted at Stage 1. However, when the site was visited in October 2021 it was found the railway and the vegetation which lines it would block visibility from the farmhouse and therefore no impact upon its setting is predicted."*



## Proposed Development of Allocation 536a (Development Option 1)

- 3.24. Since this site was identified for allocation in the Preferred Options in 2021, Miller have undertaken further analysis alongside discussions with the Council and school regarding:
- The type and nature of elderly provision required;
  - The location, scale and operation of the drop-off parking area; and
  - How the mix of uses will interrelate on site, and be accessed and serviced.
- 3.25. This allowed us to confirm that the proposed mix of uses was deliverable on site through the Council's internal site viability exercise in July 2022, based on the following estimates in terms of land take:
- "We can confirm that a circa 40 unit assisted living/ sheltered housing scheme is achievable on this site, alongside a circa 30 space car park/ drop-off area for the school.*
- In respect of land take, our assessments suggest the elderly care element will require 0.6 Ha and the car park 0.7 Ha (including road infrastructure), equating to 1.2 Ha overall for these elements with some overlap/ efficiency expected across the two uses.*
- This leaves approx 2.8 Ha for the regular housing element, as well as open space, landscaping etc."*
- 3.26. This work has now been refined further into an updated Indicative Masterplan (attached at **Appendix 1** and included below) based on further analysis and discussions with the Council to demonstrate that the proposed mix of uses and policy requirements can be delivered on site in a comprehensive and integrated manner.
- 3.27. At the outset, we would stress that the proposals are indicative at this stage and will be subject to change as the scheme evolves, with a level of flexibility included to allow the layout to respond to future market demands, the emerging requirements of Miller Homes, relevant specialist housing providers and the school, and the final adopted policy wording in the plan.
- 3.28. The current layout shows an overall developed area of 2.84 Ha, with the main residential development covering an area of 2.08 Ha on the western part of the site, which equates to circa 72 standard residential dwellings, based on the Council's targeted density of 35 dph.
- 3.29. The indicative layout above is based on a standard mix of 2-4 bed, predominantly semi-detached house types, which are outward facing where possible (upholding good urban design principles) and served by a mix of estate road and private drives.
- 3.30. The specialist housing element comprises a 40 unit assisted living/ sheltered housing set across 0.6 Ha which is based on a review of equivalent schemes in the region and the general site requirements for elderly housing providers. This is likely to comprise a block or blocks of apartments set around a courtyard and car park with amenity space, with landscape screening to delineate this from the main residential area.



Figure 3.4 - Indicative Masterplan for Site Allocation 536a



- 3.31. So in combination the site has capacity for at least 112 dwellings in total, which is well in excess of the minimum target of 84 within the draft allocation, and it may be that this can be increased further through increased densities and efficiencies within the main residential development as the proposals progress.
- 3.32. The drop-off parking area is located directly adjacent to the school in the south east part of the site and measures 0.16 Ha, providing 30 spaces off a dedicated access loop, which has been worked up by Miller's highways consultant Sweco. This aligns with the Council's requirements and the school's initial request for a minimum of 15 spaces in this location, noting that they can provide direct pedestrian access into the school from this location, through a gate and will provide staff to monitor and manage this area at drop-off/ pick-up times.
- 3.33. The school have recently provided some further detail by email on their aspirations and operational requirements for the drop-off parking area, following a meeting with Council Officers which we were not involved in. We have not had scope to address these requirements within the current submission, but they will be considered and incorporated where practicable as the proposals evolve in dialogue with the Council, and we have agreed this broad approach with Officers. This will not impact the wider scheme as the current indicative masterplan has significant flexibility built in, as noted above, to allow the drop-off area and other uses to be remodelled if required, as the proposals evolve.

- 3.34. In terms of access, the Masterplan shows two vehicular access points from Holly Lane, which have been confirmed as deliverable by Miller's highways consultant Sweco. The western access point provides dedicated access points for the residential element of the scheme, with the eastern access taken direct from the existing roundabout to the far east of the site providing a shared access for the elderly housing and school drop-off area. This will reduce conflicts between the uses from a highways/circulation perspective and also provide differentiation from a commercial perspective if these uses are ultimately managed by separate operators.
- 3.35. The remaining land (approx. 1.13 Ha) is free from development to be used for public open space, landscaping and associated boundary screening, particularly along the southern boundary with the Green Belt as specifically required in the allocation text.
- 3.36. Applying the open space standard in Policy HC17 (0.006ha per dwelling) would generate a requirement of 0.43 Ha for the 72 dwellings proposed and 0.67 Ha if the 40 elderly dwellings are included. The masterplan shows a main POS area of 0.35 Ha in the south east corner of the site which will be accessible to both the main and elderly residential elements, with further incidental amenity space around the eastern access, school drop off area, and within the elderly housing parcel which will comfortably exceed the overall requirement. The remaining land around the northern, western and southern boundaries of the site will be principally used for landscaping, with existing trees and hedgerows retained, and the southern boundary strengthened as noted to provide a strong and defensible Green Belt boundary. The western boundary may also need strengthening to mitigate noise impacts from the adjacent railway line, albeit this is in a deep cutting so unlikely to generate significant disturbance.
- 3.37. Previous iterations of the Masterplan for the wider 23 Ha site, also included a new 3G sports pitch alongside the drop off area for use by the school and wider community, as our early discussions with the school suggested a need for this both for the school and wider area, due to a shortfall in playing pitches across Cheslyn Hay / Great Wyrley. However, the Council's 'Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan' (September 2020) recommended that any new pitches be provided at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre and Great Wyrley Academy instead, so does not support the provision of a pitch here. Accordingly the draft policy does not require a pitch to be delivered and it has therefore been removed from the Masterplan on this basis.
- 3.38. Ultimately, the revised Indicative Masterplan demonstrates that draft allocation 536a is deliverable and can provide the quantum and mix of uses required by the Council (including standard and specialist elderly housing, a drop-off area for the school, and open space and landscaping), whilst upholding good urban design principles and ensuring each use can be safely accessed and serviced.
- 3.39. As such Policy SA5 is sound in its inclusion of allocation 536a.



## 4. Wider Site Allocation

- 4.1. Notwithstanding our support for proposed allocation 536a, as set out in section 3 above, we still believe that the wider Holly Lane site is suitable and deliverable for additional development, as set out below, and should be considered for allocation if the Council are required to identify additional sites through the EIP and main modifications process.

### Holly Lane Northern Parcels (Development Option 2)

- 4.2. Miller have previously put forward the site below for allocation, as a potential first phase of the wider Holly Lane site, which includes allocation 536a along with the land to west of the railway line, in a site totalling 5.9 Ha in total.

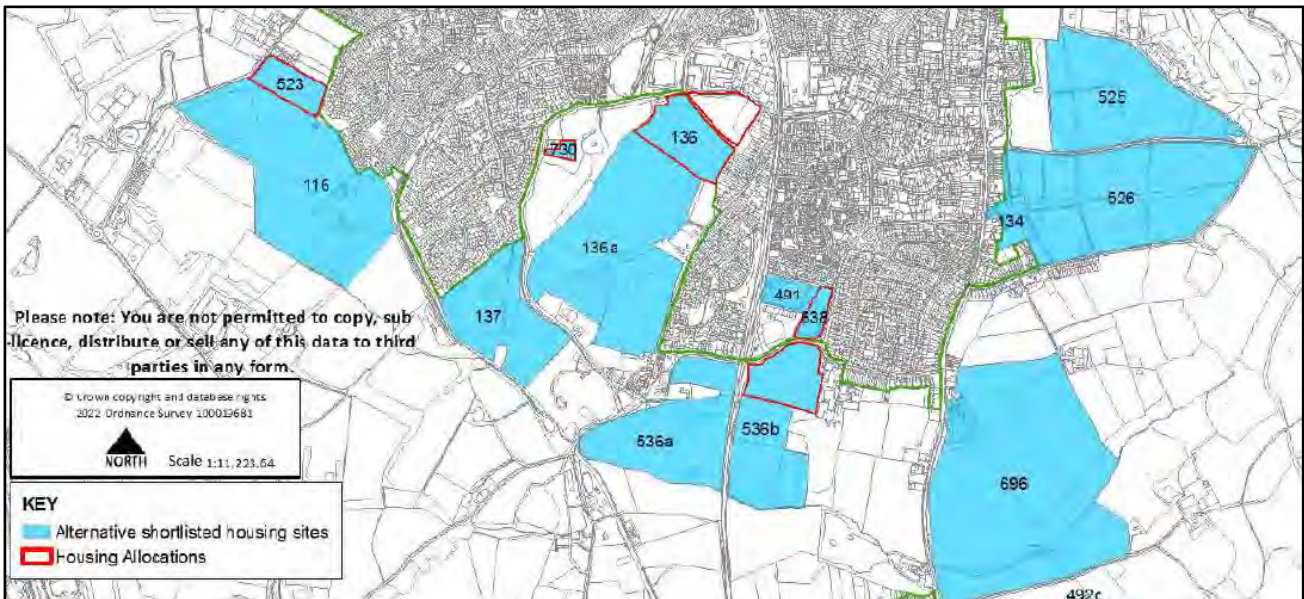
*Figure 4.1 – Proposed Development Option 2: Holly Lane Northern Parcels*



- 4.3. In our view, there is a compelling case to allocate this additional land west of the railway line, on the basis that it is very similar in character to site 536a, and therefore if the evidence supports the release of the land to the east, it should also support the release of the land to the west (which is referred to as site 536b in the Council's evidence base).
- 4.4. The 2021 Housing Site Selection Topic Paper confirmed that the north-western extent of the Holly Lane site is assessed as part of the wider 536b land parcel which included extensive land to the south. This assessment is unchanged within the equivalent 2022 Paper with all the sites assessed in this location shown on Figure 4.2 below.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Page 28 of 2022 Housing Site Selection Topic Paper..

Figure 4.2 – Plan of sites assessed in Great Wyrley / Cheslyn Hay



4.5. As detailed within the previous representations, Appendix 3 of the Site Selection Topic Paper (2021 and 2022) includes a pro forma for the wider site 536b, and the assessment and conclusions are unchanged in the 2022 version, noting the following key points:

- In relation to Green Belt Harm, it is stated that this is ‘High’ on 1.9ha of land on northern part of the site. This is identical to the findings of the assessment for draft allocation 536a, with that Proforma confirming Green Belt Harm to be ‘High’ on 3.95ha in the northern part of the site (adjacent Holly Lane)<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the level of Green Belt harm is adjudged to be the same on both land parcels in the Council’s evidence base, therefore the case for allocation of both sites in Green Belt terms is identical. However, as detailed within Miller’s previous representations, this has not translated through to the allocation stage, with the north-eastern section being allocated and the north-west section not.
- Landscape sensitivity is classed as moderate for parcel 536b. This is again identical to parcel 536a, which is also classed as moderate, but has not translated into an allocation for the land to the west.

4.6. The Council’s evidence base therefore indicates predominantly positive and almost identical findings for both land parcels, which are consistent with a large number of other sites identified for allocation. However, ultimately this has led to different outcomes in terms of allocations. Indeed, these similarities are summarised in the table below (Figure 4.3), where we replicate the Council’s overall conclusions in relation to the two assessed parcels.

<sup>2</sup> It is pertinent to note that ‘High’ is not the highest level of Green Belt Harm ascribed in the South Staffs Green Belt Review (there is a ‘Very High’ score as well) and that many of the proposed allocations are in areas of ‘High’ harm (with at least one in an area of ‘Very High’ harm).

Figure 4.3 – Summary conclusions of parcels 536a and 536b, taken from Site Selection Topic Paper

Summary conclusions for parcel 536a (partial allocation)	Summary conclusions for parcel 536b (omission)
<p><u>Key positives and negatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern part of site is similar Green Belt harm to the majority of land around the village (site is 'high'), but land to south is very high harm</li> <li>Similar landscape sensitivity to the majority of land around the village (site is 'moderate')</li> <li>Major negative impacts predicted against the landscape criteria in the Sustainability Appraisal, but failing to consider such areas for development may result in an unsustainable pattern of development and would run contrary to the Association of Black Country Authorities' proposed use of the Green Belt/landscape evidence base as set out in Duty to Co-operate correspondence.</li> <li>Highways authority advise against allocation of full site due to surrounding road network.</li> <li>Site could provide land adjacent to neighbouring school with need for increased parking capacity.</li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Having regard to all site assessment factors set out in the proforma, the northern part of the site is considered to perform better than other site options and could deliver the Council's preferred spatial strategy if delivered alongside Sites 523, 119a, 136, 638, 704, SAD Site 141, SAD Site 136 and SAD Site 139.</p>	<p><u>Key positives and negatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern part of site is similar Green Belt harm to the majority of land around the village (site is 'high'), but land to south is very high harm</li> <li>Similar landscape sensitivity to the majority of land around the village (site is 'moderate')</li> <li>Major negative impacts predicted against the landscape criteria in the Sustainability Appraisal, but failing to consider such areas for development may result in an unsustainable pattern of development and would run contrary to the Association of Black Country Authorities' proposed use of the Green Belt/landscape evidence base as set out in Duty to Co-operate correspondence.</li> <li>Highways authority advise against allocation of full site due to surrounding road network.</li> <li>Historic Environment Site Assessment indicates the potential for significant effects that may not be mitigated.</li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Having regard to all site assessment factors set out in the proforma, the site is not considered to perform so well compared to other site options that it should be allocated instead of, or in addition to, Sites 523, 119a, 136, 638, 704, 536a, SAD Site 141, SAD Site 136 and SAD Site 139.</p>

4.7. The site similarities are also evident in the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal (August 2021), which is also reflected within the November 2022 Sustainability Appraisal at Appendix 3 of the document. The appraisal confirms that both parcels have identical scoring post mitigation (which are again consistent with the scores on a number of other allocated sites), see Table G.4.1 of the 2022 SA as replicated below.

Figure 4.4 – Sustainability Appraisal scores for parcels 536a and 536b

Site Reference	SA Objective											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape & Townscape	Pollution & Waste	Natural Resources	Housing	Health & Wellbeing	Cultural Heritage	Transport & Accessibility	Education	Economy & Employment
536a	+/-	+	0	-	-	-	+	-	0	-	-	-
536b	+/-	+	0	-	-	-	+	-	0	-	-	-



- 4.8. In fact the pre-mitigation table in the SA (2022 Table G.2.1) actually scores site 536b slightly better with a 'green/single plus' score on Climate Change Adaptation compared to a 'red/single minus' score on site 536a (all other scores are identical).
- 4.9. It is evident from Figure 4.3 above that the only difference between the two parcels is in relation to heritage matters (see section highlighted yellow), with the Historic Environment Site Assessment (HESA) 2020 indicating that the development of site 536b would have the potential for significant effects that may not be mitigated<sup>3</sup>. We address this below.

#### **Heritage Considerations – Landywood Farmhouse**

- 4.10. The Miller Homes site contains no designated or non-designated heritage assets however the Grade II Listed Building known as Landywood Farmhouse is located just south west of the boundary of site 536b.
- 4.11. The HESA Updated Sites 2020 document does acknowledge this fact, giving site 536b a green score '*No concerns identified, on current evidence*' in terms of its direct physical impact on heritage assets, which we fully agree with.
- 4.12. However, in respect of indirect impacts, on the setting and character of the adjacent Listed Farmhouse the 2020 HESA scored the site as red, which means '*significant effect predicted. Mitigation unlikely to be possible*'.
- 4.13. No further commentary is provided on site 536b within the 2022 HESA as this comprises a detailed (Stage 2) reassessment of the proposed allocations, and does not consider discounted sites; although it is worth reiterating that the reassessment downgrades the impact of site 536a on the farmhouse, due principally to the intervening railway line and associated screening.
- 4.14. Pegasus Heritage provided a Note alongside our Preferred Options representations which disagrees with the findings of the 2020 Assessment, and this is reattached at **Appendix 2** for clarity, with the key conclusions summarised below,
- The historic functional association of the site with the Grade II listed building, Landywood Farmhouse does offer some minor contribution to the heritage significance of this designated heritage asset. However, its contribution is less than the architectural and historic interest of the building itself which was the reason for its designation, or its immediate setting and surrounds of its curtilage, which is outside of the site boundary.
  - The method of the Council's assessment of heritage impact is not consistent with the Government's policies for plan-making or decision-making as set out in the NPPF and fails to recognise that not all designated heritage assets are of the same degree of heritage significance, and that Landywood Farmhouse is a designated heritage asset of lower significance.
  - The assessment, by not fully adopting the language or considering the policies of the NPPF does not suitably reflect the different degrees of harm within heritage policy as

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<sup>3</sup> This was the most recent HESA to assess site 536a, as the 2021 HESA was a short addendum to the 2020 version assessing some additional sites and the 2022 HESA focuses on the proposed allocations.

set out in NPPF. As such this has not allowed a robust assessment of potential impact on heritage significance that can be considered to be consistent with the NPPF.

- The scoring of the site as red, and thereby considered to be substantially harmful to the significance of a Grade II listed building via a change to its setting, is both overstating the contribution of the site to the heritage significance of the building and that of the potential impact of the allocation. When the proposed allocation is considered alongside the policies of the NPPF the potential for harm could only be less than substantial, which could be mitigated by layout, screening and provision of open space to further lessen or remove harmful impact. An amber score meaning *'no significant effects which could be mitigated'* would be a more appropriate score.
- The allocation is also likely to bring public benefits as per paragraph 8 of the NPPF. These have not been taken into consideration as part of the scoring. Any harm would also need to be weighed against the public benefits which might outweigh the harm.

4.15. Ultimately, we disagree that this site should score red in terms of its indirect heritage impact, and instead should be amber: *'no significant effects which could be mitigated'*. Indeed, development proposals could carefully respect Landywood Farmhouse through mitigation, ensuring that heritage is not a technical constraint which would prevent residential development on this site.

4.16. The 2022 HESA reassessment of site 536a gives further credence to our conclusions recognising that existing screening around that site's boundary with the railway line minimises the impacts of development on the farmhouse; and it follows that enhanced screening around site 536b would have a similar effect.

4.17. Given that heritage impact is seemingly the only difference between the two land parcels at the northern extent of the Holly Lane site, the findings of which we disagree with, it is clear that both of these land parcels are nearly identical in terms of site characteristics. Indeed, our previous representations have discussed the similarities in detail in respect of Landscape and Green Belt matters and the Council's own evidence base comes to the same view.

4.18. Therefore, there is a justified and robust planning case to extend the draft Holly Lane allocation to incorporate the land to the west of the railway line. This is not only due to the similar site characteristics outlined above, but also due to the extensive housing needs of the district and wider region, which have not been fully accounted for in the current plan, and which address in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

4.19. As such we have prepared an Indicative Masterplan for the extended site, shown below and attached at **Appendix 3**, which builds on the plan for site 536a with the addition of further standard housing and a large area of open space on the site frontage, providing a stand-off to the Listed Farmhouse, an attractive gateway to the site, and an accessible open space for the wider community.

Figure 4.5 – Indicative Masterplan for Development Option 2



- 4.20. The plan shows an additional net developable area of 0.65 Ha which could deliver a further 22 market and affordable homes, so approx 94 including site 536a.
- 4.21. The western parcel includes a further access point from Holly Lane, which has been confirmed as deliverable by Sweco.
- 4.22. Development Option 2 also provides further flexibility and opportunities to provide differentiation between the different uses, which will have operational and commercial benefits. Indeed, the western parcel could potentially deliver the elderly housing element as a standalone use.
- 4.23. Furthermore, we understand one of the Council's other concerns over an enlarged allocation at Holly Lane is highways capacity; however our assessments suggest the addition of circa 22 homes via a separate access point some way along Holly Lane will not generate any significant additional impacts.
- 4.24. Therefore, this section and updated Indicative Masterplan demonstrates that both the Holly Lane Northern parcels (Development Option 2) are deliverable and provide increased flexibility in meeting the infrastructure requirements of the site and wider community.
- 4.25. We therefore politely request that if the Council are required to identify additional sites through the EIP and main modifications process, they consider expanding the Holly Lane allocation (536a) to include the land west of the railway line, which represents a highly suitable and sustainable housing site with near identical characteristics (in technical terms) to the current proposed allocation to the east.
- 4.26. In our view, this enlarged allocation could form the first phase of the full 23 Ha Holly Lane site, which we maintain is deliverable for the reasons set out below.

## Wider Holly Lane Site (Development Option 3)

- 4.27. As noted, Miller are still promoting the full 23 Ha Holly Lane site, as shown below, and maintain this is suitable and deliverable in light of the evidence base and emerging housing requirements.

*Figure 4.6 – Proposed Development Option 3: Wider Holly Lane site*



- 4.28. We have already explained how the entire Miller landholding has been assessed in the Site Selection Paper under site proformas 536a and 536b. These assessments concluded that the northern land parcels are less sensitive in terms of Green Belt harm and that the southern land areas would cause 'very high' harm to the Green Belt. It is also stated that the highways authority advise against allocation of the full site due to capacity issues in the surrounding road network. We deal with these two matters in turn below.

### Green Belt Matters

- 4.29. In respect of Green Belt matters, our 2019 Representations to the Spatial Housing Strategy, commented on this matter in great detail – including concerns regarding the methodology of the 2019 LUC Assessment (which has not been substantially updated) as well as the site-specific findings relating to the Holly Lane site. We do not repeat the contents of our previous representations in full, however we do provide an extract of the relevant section (6) from our 2019 representations at **Appendix 4**, including our site-specific Green Belt assessment of the entire Holly Lane site, which considers the full 23 Ha site against the 5 green belt purposes as set out in paragraph 138 of the 2021 NPPF.



## Highways Considerations

4.30. In respect of highways, we take note of the Highways authority summary advice ‘against allocation of the full site due to surrounding road network’ with the supporting highways comments at Appendix 2 (of the 2022 Site Selection Paper, which is unchanged from the 2021 version in this regard) giving both parcels a yellow score (‘Ok in principle subject to significant highways improvements’) then noting:

*‘Ok in principle subject to smaller site release and significant highways improvements to Holly Lane railway bridge crossing’.*

4.31. We dispute this position, as our initial highways investigations undertaken by Sweco have confirmed that a development of up to 350 homes could be served from the three proposed vehicular accesses on Holly Lane without significantly impacting the local highway network or the Holly Lane Bridge. Indeed, we have also demonstrated through our vision document and representations how the proposed drop-off parking area for the school within the site, will actually alleviate existing congestion issues in the site.

## Wider Benefits

4.32. In addition to the above, we have also comprehensively demonstrated that the whole Holly Lane site is suitable for development from all other technical aspects/considerations. Indeed, our previous Vision Document, which has already been before the Council but is provided again at **Appendix 5**, provides full details on this matter.

4.33. Furthermore, our Representations to the 2021 Preferred Options consultation, reattached at **Appendix 6**, set out the potential benefits of allocating the full site here (paragraphs 3.61 – 3.75), including the following:

- Provide significant levels of additional housing to help meet emerging needs of South Staffordshire, and the wider Birmingham region, which we believe have not been properly accounted for in the current plan (addressed in more detail in Section 5 below).
- Increased capacity for elderly provision, and the potential for a larger specialist facility that could meet needs beyond the immediate area.
- Potential to deliver recreation uses, alongside a school parking drop-off area; providing a genuine dual purpose facility that can be used by the school during school hours and the wider community outside school hours (with its own dedicated access and car parking).

4.34. Finally we would request that if the Council are required to identify additional sites through the EIP and main modifications process, that the full wider Holly Lane site be considered for allocation or at least as safeguarded land (please see our comments in section 5), such that it could form a later phase to the development of the northern parcels (Options 1 and 2), as part of a future Local Plan review, and provide certainty and comfort to Miller to provide the necessary infrastructure and futureproofing into the current development (in terms of access routes etc).

4.35. As such Policy SA5 is not unsound, but could be amended as suggested above to include some or all of the wider site if additional land is required to meet the plans’ needs.



## 5. Housing Needs (Policy DS4 – Chapter 5)

- 5.1. Policy DS4 and supporting paragraphs 5.8–5.17 consider the districts housing needs. The total housing requirement is now **9,089** over the 21 year period from 2018 to 2039 which equates to **433 dwellings per annum**. This total requirement has increased slightly since the 2021 Preferred Options requirement of 8,881, however it covers an additional year, with the annual requirement reducing from 444 dpa.
- 5.2. Within this figure, the underlying Standard Method requirement has reduced slightly from 243 dpa in 2021 to **241 dpa** in 2022<sup>4</sup>, whilst completions totalling 992 across the period 2018–2022 have been deducted. The total still includes a 4,000 dwelling apportionment to support the delivery of unmet need in the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (GBHMA).

*Figure 5.1 – Overall Housing Requirements*

South Staffordshire’s own housing need using the government’s standard method (2022-2039)	4,097
Completions in the district since the start of the plan period (2018-2022)	992
Additional housing to contribute towards the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA	4,000
<b>Total number of dwellings to be planned for</b>	<b>9,089</b>

- 5.3. Miller contend that whilst the proposed figure exceeds the minimum starting point of the standard method, and is therefore not technically unsound; there are a number of factors at play in South Staffordshire, and the wider Greater Birmingham Region that would justify an increase to this figure, to ensure a positively prepared plan in line with paragraph 35 of the 2021 NPPF. We outline these factors below, with reference to the current national guidance. These representations build upon those submitted to the Preferred Options in November 2021, providing additional evidence from the Council’s evidence base and other relevant documentation.

### National Guidance on Housing Need

- 5.4. In terms of national policy, NPPF Paragraph 61 states that (our emphasis):

*‘To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.’*

<sup>4</sup> As of March 2022, using the 2014 SNHP over the period 2022 – 2032 with 2021 affordability ratios.

- 5.5. Paragraph 11 also notes that for plan-making, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means that *'all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure...'*
- 5.6. As such, the Standard Methodology figure must be treated as the minimum starting point for housing delivery. This is supplemented with additional detail in the NPPG<sup>5</sup>, which states that the Local Housing Need (LHN) provides a minimum starting point in determining the number of homes needed, it also states that government is committed to ensuring that more homes are built and that government support ambitious authorities who want to plan for growth.
- 5.7. This paragraph then sets out the circumstances when it might be appropriate to plan for a higher housing need than the Standard Method indicates, including:
- where there are deliverable growth strategies for the area (e.g. Housing Deals);
  - where there are strategic infrastructure improvements that are likely to drive an increase in the homes needed locally,
  - where an authority has agreed to take on unmet need from neighbouring authorities, or
  - where previous levels of housing delivery or assessments of need are significantly greater than the Standard Method.
- 5.8. In addition, paragraph 2a-015-20190220 confirms that *'Where a strategic policy-making authority can show that an alternative approach identifies a need higher than using the Standard Method, and that it adequately reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals, the approach can be considered sound as it will have exceeded the minimum starting point.'*
- 5.9. Whilst South Staffordshire are proposing an approach that exceeds the minimum requirement, it is our strong view that this doesn't reflect the circumstances in South Staffordshire and the wider Greater Birmingham area (as referenced in paragraph 10 of the PPG), or the demographic trends or market signals (as referenced in paragraph 15 of the PPG). As such, it is our strong view that a far greater uplift is required.

## Meeting South Staffordshire Needs

- 5.10. In line with the guidance above, we set out the relevant circumstances that would support an uplift to the standard methodology for meeting South Staffordshire's own needs (before moving on to meeting unmet need in the wider region, other market signals, and supply side considerations). It is important to emphasise that we do not believe the current housing figures and need are unsound, but there is scope to deliver further housing in South Staffordshire to meet its own need and unmet need in the wider region.

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<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 2a-010-20201216

## **Growth Strategies**

- 5.11. NPPG guidance notes how there may be justification to exceed the standard method figure if there are growth strategies in the area, for example where funding is in place to promote and facilitate additional growth. As summarised below, there are economic growth strategies in the South Staffordshire area which justify the standard housing method being exceeded in the District.
- 5.12. Firstly, South Staffordshire is part of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Deal, which was agreed by Government in March 2014. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has secured £121m to support economic growth in the area from 3 Growth Deals (2014, 2015 and 2016), with £14.1m of funding committed between 2016 and 2021. Furthermore, the substantial investment from Government is expected to generate at least £19m of additional investment from local partners and the private sector, creating a total new investment package of £101.3m for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire area.
- 5.13. In addition, the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Strategic Economic Plan (April 2018) outlines strategic employment sites that are identified as priorities in the LEP area, which includes the Bericote Four Ashes and Featherstone sites which are both located in South Staffordshire District. Both sites will clearly generate significant jobs in South Staffordshire, which will in turn increase housing demand in the area. Indeed, the Four Ashes site will provide 900,000 sq ft of industrial floor space and accommodate over 1,000 jobs, and has outline planning consent in place. Since then the West Midlands Interchange has gained consent through the DCO process, which will generate further jobs growth, which we come on to below.
- 5.14. Finally, the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP adopted a Local Industrial Strategy in March 2020, This aims to boost investment in the area by focussing on the following strengths, and needs to be taken into consideration when establishing the housing need requirement for the District:
- manufacturing and materials innovation;
  - energy innovation and low carbon adoption;
  - connectivity; and
  - a strong and growing visitor economy.
- 5.15. To conclude, the aforementioned economic growth strategies provide justification for exceeding the minimum standard method housing figure in the South Staffordshire context.

## **Strategic Infrastructure Improvements**

- 5.16. NPPG Guidance also outlines how strategic infrastructure improvements that are likely to drive an increase in the homes needed locally provide justification for exceeding the standard housing method figure. Our previous representations (see Appendix 6) set out the infrastructure improvements and projects which need to be taken into consideration when establishing South Staffordshire's housing requirement, and these are still considered of relevance here.
- 5.17. As part of the Publication Plan consultation, the Council have published an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2022). Whilst a number of the infrastructure projects in the plan

relate to education, additional car parking provision etc, others are transport related such as road infrastructure improvements to help deliver the ROF Featherstone Strategic Employment site, and upgrades to Gailey Island associated with WMI. We have already outlined the economic growth benefits that will arise from the strategic employment sites, with the planned highways infrastructure helping to unlock their potential.

- 5.18. Table 6.1 of the South Staffordshire District Integrated Transport Strategy (October 2017) outlines potential and planned infrastructure projects in the District. Notably, Landywood Railway Station features in the Plan, including the 'Landywood rail station gateway project' and the aim to provide earlier and later trains and a half-hourly off-peak service from Landywood (which has now been achieved).
- 5.19. At a more strategic level, HS2 is clearly a key infrastructure project with a proposed new station in Stafford to the north. Phase 2a of HS2 was approved by Parliament in 2021, connecting Birmingham with Crewe. South Staffordshire District borders Stafford District to the north, therefore there will be evident economic growth benefits for South Staffordshire arising from the proposals<sup>6</sup>. For example, spurred on by HS2 connectivity at Stafford, Stoke and Macclesfield, the 'Cheshire & Staffordshire HS2 Growth Strategy' aims to deliver 100,000 new homes and 120,000 new jobs by 2040.
- 5.20. South Staffordshire is also likely to see significant benefits arising from the development of the West Midlands Interchange (WMI) which represents a strategic infrastructure project that achieved consent through the DCO process in May 2020. Once complete, the Interchange is expected to deliver up to 8 million sq ft of logistics floorspace and support around 8,500 jobs and given its location, it is reasonable to expect a good proportion of these to be taken by South Staffordshire residents – either existing or new people attracted to the area by new employment opportunities.
- 5.21. Finally, Highways England granted a DCO in April 2022 for a new Link Road between the M6 and M54, to reduce pressure on the A460, at an estimated cost of £779m, and this clearly represents a significant piece of strategic infrastructure that will support additional growth in the future. Work on this scheme is set to commence in 2023.
- 5.22. Therefore, the above infrastructure improvements and projects need to be taken into consideration when establishing South Staffordshire's housing requirement.

### **Previous Delivery**

- 5.23. Previous delivery had been broadly in line with the Standard Method figure of 241 for the majority of the last 20 years, however the year 2021/2022 saw elevated delivery of 530 dwellings which has increased the average delivery to 265 dpa since 2001 and 284 over the Core Strategy period (2014/15–2021/22)<sup>7</sup>, which is 10–18% higher than the requirement. What's more the Council's latest 'Housing Monitoring and Five Year Housing Land Supply' document, dated April 2021, projects delivery at an average 363 dpa from 2021 – 2026, indicating that the 2021/2022 figure was not an anomaly and that delivery is trending upwards, which might support an uplift in the requirement in the coming years.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hs2.org.uk/why/connectivity/>

<sup>7</sup> According to government live table 122.



### **Previous Assessments/SHMAs**

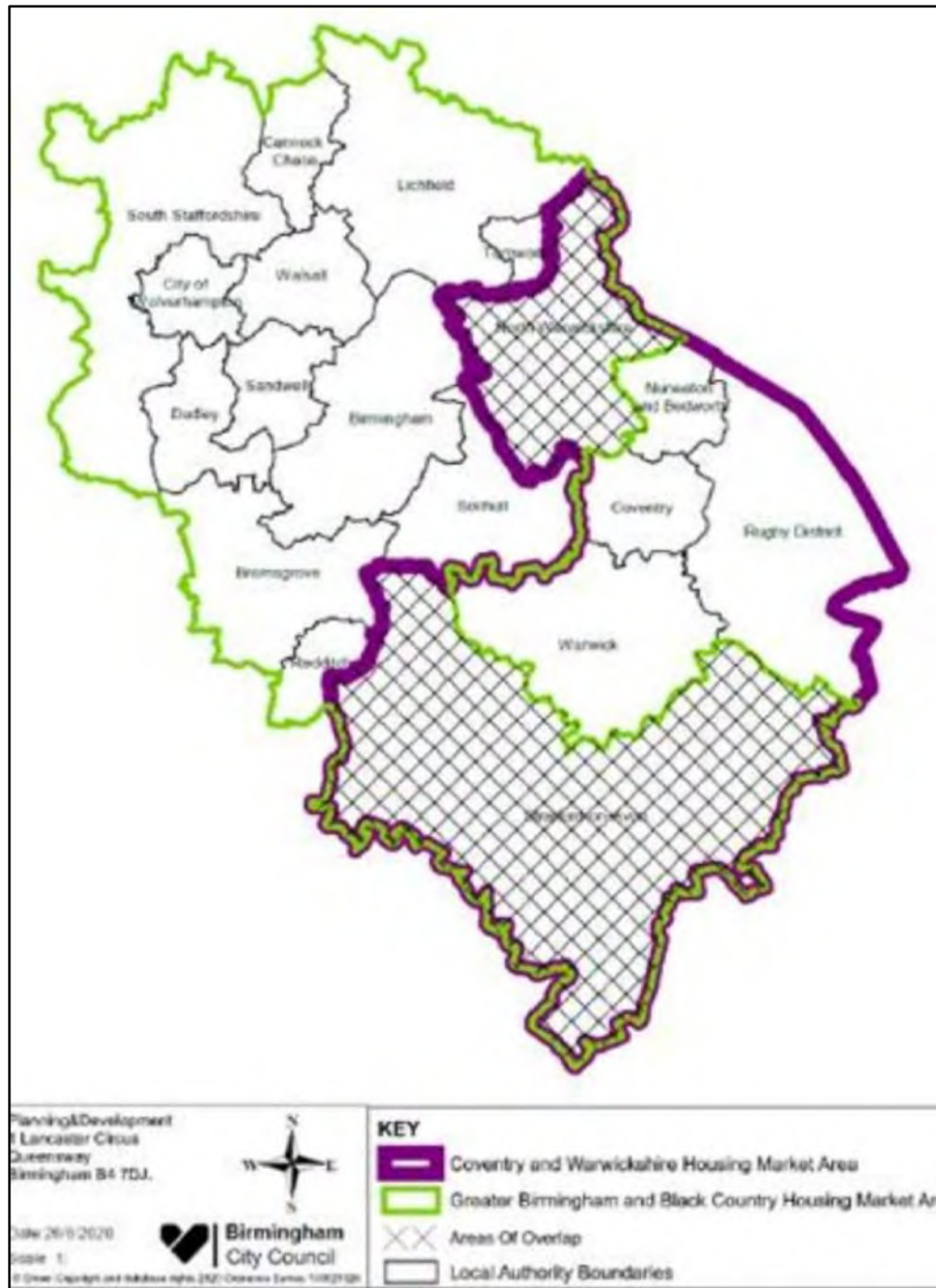
- 5.24. Whilst there is an October 2022 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (SHMA), prepared by HDH Planning & Development, this does not seek to establish an objectively assessed housing need (OAN) figure instead it simply applies the standard method, which we acknowledge is in line with current PPG guidance.
- 5.25. The last assessment to fully consider need, beyond the standard method, was the March 2017 Black Country and South Staffordshire SHMA, prepared by Peter Brett Associates. Table 7.1 of the report states that the OAN requirement for South Staffordshire is 270 dpa. This OAN figure covers the time period 2014 to 2036, and was calculated taking into account market signal adjustments, economic growth etc. Paragraph 7.30 confirms that the OAN figure does not include meeting unmet housing needs from elsewhere in the Housing Market Area (HMA).
- 5.26. However, paragraph 7.31 of the 2017 SHMA notes how there is scope for South Staffordshire to offset some of the wider unmet cross-boundary need, because demand for new homes in this area is higher than other parts of the HMA. We fully agree with this assertion, as discussed in detail below.

### **Meeting Wider Unmet Needs within Greater Birmingham**

- 5.27. Paragraph 5.12/ Table 7 of the Publication Plan document confirms that South Staffordshire will accommodate up to 4,000 dwellings towards the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA, which is unchanged from all the previous consultations dating back to 2018.
- 5.28. We reiterate our previously raised concerns on this matter, namely that we do not consider that the 4,000-unit uplift goes far enough to meet the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area, given the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities who are unable to sufficiently contribute to the wider Greater Birmingham needs. Whilst it is welcomed that South Staffordshire District Council is looking to contribute towards the delivery of unmet needs from the wider GBHMA, the 4,000 figure does not appear to be based on robust evidence of site capacity and constraints within the relevant local authorities.
- 5.29. The latest GBHMA Position Statement Addendum is from December 2021 provides a detailed update to the housing supply position up to 2031 (with a base date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020) which is largely based on the trajectories and committed supplies of adopted local plans. It confirms a total supply of 201,677 against a requirement of 207,979, generating a shortfall of 6,302. Whilst this shortfall is just 2% of the overall requirement the total supply/ shortfall has deteriorated by 3,705 dwellings since 2019 showing a negative direction of travel.
- 5.30. However it is the unmet need and supply position beyond 2031 which is of real concern, as much of this supply is not yet committed and reliant on emerging plans to cover the extended period to 2039/2040.



Figure 5.2 – Map of Authorities in Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area



5.31. Whilst the December 2021 Position Statement does not provide detailed supply estimates beyond 2031 it does give an indication of the latest estimates of unmet need beyond that and which authorities are proposing to contribute (at Appendix 2), and combined with the latest evidence from the relevant authorities, we note the following:

- The appendix 2 table confirms an unmet need from Birmingham of **37,900** from 2011 to 2031 and an unmet need from Black Country of **28,329** from 2018 to 2039. So a total unmet need of **66,139** from 2011–2039.

- It then confirms adopted/ proposed contributions to unmet need from the remaining authorities<sup>8</sup>, which total **13,935**. This leaves a potential shortfall of as much as **52,204**.
- Now this doesn't specify the exact periods over which these shortfalls/ contributions cover so we cross reference this with the committed supply to 2031 and wider evidence. The main position statement confirms a residual shortfall of **6,302** to 2031; whilst the Black Country Regulation 18 evidence suggested a shortfall of **11,888** over the period 2031–2039, suggesting an overall residual shortfall of at least **18,190** beyond 2031.
- Of the 13,935 of proposed contributions to meeting unmet need, not all are applicable to the period 2031 to 2039, with Stratford on Avon's adopted plan expiring in 2031 and North Warwickshire's only running until 2033 (and therefore only making a pro rata contribution of 464 between 2031 and 2033). If these are accounted for the proposed contributions total no more than **9,724**.
- This suggests a minimum residual shortfall of **8,466** beyond 2031.

5.32. So the December 2021 Position Statement suggests a shortfall between **8,500 and 52,000**. In our view the real figure is likely to be towards the upper end, given the housing requirement figures used in the GBHMA Statement are now out of date and likely to be an underestimate, given they are taken from the 2016 Strategic Growth Study baseline and don't take account of the latest national housing requirements, which include 35% 'city' uplifts for Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

5.33. Indeed, other third party consultant assessments that have looked at this issue and factored in the 35% 'city uplifts' suggest significantly higher levels of unmet need to 2040. These include:

- Barton Willmore's 'Mind the Gap' Report published in March 2021 – which indicated unmet need across the GBHMA could be as high as **122,828** to 2040.
- Turley's 'Falling Short – Taking stock of unmet needs across the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area' Report published in August 2021, – which indicated the shortfall could be as high as **78,000** to 2040.

5.34. This position is likely to have deteriorated further since 2021, due to the following changes in circumstances over the last year.

- The emerging Black Country Local Plan, which was at Regulation 18 stage, was abandoned in October 2022, with the four authorities unable to reach agreement on an approach to meeting future development needs. Each of the four authorities will now have to prepare their own Local Plans, which is likely to lead to significant delays in allocating sites to meet the housing need in 4 of the 14 authorities in the wider HMA, which will impact the supply position to 2039.
- The recent Written Ministerial Statement dated 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022, amendments to the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) and potential upcoming changes to the

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<sup>8</sup> South Staffordshire (4,000); Lichfield (2,655); Cannock Chase (500); Solihull (2,105); North Warwickshire (3,790 + 620); Stratford on Avon (2,720 + 265)



NPPF in respect of the Local Plan process, housing requirements and Green Belt release are also likely to delay Local Plans further and have a significant negative effect on supply in GBHMA.

- 5.35. In terms of how this shortfall may be met, the higher range shortfall figure of 120,000 would require the 14 authorities in the GBMHA to take over 8,500 dwellings each, although it is unclear whether adopted or proposed contributions to unmet from the 14 constituent authorities are included in this or how realistic this would be to achieve under the current duty to cooperate regime and without some form of wider strategic plan for the region.
- 5.36. The lower range shortfall figure of 8,500 does already account for all the adopted and proposed contributions from the constituent authorities (including 4,000 from South Staffordshire), with the remaining authorities largely those that aren't able to meet their own needs in full (Birmingham, Redditch, Tamworth and Black Country).
- 5.37. Therefore, either way, the only logical way this shortfall will be met is by existing authorities like South Staffordshire, who can meet their needs, and are already taking or offering to take unmet need, accommodating more.
- 5.38. Furthermore, even with the evident uncertainty around the extent of housing shortfall, the 4,000 unmet need figure suggested by South Staffordshire is not clearly justified. We consider there to be significant scope to increase the proportion that South Staffordshire takes of the unmet GBBCHMA housing need. The District covers a significant geographical area that wraps around the Major Urban Area along the western and north western boundaries of the Black Country. The District is also free of significant physical and environmental constraints and has strong functional links with the Black Country and Birmingham. These opportunities for increasing housing growth are less prevalent in the majority of other LPAs across the HMA, including the Black Country Authorities, Birmingham City, Tamworth Borough and Redditch as noted above.
- 5.39. Therefore, there is a compelling case to increase the proportion that South Staffordshire takes of the unmet housing need above 4,000 dwellings. The apportionment of unmet need across the relevant LPAs should be based on a robust capacity study, as opposed to figures which do not appear to be justified or based on demonstrable evidence. It is a matter of strategic, cross-boundary importance that the housing needs of the GBBCHMA are met, based on robust capacity evidence.
- 5.40. On a final note, the strong economic and geographic links that South Staffordshire shares with the Black Country and Birmingham is crucial to meeting the housing needs of the wider HMA. As we explain throughout these representations, Great Wyrley and the Land South of Holly Lane site in particular is well placed to meet both local housing needs within South Staffordshire (particularly the proposed allocation, and Development Option 2 noted above); but also to meet the needs over the wider conurbation (particularly the wider site/ Development Option 3 noted above), as it benefits from an excellent location in relation to the adjoining Black Country conurbation, and with direct rail connections to Birmingham City Centre.

### **Housing Affordability**

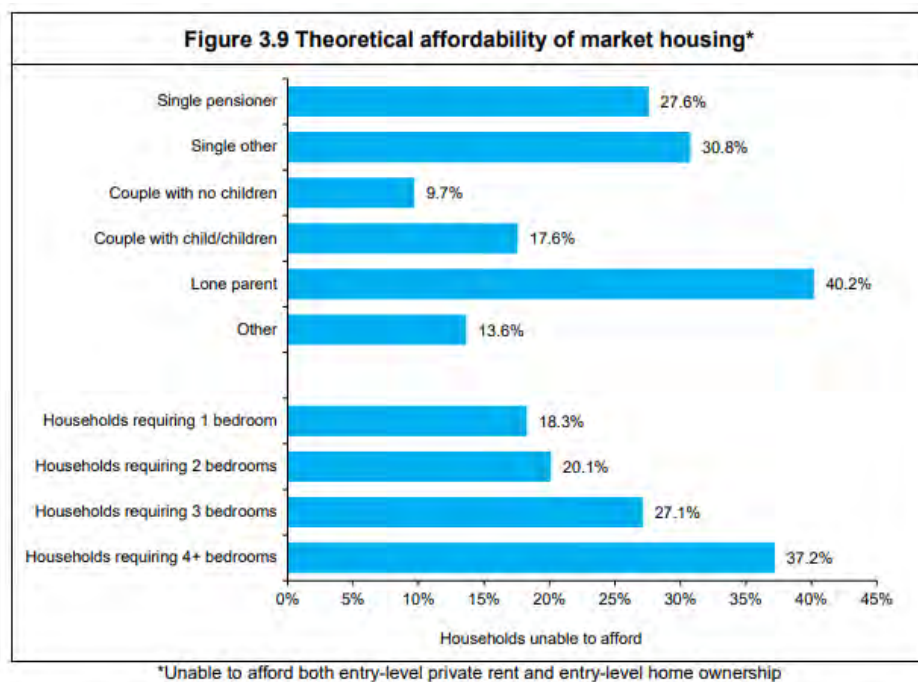
- 5.41. Whilst affordability is factored into the standard method calculation, the Housing Market Assessment Update 2022 (HMAU) contains new data on affordability, including initial findings from the 2021 census which has not yet been picked up by the standard method and



demonstrates worsening affordability in recent years which is acknowledged to be one of the principle indicators that housing needs are not being met.

5.42. Indeed, the 2022 SHMA confirms that the average housing price in South Staffordshire rose by 19.0% between 2019 and 2021, above the national average. The affordability ratio in South Staffordshire has risen from 7.39 to 8.43 between 2018 and 2022. Figure 5.3 below illustrates the affordability challenges for within South Staffordshire, with the challenges particularly acute for larger family homes and lone parents.

Figure 5.3 – Theoretical affordability of market housing



5.43. This significant rise in house prices and the corresponding affordability of housing in South Staffordshire provides a compelling case for the need for additional market housing to alleviate cost pressures, and this would also assist in delivering additional affordable housing.

5.44. The HMAU identifies the north east sub area as having the lowest median house prices in South Staffordshire which includes the settlement of Great Wyrley. The allocation of additional sites within the north east sub area represents the most appropriate location for housing which is affordable and meets the household requirements set out within the HMAU.

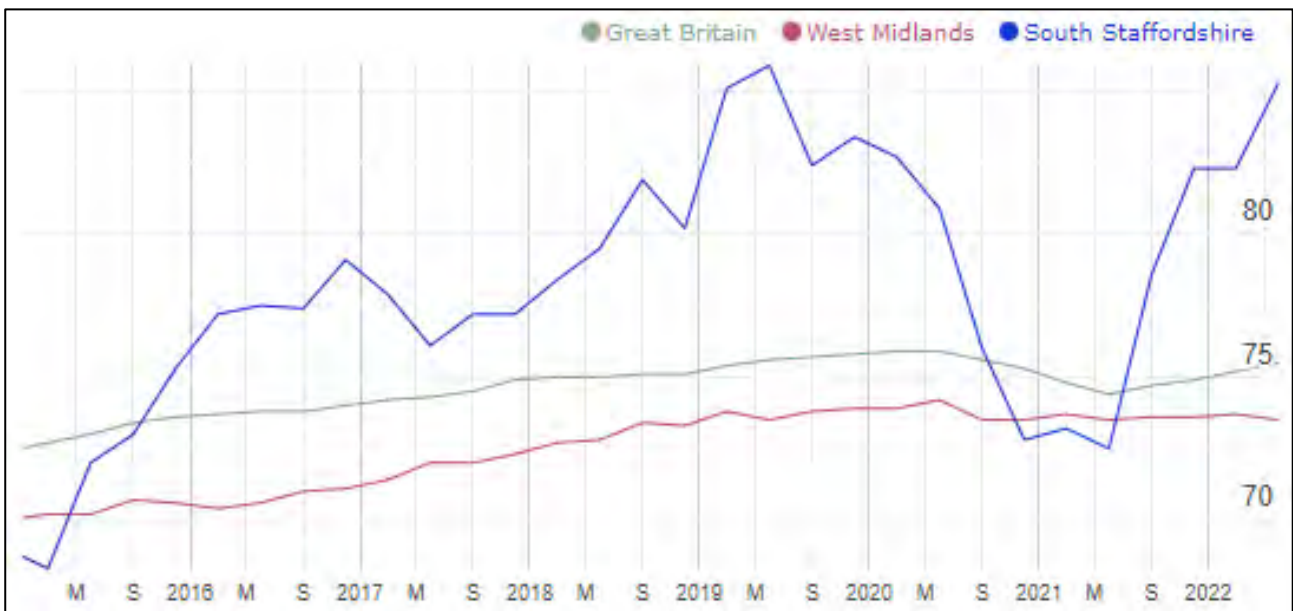
5.45. Therefore, the significant housing affordability increases since 2019 need to be taken into consideration when determining the level and location of any additional housing, should this is required through the examination and Main Mods process.

**Market Signals and Employment Trends**

5.46. The previous 2021 representations to the Preferred Options considered the level of new housing provision required in South Staffordshire. It is helpful to look at past employment trends in the area, which are a relevant market signal in line with para 2a-015-20190220 of the NPPG, as housing need will be driven to a large extent by changes in the labour market.

- 5.47. Whilst the latest Housing Market Assessment Update 2022 points to low unemployment and higher levels of skilled rolls than the national average, we present further recent evidence demonstrating the strong employment growth in South Staffordshire and the impacts this will have on future housing requirement.
- 5.48. Utilising Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, the previous representations highlighted strong employment and job growth from 1998 to 2019, outperforming West Midlands and national growth.
- The District saw total employment increase by around 3,000 from 1998–2008, equating to annual growth of 1.1%. This was above the annual increases in West Midlands and Great Britain of 0.3% and 0.9% per annum respectively.
  - The District experienced jobs growth of 2% p.a. from 2009–2015, equating to around 4,000 more jobs. This was higher than the increases of 0.8% p.a. in the West Midlands and 1% p.a. in Great Britain over the same timeframe.
- 5.49. The 2021 representations detailed how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on job numbers in South Staffordshire in 2020, with a reduction in job growth in line with trends seen nationally. The latest ONS figures to June 2022 show strong employment growth in South Staffordshire following a dip during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Figure 5.4 below illustrates this growth, with 85.3% economically active residents, a growth from 72.5% in June 2021. This far outstrips the average figures for the West Midlands (73.5%) and nationally (75.5%). This rapid employment growth in South Staffordshire coming out of the pandemic indicates the strength of the labour market and wider economy.

*Figure 5.4 – Percentage of those in employment*



- 5.50. The ABI and BRES data indicate that South Staffordshire’s labour market performed strongly between 1998 and 2019, and again since 2021, following a dip during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.51. As it stands, South Staffordshire is planning for delivery of 241 dwellings per annum, which is based on housing need derived from the standard method, which is still based on the 2014

household projections and does not take account of recent economic growth aspirations. Indeed the benefits associated with HS2 and the West Midlands Freight Interchange (WMFI) will not have been factored in, and it does not seem unreasonable to expect the District to continue to experience strong jobs growth over the next 10–15 years in line with the wider trend since 1998. This is likely to place further pressure on the housing market and lead to increased demand for homes in South Staffordshire to support the associated jobs, with more sites required to meet this increased demand, and the land to the South of Holly Lane could assist with this.

## Providing a Buffer to Overall Supply

- 5.52. In addition to the housing requirement issues set out above, the Local Plan Review must also consider the total supply figure required to ensure that this overall requirement is met, and surpassed.
- 5.53. As noted, the housing target suggested in the Publication Plan is **9,089** over the 21 year period from 2018 to 2039.
- 5.54. Table 8 suggests a total supply of 9,588 dwellings. A windfall allowance of 600 dwellings has been added on top of this, which is an increase from the 450 dwellings presented at the Preferred Options stage. This brings the overall land supply figure within the Publication Plan to **10,188**.
- 5.55. Therefore, the total proposed supply exceeds the target by 1,099 dwellings or **10.7%**. Miller reiterate concerns with this level of headroom (which has reduced from 12.9% in the Preferred Options) as it does not allow sufficient flexibility to provide a choice and range of sites and to allow for under delivery of allocated/ committed sites, particularly given the number of strategic sites and level green belt release proposed.
- 5.56. The text of policy DS4 needs to be updated to reflect this as it still says that it provides *“approximately 13% additional homes to ensure plan flexibility”*.
- 5.57. We also consider the increased level of windfall sites (600 or 5.8%) as optimistic, as sources of windfall supply will inevitably dry up once the plan is in place and as more sites are allocated. Given table 8 already picks up a large number of single dwelling consents in the smaller settlements, so this could be considered double counting.
- 5.58. Paragraph 60 of the 2021 NPPF is clear that the Government have a continued commitment to significantly boost the supply of homes. Paragraph 23 of the NPPF also notes how strategic policies should provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed needs over the plan period, in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For this reason, Miller continue to advocate their previous position that a higher land supply buffer is used in order to provide greater certainty that development requirements will be met.
- 5.59. Indeed, the HBF commonly recommend a 20% buffer is added to housing land supply. The inclusion of such a buffer would provide much greater flexibility for delivery slippage or elongated delivery timescales, and it is important to note that the housing requirement should be viewed as a minimum, which Council’s should be seeking to surpass in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Furthermore, the 20% buffer would



provide greater choice and competition in the land market and greater flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.

5.60. Providing a 20% buffer on the proposed requirement equates to **1,818 dwellings** which would generate a total supply of **10,907** and require allocations for a further 719 dwellings and this would increase further should a higher requirement/ unmet need figure be progressed, as we have advocated.

5.61. It is possible that additional safeguarded land could also be considered to provide the relevant flexibility and potentially contribute to this buffer, as we come onto in the next section, and whilst this should obviously be targeted towards the next plan period (currently post 2039) and not relied on as part of the current planned supply, it would allow it to be brought forward and allocated as part of a future Local Plan review (i.e. whenever the emerging plan is 5 years old, so potentially from 2029), and could even include mechanisms allowing earlier release if housing delivery slips below a certain level.

## **Conclusions on Housing Need/ Policy DS4**

5.62. To conclude, all of the reasons outlined above provide justification for a higher housing requirement which exceeds the minimum starting point provided by the standard method (241 dpa), with a further uplift to deal with wider unmet need, in addition to what South Staffordshire have already agreed to accommodate (4,000 dwellings).

5.63. Accordingly, whilst not challenging the soundness of the plan, we ask that the overall housing requirements and buffers within policy DS4 are reconsidered to ensure it is positively prepared (along with employment land requirements to ensure that they are aligned).

5.64. If the Council continue with the proposed requirements, then we would ask that the wording be amended to confirm that the headroom is approximately 11% not 13% as suggested.

5.65. As such the policy is not positively prepared, justified and consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

### **Duty to Cooperate Implications**

5.66. Finally we stress that in suggesting that South Staffordshire should consider accommodating a higher level of unmet need from the wider GBHMA, we are not suggesting they have failed the duty to cooperate (DtC).

5.67. In fact, it is clear from the Duty to Cooperate Paper 2022 that South Staffordshire have undertaken extensive engagement with adjacent authorities and have committed to helping meet unmet needs since early versions of the plan, which is as much as the DtC can realistically achieve in its current format, which deals with each authority on an individual, ad hoc basis.

5.68. Indeed, it is clear that a wider strategic plan for the region, with proper Development Plan status (similar to Places for Everyone in Greater Manchester), is needed to properly tackle the acute unmet need issue across Greater Birmingham.

5.69. It is also worth noting that the abandonment of the Black Country Local Plan does not affect the DtC in South Staffordshire. This is because they have never had a SoCG or agreement with Black Country as a whole, and have instead sought individual SoCGs with 15 adjacent



authorities (including all 4 of the individual Black Country ones), along with group ones for the Greater Birmingham HMA and the FEMA. Furthermore, the 4,000 dwellings of unmet need they are proposing to take comes from the wider HMAs overall/ 'global' unmet need figure, so doesn't specifically include an element for Black Country, and therefore the progress of the Black Country plan doesn't affect this and the evidence/ justification behind it.



## 6. Spatial Strategy (Policy DS5 – Chapter 5)

6.1. Policy DS5, Table 8 and supporting paragraphs 5.18–5.50 set out the updated spatial strategy for the district, which is replicated below. As with our previous representations, Miller are generally supportive of the principles which underpin the strategy, which provides a mixture of site sizes and development distribution across the geographic area of South Staffordshire. However we do raise concerns over the following elements of the plan.

### Growth in Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley

6.2. In overall distribution terms, since the Preferred Options stage in 2021, slightly more growth is apportioned to Tier 1 Villages (39.7% up to 40.5%), less in Tier 2 Villages (17% down to 16.5%), roughly the same in Tier 3 and 4, and less in strategic sites/ urban extensions (29.6% down to 28%); and these minor differences are largely based on the emerging evidence base in respect of site deliverability.

Figure 6.1 – Proposed Spatial Strategy and Proportion of Housing Delivery

Spatial Housing Strategy 2018 - 2039		Indicative minimum dwelling numbers 2018-2039 <sup>a</sup>		
Location	Total proportion of housing delivery	Existing planning permissions and allocations	Safeguarded land	New allocations
<b>The district's rural area</b>				
<b>Tier 1 villages</b>	<b>40.5%</b>	<b>1228</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>2042</b>
Penkridge	17.8 %	529	88	1209
Codsall/Bilbrook	16.8 %	462	584	679
Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley	5.9 %	236	218	154
<b>Tier 2 villages</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>310</b>
Wombourne	8.0 %	300	280	245
Brewood	1.8 %	77	63	43
Kinver	2.6 %	136	82	44
Perton	3.7 %	226	150	0
Huntington	0.5 %	9	39	0
<b>Tier 3 villages</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>37</b>
Essington	2.3 %	235	0	0
Coven	1.1 %	66	48	0
Featherstone	1.2 %	86	35	0
Shareshill	0.0 %	3	0	0
Wheaton Aston	0.8 %	67	0	15
Pattingham	0.2 %	7	17	0
Swindon	0.3 %	9	0	22
<b>Tier 4 villages</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>43*</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Growth in other rural locations and Tier 5 settlements</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>258*</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Areas adjacent to neighbouring towns and cities</b>				
Employment-led growth at Land at Cross Green (Brewood and Coven Ward)	11.7%	0	0	1,200
Northern edge of the Black Country at Land north of Linthouse Lane (Essington Ward)	11.7%	0	0	1,200

Western edge of the Black Country at Land at Langley Road (Wombourne North and Lower Penn Ward)	3.8%	0	0	390
South of Stafford at Land at Weeping Cross (Penkridge North East and Acton Trussell Ward) (A34 corridor)	0.8%	0	0	81
<b>Other sources of supply</b>				
Windfall development on small sites	5.8%	600	0	0

6.3. We welcome the fact that Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley is now proposed for a slight increase in growth, rising from 5.8% to 5.9%, reflecting its status as one of the highest performing settlements in sustainability terms.

6.4. However, it is our strong view that Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley is still underrepresented compared to the other Tier 1 Villages, as it only receives approximately 1/3 of the growth of the other two tier 1 villages of Codsall/ Bilbrook and Penkridge and even less growth than Wombourne in Tier 2. This position is simply not justified in the evidence base, as the updated 2021 Rural Services and Facilities Audit reconfirms its status as a Tier 1 Village, with Appendix 5 scoring it identically to the other two Tier 1 settlements on 7 of 8 criteria, with it only being marked down slightly on the provision of retail facilities, with the overall conclusion for the Tier 1 Villages being:

*“These settlements typically have food stores, a wider range of services and facilities than other villages, a range of education establishments, access to a train station and good access to employment and wider facilities outside the village via public transport. Codsall/Bilbrook and Penkridge in particular have better retail access, with large village centres within the respective settlements.”*

6.5. This lack of proposed growth must also be considered against a backdrop of comparatively limited historic growth in Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay. The table above illustrates this, with the settlements having capacity for just 454 dwellings in existing commitments/ allocations/ safeguarded land, equating to 5.0% of the total currently suggested housing requirement, which is lower than Penkridge (617 / 6.7%), Codsall/ Bilbrook (1,046 / 11.5%) and Wombourne (580 / 6.3%).

6.6. To be clear, we are not suggesting that any of these other settlements necessarily have an overprovision or that any of their allocations should be removed; however we are simply using this as a relative tool to demonstrate under provision in Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley, and that this should be a focus for further allocations to meet the uplifted requirements advocated in the previous section.

6.7. Accordingly, if the Council are required to identify additional land for development through the examination process, Miller urge them to consider further or enlarged allocations within Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley; with specific reference to further land at the Holly Lane site (Development Options 2 and 3), which are considered wholly available, suitable and deliverable for development.

## Safeguarded Land

- 6.8. Miller also raise concerns around the absence of safeguarded land in the current plan. The NPPF is clear in paragraphs 137 and 140 that Green Belts should have a degree of permanence and should endure beyond the plan period. Paragraph 143 suggests that this can be achieved by identifying areas of safeguarded land to be released from the Green Belt to meet longer term needs, but not to be allocated until a further update/ review of the plan which requires this. This ensures that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered further at the end of the plan period.
- 6.9. We entirely endorse the Council's acceptance exceptional circumstances exist to release land from the Green Belt in South Staffordshire and it follows that safeguarded land should also be identified in line with the NPPF.
- 6.10. Indeed, South Staffordshire have taken this approach in their previous 2 Local Plans with the 1996 Local Plan safeguarding land which was ultimately identified in the 2012 Core Strategy (policy GB2) and 2018 Site Allocations (policy SAD2), with further safeguarded land identified in policy SAD3; which is proposed for release in the current review.
- 6.11. Therefore, it would seem prudent and entirely logical to continue with this strategy, and if anything to increase the quantum of safeguarded land to a more meaningful level (the NPPF suggests a full plan period's worth, i.e. 15 years) such that boundaries can endure for longer and further Green Belt release is not required in the next Local Plan Review.
- 6.12. Based on our assessments in the previous section, 15 years' worth of safeguarded land could equate to between 3,645 (based on the standard method) to over 10,000 if a high proportion of unmet need is accounted for.
- 6.13. We also note in the previous section that safeguarded land can also be used to provide flexibility to the current plan period supply, by allowing its early release or any early Local Plan review if housing delivery slips below a certain level (i.e. performance against the housing delivery test or five year supply calculation to be captured in the monitoring framework).
- 6.14. By way of example, West Lancashire have an adopted policy covering this issue from Local Plan (October 2013) at policies GN2 – Safeguarded Land and RS6 – A 'Plan B' for Housing Delivery. We would urge that South Staffordshire consider similar mechanisms here.
- 6.15. It is our view that if it is not allocated for development that the wider Holly Lane site should be considered for safeguarding to provide a later phase to the current allocation and wider northern parcel site to the west of the railway line.
- 6.16. Accordingly, Policy DS5 is not fully justified or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

## 7. Relevant Development Management Policies & Monitoring (Chapters 7–15)

- 7.1. This section provides commentary on the relevant development management policies detailed within chapters 6–14 within the Publication Plan and builds upon similar comments raised to the Preferred Options in 2021.

### Site Allocations

#### SA5 – Housing Allocations

- 7.2. The policy sets out the housing allocations to be delivered to meet the district's housing target up to 2039. As detailed throughout these representations part of the Holly Lane site is allocated under reference 536a, with a minimum capacity of 84 dwellings.
- 7.3. A detailed site specific assessment of the proposed allocation is included within section 3 of this statement. A further assessment of the benefits of a wider allocation are included within section 4.
- 7.4. These sections conclude that policy SA5 is sound in respect of its inclusion of allocation 536a, given this has been demonstrated to be deliverable; and could be amended further as suggested to include some or all of the wider site if additional land is required to meet the plans' needs.

### Delivering the Right Homes (Chapter 7)

#### HC1 – Housing Mix

- 7.5. The policy states that all developments should provide a mixture of property sizes, types and tenures to meet the needs of different groups in the community, and goes on to set the following stipulations:
- For major residential developments, in terms of market housing 70% of properties are to have 3 bedrooms or less, with specific breakdown to be determined on a sit by site basis with reference to the latest HMA.
  - For major residential developments, in terms of affordable housing, a specific breakdown will be determined with reference to the latest HMA and other affordable housing needs evidence.
  - Developments that fail to make an efficient use of land by providing a disproportionate amount of large, 4+ bedroom homes will be refused.
- 7.6. This policy is inappropriate as currently drafted. Housing mix is best determined on a site-by-site basis, taking account of site-specific characteristics and local demand in the area. The requirement for 70% of properties to be 3 bedroom or less is overly prescriptive in nature and does not allow for a flexible approach.
- 7.7. Whilst it is understood that the crux of this policy is to maximise densities and the efficient use of land, there will be instances where sites are looking to provide an executive housing

offer which requires larger properties. The policy effectively precludes such developments, by stating proposals will be refused that have a disproportionate amount of 4+ bedroom homes. There needs to be a balance.

- 7.8. The most suitable and appropriate manner to assess housing mix requirements is by determination of the market at the time of submission of a planning application, rather than at the point of adoption of the local plan. Overly prescriptive housing mix standards can often lead to deliverability and viability issues.
- 7.9. A flexible approach should be taken regarding housing mix, which recognises that needs and demand will vary from area to area and site to site. A flexible approach will also help to ensure that housing schemes are viable and appropriate for the local market.
- 7.10. As such, the reference to the 70% threshold for 3 bedrooms or less needs to be removed as should the reference to disproportionate amount of large homes.
- 7.11. The policy is not justified or effective as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

### **HC2 – Housing Density**

- 7.12. This policy seeks the efficient use of land, and a minimum net density of 35 dwellings per net developable hectare on developments within or adjoining Tier 1 settlement, in infill locations with the development boundaries of other settlements, or in urban extensions to neighbouring towns and cities.
- 7.13. It also supports lower densities in certain circumstances and on a site-by-site basis in areas not covered by the 35dph standard.
- 7.14. The efficient use of land as per paragraph 125 of the NPPF is entirely appropriate, as is some flexibility in the standards in certain locations; however the policy still sets a blanket housing density target across the majority of the district, which needs to be relaxed to allow greater flexibility to allow developers to take account of local evidence in relation to market aspirations, deliverability, viability and accessibility.
- 7.15. The policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

### **HC3 – Affordable Housing**

- 7.16. This policy requires major residential developments to provide 30% affordable housing, broken down using the ratio of 50% social rent, 25% shared ownership and 25% first homes.
- 7.17. The HBF's comments on this policy note how the Council's Viability Study (2022) clearly highlights the challenges in delivering the 30% affordable housing requirement, and that without higher sales values many sites may not be viable.
- 7.18. Paragraph 34 of the NPPF is clear that development of affordable housing policies must take account viability and deliverability as well as need; as it is unrealistic to negotiate every site on a one-by-one basis because the base-line policy aspiration is set too high, as this will lead to delays in delivery. Such delays and issues could be reduced by taking a variable approach to affordable provision based on the evidence provided in their Viability Study.





- 7.19. The breakdown in terms of tenure broadly aligns with national policy, although should include flexibility to adapt to the latest evidence of need and any future changes to the tenure definitions and requirements of national policy (noting change from Starter Homes to First Homes in recent years). It may also be beneficial for the Shared Ownership definition to be broadened out into other forms of affordable home ownership in line with the NPPF to provide further flexibility.
- 7.20. Finally, the frequent reference to further guidance being provided by the Affordable Housing SPD is noted. The SPD should do no more than clarify the Local Plan policy, and it is suggested that if the requirements for implementing the policy are known to need explanation now, then these should either be included within the Plan now or set out within the explanatory text. The SPD is not the appropriate vehicle for setting new policy and or burdens on delivery which may not have been included in the Plan's Viability Study, and the Plan should provide clarity at the point of adoption as to what it requires.
- 7.21. This policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

#### **HC4 – Homes for Older People**

- 7.22. This policy requires developments to contribute to meeting the needs of older people and other groups with specialist requirements, through the provision of bungalows, other age restricted single storey accommodation, sheltered / retirement living, and extra care / housing with care and other supported living to be provided as part of the wider mix on site, within both the market and affordable sectors, with the specific mix further guided by the council's latest Housing Market Assessment, local housing need surveys and the Housing Register.
- 7.23. It also states that all (so 100%) of market and affordable homes will be required to meet the Building Regulations Standard Part M4(2), which has increased from 30% in the 2021 Preferred Options.
- 7.24. It is important to note that these technical standards are optional and need to be justified as per the PPG<sup>9</sup>, which outlines the range of factors which local planning authorities need to take into account when considering whether to apply such standards:
- The likely future need for housing for older and disabled people (including wheelchair user dwellings).
  - Size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed to meet specifically evidenced needs (for example retirement homes, sheltered homes or care homes).
  - The accessibility and adaptability of existing housing stock.
  - How needs vary across different housing tenures.
  - The overall impact on viability.

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<sup>9</sup> Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 56-007-20150327



7.25. Whilst we note the October 2021 Viability Assessment (prepared by Dixon Searle Partnership) has factored in 30% provision into site viability costings, we have not assessed the methodology or conclusions in detail and no further calculations provided within the 2022 Viability Study. Furthermore, the evidence base has not yet been provided to demonstrate a clear and demonstrable need for 100% provision of these optional technical standards.

7.26. This policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and requires further evidence, otherwise it should be amended as suggested.

#### **HC5 – Specialist Housing Schemes**

7.27. This policy confirms that there will strong support for proposals for specialist housing of all tenures, in the form of age-restricted accommodation, retirement homes, sheltered and/or extra-care housing, nursing/residential homes or other forms of supported living, subject to sustainability, access and design criteria.

7.28. As noted in section 3, Miller have been asked to accommodate an element of specialist elderly accommodation into the proposed allocation at Holly Lane, Landywood (Site 536a) and will work alongside the Council and specialist providers to deliver this within the allocation, in accordance with local need, with reference to our comments on the associated evidence base.

7.29. We do not question the soundness of this policy, subject to our comments above and within section 3, but reserve the right to interrogate the evidence base further at EiP stage.

#### **HC8 – Self & Custom Build Housing**

7.30. Miller welcome this policies overall aspiration to support self-build and custom housing schemes, and to work positively with developers, Registered Providers, self and custom build associations and other community groups to meet the demand from the self-build register.

7.31. However the second and third paragraphs suggest that major developments will be required to provide for self-builders, and may also be required to provide design codes to support delivery of these plots, and to market such plots for a 12 month period before they can be brought forward as standard homes.

7.32. We do not consider a blanket approach to all large sites with the associated restrictions noted above to be appropriate, as this is likely to have significant negative impacts on delivery and viability for both regular housing and self-builds; particularly for volume housebuilders who will be bringing the majority of large sites forward, as their approach is not always compatible with self-building. We would therefore ask that this requirement is removed.

7.33. Instead, the Council should look to allocate sites specifically for self and custom-build housing, in and negotiation with landowners; supported by a more flexible policy that supports self-build on a site by site basis where there is a demand and appetite for it, and in line with relevant design parameters and other policies.

7.34. This policy is not justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.



## Design and Space Standards (Chapter 8)

### HC10 – Design Requirements

- 7.35. The policy sets out a range of design requirements which largely reflect the sentiments of the 2021 NPPF and its renewed emphasis on design, although Miller do raise issues with the following criteria:
- Criteria a – this criteria and wider policy largely relies on detail within latest South Staffordshire Design Guide SPD and relevant national and local design guides etc.; however these documents cannot be given full weight as they have not been subject to examination and are not part of the Local Plan. As such any detail from these documents which is intended to guide the determination of applications for planning permission should be set clearly within this Local Plan policy, to ensure that it is effective in line with the NPPF test.
  - Criteria c – tree lined streets – this should be refined to reflect footnote 50 of the NPPF which states streets should be tree-lined: ‘unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate’, and to note that such an approach is subject to highway authority agreement.
  - Criteria l – simply duplicates policy HC1 and is therefore unnecessary and could be removed.
- 7.36. The policy is not effective or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

### HC11 – Protecting Amenity

- 7.37. This policy requires all developments to account for the amenity of nearby residents in respect of to privacy, security, noise and disturbance, pollution (including light pollution), odours and daylight.
- 7.38. Miller are supportive of this policy and have no specific comments.

### HC12 – Space about Dwellings and Internal Space Standards

- 7.39. The policy requires all new residential developments to meet or exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS), and also provides prescriptive external space requirements. In general terms, it is our view that this policy should be more flexible on both internal and external standards to account for specific circumstances on sites that might support smaller units; and to acknowledge that well-designed dwellings below NDSS can still provide good, functional homes.
- 7.40. In terms of NDSS specifically, The PPG is clear that these are optional, not mandatory, standards and that their application needs to be justified with evidence of need, viability and timing.
- 7.41. At this stage, the Council have not prepared the evidence base necessary to support the introduction of these standards. Indeed, the Council’s Viability Study 2022 only tests five average house type sizes, rather than testing the 16 NDSS compliant house typologies. There is no evidence to demonstrate that testing only a limited number of average sized dwellings

would meet all the technical requirements of the NDSS. This is not a robust approach to assessing the impact of NDSS on viability. This issue was flagged by the HBF at the Preferred Options stage in 2021 but has not yet been addressed, and should be accounted for within the process.

- 7.42. We also highlight the HBFs confirmation that there is a direct link between unit size, cost per sqm and affordability. The policy approach needs to recognise that customers have different budgets and aspirations. An inflexible policy approach to NDSS for all new dwellings will impact on affordability and affect customer choice. An inflexible approach which imposes NDSS on all housing removes the most affordable homes and denies lower income households being able to afford homeownership.
- 7.43. In terms of external space standards, these are broadly aligned with those adopted 2012 Core Strategy (Appendix 6), with a 3 square metre increase for dwellings with 2 bedrooms or less:
- 45 square metres for dwellings with 2 or less bedrooms;
  - 65 square metres for dwellings with 3 and 4 bedrooms;
  - 100 square metres for dwellings with 5 or more bedrooms;
  - 10 square metres per unit for flats/apartments provided in shared amenity areas.
- 7.44. We object to this prescriptive approach, which does not allow for flexibility in design on a site-by-site basis, where creative design solutions may be required to address other issues such as privacy, lighting etc, which fall short in achieving such prescriptive standards.
- 7.45. Indeed, there has been an evident move in recent years away from blanket, prescriptive standards towards innovative, design-led solutions (as seen in the Manual for Streets guidance). A greater emphasis has also been placed on design in the 2021 NPPF. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF notes how authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.
- 7.46. Notably, the National Design Code outlines how in more urban areas there may be a need for more lighting and shorter privacy distances might be acceptable, while in suburban areas lighting might be more minimal and privacy distance might be greater<sup>10</sup>. This clearly emphasises a more localised, nuanced site-by-site approach to design and residential standards, as opposed to a standardised, district-wide approach currently suggested. Such flexibility, as advocated in the National Design Code, also allows for a suitable degree of variety and in turn the delivery of beautiful places.
- 7.47. Therefore the current approach to maintain prescriptive, top-down standards is not appropriate and at a minimum should include amendments to the wording noting 'where possible' and 'where feasible' should be added into the policy.
- 7.48. To conclude, the blanket introduction of space standards has the potential to generate viability, delivery and affordability issue; which is why the PPG requires a strong evidence base to justify their application. This evidence base has not been provided at this stage.

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<sup>10</sup> Page 28, Part 1 the Coding Process National Model Design Code (June 2021)

- 7.49. As such, the policy is neither justified nor consistent with national policy, and should be amended as suggested unless further evidence is provided.

### **HC13 – Parking Standards**

- 7.50. The policy sets out parking standards and recognises that these are ‘recommended’ rather than maximum standards in line with the NPPF, which Miller support.
- 7.51. In respect of electric vehicle charging, this requires one 7kW (or better) charging point per dwelling. The Council should note that this requirement is already enshrined within Part S of the Building Regulations which took effect in June 2022; so does not need to be duplicated in the Local Plan.
- 7.52. If the policy is to be retained, it should accurately reflect the national Building Regulations standard which states that the total number of charging points must be equal to the number of parking spaces if there are fewer parking spaces than dwellings, or equal to the number of dwellings where there are more parking spaces.
- 7.53. The Council will also need to keep monitoring viability implications here, as the 2022 Viability Study recognises that the cost of providing charging points has increased significantly since 2021, with costs of £895 per dwelling (houses) and £1,961 per dwelling (flats) factored in (previously the 2021 plan had assumed £500 per dwelling, representing an 80% increase in a year). These are based on findings from a government impact assessment, but it is unclear when this was published, and the situation will need to be reviewed again through the to accurately reflect EV charging costs and any associated costs of upgrading the network.
- 7.54. The policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

## **Promoting Successful and Sustainable Communities (Chapter 9)**

### **HC14 – Health Infrastructure**

- 7.55. This policy refers to proposed developments causing ‘unacceptable impact’ on existing healthcare facilities but fails to define what level of impact is deemed unacceptable or how that is to be measured. The policy should acknowledge that not all residents of a development will be new to a catchment area of the relevant NHS Trust and that many will indeed be registered with local health care providers, thereby not creating any additional impacts.
- 7.56. Careful analysis is required in respect of the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate new patients, before reaching a conclusion as to what any CIL compliant financial contribution might be, and the requirement for CIL compliance of any request should be specified within the policy for clarity.
- 7.57. The policy is not justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above unless further evidence provided.



### **HC15 – Education**

- 7.58. The policy makes a blanket assumption that new education infrastructure will be required from all new development. However, any such provision to be delivered via S106 legal agreement, must have regard to the tests within CIL Regulation 122 and the policy should make this explicit. Furthermore, the policy should also recognise that new infrastructure will only be required from new development where it can be demonstrated that existing capacity to accommodate growth does not currently exist.
- 7.59. The policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

### **HC17 – Open Space**

- 7.60. This policy sets out open space standards for new residential development, requiring 0.006 Ha of multi-functional publicly accessible open space per dwelling, excluding smaller incidental areas that do not have a clear recreational purpose. We raise no issue with this overall approach, and welcome the recognition that open space can serve multiple functions, however the policy then notes that on-site open space should also include equipped high quality play provision as a default unless an alternative play provision strategy is agreed with the council.
- 7.61. The policy should acknowledge that the type of open space provision, including formal play equipment, should be considered on a site by site basis and take account of on-site circumstances and existing provision in the wider area (for example, play equipment may not work within the wider open space strategy on an individual site and may not be required if there is an existing play area nearby).
- 7.62. The policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

### **HC18 – Sports Facilities and Playing Pitches**

- 7.63. The policy details how major residential development will be required to make a contribution towards sports facilities and playing pitches which will be secured through a S106 agreement and informed by the latest Sport Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies.
- 7.64. Miller have no specific comments on Policy HC18, other than to reiterate our comments in section 4, that the wider Holly Lane site has the potential to provide recreation facilities, including onsite sports/playing pitch provision which would be fully accessible to future residents and the wider community.
- 7.65. We raise no issues of soundness with this policy subject to comments above.

### **HC19 – Green Infrastructure**

- 7.66. This policy seeks to maximise on-site green infrastructure. Where suitable opportunities exist, taking into account local circumstances and priorities, development must demonstrate it has sought to strengthen and promote connectivity with the existing green infrastructure network by:

- Providing interlinked multifunctional publicly accessible open space within new development schemes including public open spaces, attractive cycle and walkways, street trees, green roofs and walls, pocket parks, allotments, play areas and new wetland habitats.
- Identifying and strengthening potential linkages with green and blue spaces within adjoining developed areas to promote interconnected urban green infrastructure.
- Connecting together and enriching biodiversity and wildlife habitats.
- Strengthening green linkages with the wider countryside and major areas of open space such as country parks.

7.67. Miller are committed to the delivery high-quality green infrastructure within their schemes. The only point we wish to reiterate from the comments on Policy HC10 above is that the reference to a requirement for all developments to incorporate tree lined street should be refined to reflect the NPPF.

7.68. As such, the policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

## **Community services, facilities and infrastructure (Chapter 11)**

### **Policy EC11 – Infrastructure**

7.69. This policy confirms that all developments will be required to deliver or contribute towards necessary supporting infrastructure with reference to the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

7.70. We fully support this aspiration, and reiterate the infrastructure opportunities offered by the Miller site at Holly Lane, both in terms of the drop-off parking area for the school proposed within allocation 536a (as set out in section 3), and further opportunities offered by the wider site were this to be identified for development in terms of an enlarged drop off area and recreation uses (as set out in section 4).

7.71. We would also stress the importance that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan is up to date at the time of examination to ensure that the viability implications of the proposed strategic infrastructure have been fully accounted for in the plan, given current rates of inflation, particularly in respect of construction costs.

7.72. We raise no issues of soundness with this policy subject to comments above.

## **The Natural and Built Environment (Chapter 12)**

### **NB1 – Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets**

7.73. The policy seeks to support proposals which protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment. When determining planning applications, the council will apply the principles relevant to habitats and species protection as set out in national legislation and policy. This includes impacts on internationally, nationally and locally designated sites.

7.74. Miller support this policy and have no comments to make at this time.

#### **NB2 – Biodiversity**

7.75. This policy states that all new development will contribute a measurable net biodiversity gain, with a threshold of 10% for major developments, and that applicants will be expected to submit a Biodiversity Baseline Assessment with the calculation to be based on Defra’s biodiversity metric.

7.76. Following the passing of the 2021 Environmental Bill, BNG is expected to become a mandatory requirement in an as yet unconfirmed date in late 2023. As such, we wish to emphasise the importance of the policy requirements being drafted in line with the requirements of the Environmental Bill in respect of net gain.

7.77. Miller are committed do maximising environmental gains, but suggest a flexible approach to the delivery of the BNG within sites. In a comparable manner to open space discussed above, a pragmatic approach to BNG should be taken where improvements to biodiversity can be delivered in conjunction with open space provision, so as not to put unreasonable pressure on developable area and associated viability on sites.

7.78. The policy is not unsound but could be improved with the amendments suggested above.

#### **NB3 – Cannock Chase SAC**

7.79. The policy states development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal, either directly or in combination with other plans or projects, will not be likely to lead to an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The effective avoidance of, and/or mitigation for, any identified adverse effects on the Cannock Chase SAC must be demonstrated to the council and Natural England and secured prior to the council giving approval for development.

7.80. It is noted that the principal legislative framework surrounding SAC’s remains unaltered. The principle of requiring mitigation to address the likely adverse effects of residential development remains valid, and therefore this policy largely duplicates national policy in this regard.

7.81. We welcome confirmation that the previously suggested approach of offsite Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs), is not being pursued at this time.

7.82. We raise no issues of soundness with this policy.

#### **NB4 – Landscape Character**

7.83. The policy seeks to maintain/enhance the rural character and local distinctiveness of the landscape. This includes considerations of the County Council Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Characterisation in assessing their impacts upon landscape character. Trees, woodland, and hedgerows should be protected and retained, with any new/replacement planting maximising biodiversity. Guidance is also offered in relation to proposals impacts on Historic Landscape Areas and the Cannock Chase Area AONB.

7.84. We raise no issues of soundness with this policy.

## Climate Change and Sustainable Development (Chapter 13)

### NB6 – Energy and water efficiency, energy and heat hierarchies and renewable energy in new development

- 7.85. It is stated that all major residential development must:
- A minimum 63% reduction in carbon emissions is achieved for each dwelling by on-site measures compared to the relevant baseline rates set by Building Regulations Part L 2021. In achieving this, each dwelling must demonstrate at least a 10% improvement on the Part L 2021 Target for Fabric Energy Efficiency and must not include fossil fuel-based heating systems or be connected to the gas grid.
  - Once minimum improvements in fabric efficiency and carbon reduction in (a) are delivered, additional on-site renewable energy generation must be provided, or connections made to on or near site renewable/low-carbon community energy generation and storage networks.
  - For major developments, any remaining residual regulated carbon emissions which demonstrably cannot be addressed via on or near site, renewable technologies must be offset. Offsetting will only be considered an acceptable alternative to renewable energy generation in meeting net zero carbon requirements if it can be demonstrated that the necessary emission reductions achieved via renewable energy generation are demonstrably unfeasible.
  - All residential schemes' energy statements must also show compliance with a water efficiency standard of 110 litres/person/day. Water reuse and recycling and rainwater harvesting should be incorporated wherever feasible to reduce demand on mains water supply, subject to viability.
- 7.86. The PPG notes how local planning authorities can set energy performance standards for new housing or the adaptation of buildings to provide dwellings, that are higher than the building regulations, but only up to the equivalent of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 7.87. However, this policy approach is unnecessary and repetitious of the 2021 Part L Interim Uplift. The Government intends to set standards for energy efficiency through the Building Regulations process. As noted by the HBF, the key to success is standardisation and avoidance of individual Council's specifying their own policy approach to energy efficiency, which undermines economies of scale for suppliers and developers. Variations in regulations also provides developers with less certainty in terms of what is required of them. 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 the 2021 Part L Interim Uplift and proposals for the 2025 Future Homes Standard.
- 7.88. It is noted that Inspectors examining the Salt Cross DPD in West Oxfordshire have raised concerned over a requirement for development to demonstrate net zero operational carbon on-site through ultra-low energy fabric specification, low carbon technologies and on-site renewable energy generation. The Inspectors have proposed instead that development will be required to demonstrate an ambitious approach to the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new

buildings. Whilst the justification for this amendment is awaited, the difference between national and local requirements has clearly been held to be unsound.

- 7.89. We note that the 2021 Viability Assessment does take account of the 31% carbon reduction over current Building Regulation requirements. The 2022 Viability Study assumes costs of achieving carbon reduction measures based on experience elsewhere in the region of 4.73% for flats and 7% for houses. There are concerns with these figures as no detailed workings are provided to support these percentage costs.
- 7.90. In respect of water efficiency standards, again there are optional and not mandatory requirements. The PPG notes how all new homes already have to meet the mandatory national standard set out in the Building Regulations (of 125 litres/person/day). Where there is a clear local need, local planning authorities can set out Local Plan policies requiring new dwellings to meet the tighter Building Regulations optional requirement of 110 litres/person/day.
- 7.91. As set out in the NPPF<sup>11</sup>, all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence, which should be adequate, proportionate and focussed tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned. Therefore, a policy requirement for the optional water efficiency standard must be justified by credible and robust evidence. If the Council wishes to adopt the optional standard for water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day, then the Council should justify doing so by applying the criteria set out in the PPG. PPG<sup>12</sup> states that where there is a 'clear local need, Local Planning Authorities (LPA) can set out Local Plan Policies requiring new dwellings to meet tighter Building Regulations optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day'. PPG<sup>13</sup> also states the 'it will be for a LPA to establish a clear need based on existing sources of evidence, consultations with the local water and sewerage company, the Environment Agency and catchment partnerships and consideration of the impact on viability and housing supply of such a requirement'. The Housing Standards Review was explicit that reduced water consumption was solely applicable to water stressed areas.
- 7.92. A case for clear need to introduce these optional water efficiency standards has yet to be provided. Indeed, we note that The Water Cycle Study (2020) identifies the Severn Trent Water and South Staffordshire Water supply regions as areas of only moderate water stress. Therefore, this policy is unsound until this information has been provided, as there must be a clear and robust evidence base to support this.
- 7.93. Accordingly, the policy is not justified or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above, unless further evidence is provided.

## **Enhancing the Historic Environment (Chapter 14)**

### **NB8 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment and Heritage Assets**

- 7.94. The policy details how the historic environment will be conserved and enhanced, and heritage assets will be protected in a manner appropriate to their significance. Proposals are expected to preserve or enhance the character, appearance and function of heritage assets and their

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<sup>11</sup> NPPF Paragraph 31

<sup>12</sup> ID: 56-015-20150327

<sup>13</sup> ID: 56-015-20150327





settings and respect the significance of the historic environment. Development proposals which would cause harm to the significance of a heritage asset, or its setting, will not be permitted without a clear justification in accordance with legislation and national policy.

- 7.95. We have no specific comments on Policy NB8, as it largely reflects and duplicates national heritage policy and legislation, and would refer to our comments in section 4 in respect of localised heritage issues around the Holly Lane site.

## **Monitoring (Chapter 15)**

- 7.96. We agree that the principle mechanism for monitoring the plan should be the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and would stress that these are updated in a timely and consistent format each year to allow effective monitoring and the ability to notice trends in certain areas, such as housing delivery (as if the format changes each year it is difficult to track if delivery is improving or deteriorating etc).
- 7.97. We do not make any detailed comments on the proposed monitoring framework in Appendix J other than to note it only addresses the strategic objectives of the plan and their associated key policies. We presume this covers all strategic policies, but this is not made clear, and therefore it would be useful to confirm in this section (or the list of policies at the beginning) those which are subject to monitoring and those which aren't.
- 7.98. We reserve the right to make further comments on this at the EiP.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1. These representations welcome and support the decision of the Council to allocate part of Miller's landholding at Holly Lane Landywood for housing development in the Regulation 19 Publication Local Plan (**Site 536a / Development Option 1 – 3.95 Ha**), demonstrating that it is a sustainable location for development, within in one of the district's top tier settlements. Indeed, it offers excellent access to existing schools, shops and surrounding urban areas via Landywood Train Station. The Holly Lane site also benefits from an excellent location in relation to bus services, particularly the X51 service which provides direct access in to Birmingham City Centre.
- 8.2. Whilst we do not contest that the plan has not been positively prepared, we also consider there to be justification to extend the allocation further to accommodate the parcel to the west (**Development Option 2 – 5.9 Ha**) as this increase in scale can offer additional benefits in terms of open space, increased specialist elderly accommodation and drop off parking for the school; with negligible additional impacts, given that the characteristics and technical issues on the two parcels are identical, with the exception of heritage, which we have demonstrated can be addressed.
- 8.3. Furthermore, we reiterate our previous position that the full 23 Ha site south of Holly Lane (**Development Option 3**) is available, suitable and deliverable and would form a logical and sensitive extension to Great Wyrley, should further housing sites be required through the examination and Main Modifications process. Due to its scale, the wider site offers scope to provide further benefits alongside additional housing, including additional facilities for the adjacent school, and an increased and more integrated open space network to benefit future residents and the existing community. This will also help to mitigate any impacts on the Cannock Chase Conservation Area and help to relieve existing pressures.
- 8.4. Great Wyrley is a highly sustainable settlement, with its Tier 1 status fully justified, and the fact it is conjoined with another Tier 1 settlement in Cheslyn Hay, makes it an obvious location for additional growth, beyond the modest level it is ascribed in the current plan. Our previous critique of the Council's Green Belt and Landscape evidence also highlighted various methodological flaws and inconsistencies which have contributed overly negative assessment of the land around Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley.
- 8.5. In respect of housing need it is our view that whilst not unsound, the baseline housing requirement should be increased, above and beyond the standard methodology figure, given that several the circumstances that support elevated growth, as set out in the NPPG, are present in South Staffordshire, including wider economic growth strategies, committed infrastructure improvement projects, and significant unmet need in the wider area.
- 8.6. Furthermore, whilst the additional dwellings proposed to meet unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area are welcomed, the 4,000 figure itself is lacking in justification and in our view does not go far enough given the acute and chronic level of unmet need combined with the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities.
- 8.7. The plan should also consider safeguarding land for longer term needs, to align with national policy and the approach taken in previous plans, and should consider the wider Holly Lane site for safeguarding at the very least.



- 8.8. Overall, we do not contest the plans soundness and welcome the allocation of site 536a. However, for the reasons discussed in detail in these representations, we respectfully request that if the Council are required to identify additional sites through the EIP and main modifications process, they consider the full Holly Lane site for allocation, or an extension of site 536a to take in the land to the west as a combined first phase, with the wider site safeguarded, to assist meeting the district and wider region's longer term needs.



## **Appendix 1 – Indicative Masterplan for Site Allocation 536a**





## Appendix 2 – Pegasus Heritage Note



# Heritage Note

## Land South of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley, South Staffordshire.

REF: P16-1504

DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

### Introduction

1. This Heritage Note provides information relating to heritage matters at the proposed allocation of land South of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley, South Staffordshire. The land is identified as site 536a and 536b in South Staffordshire's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA). This Note primarily relates to site 536a to the west of the railway.

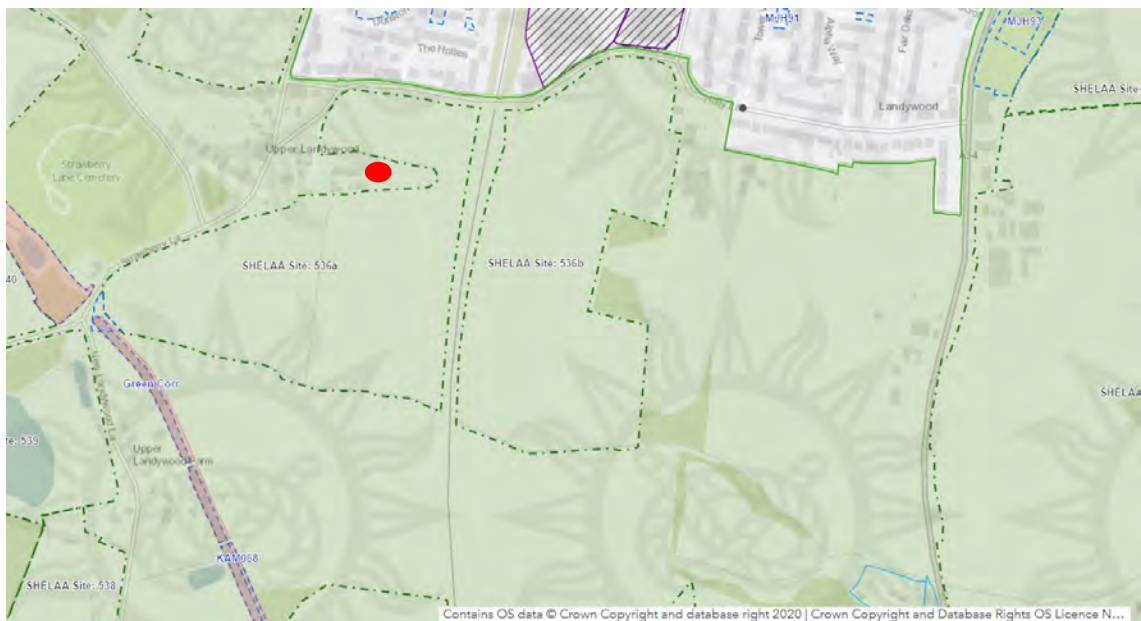


Figure 1: Site 536a and 536b. Location of Grade II Landywood Farmhouse denoted by the red dot.

2. The site contains no designated or non-designated heritage assets but is within the vicinity of the Grade II Listed Building known as Landywood Farmhouse.
3. The heritage significance of the site and its contribution that it makes to the special interest of Landywood Farmhouse has been assessed by the Local Planning Authority in the South Staffordshire Historic Environment Site Assessment 2020<sup>1</sup>. The methodology of the Assessment recognises the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Planning Practice Guide (PPG) and relevant Historic England Guidance.

<sup>1</sup> South Staffordshire Council Historic Environment Site Assessment II: Stage I Report. December 2019.

4. The Stage 1 Assessment was a desk-based assessment using spatial data sets from the Council, Historic England and the Historic Environment Record (HER), a site visit was not undertaken.
5. The analysis of the data sets was used to inform a Red, Amber Green (RAG) scoring exercise which considered the potential for both direct physical impacts upon known or unknown heritage assets, including buried archaeological remains, as well as the potential for impacts upon the setting of nationally and locally designated heritage assets.
6. The Assessment methodology classifies cultural heritage importance by the criteria used for the designation of Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings, stated as follows:

*"Our method of classifying cultural heritage importance will be guided by the classification criteria used nationally by Historic England in designating heritage assets, such as Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings which is set out in Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS 2018) and the Scheduled Monuments Policy Statement (DCMS 2013) and also the definition of significance for heritage assets that is included within the NPPF Glossary. Historic England documentation will **also be considered. This will involve consideration of the asset's cultural heritage value/significance and will include consideration of such factors as their type, age, rarity, group value, site context, historical associations (i.e. with well-known persons or historical events), quality, character and style of construction and condition.**"<sup>2</sup>*

7. The methodology states how the RAG score would be identified, with a red score assigned to site that would lead to substantial harm:

***Para 3.13: "Where it is considered that development within a proposed allocation would lead to substantial harm or total loss of significance to a designated heritage asset (including through impacts to its setting) then, in line with the NPPF, a Red RAG score will be predicted. In the case of non-designated assets a Red RAG score will be applied in instances where the predicted level of harm to the significance of the asset would constitute a major impediment to the ability to understand or appreciate the heritage asset in question by reducing or removing its information content, to the extent that the consequent harm resulted in a major reduction or total loss of its cultural heritage value. Any assessment of harm, and the consequent RAG scoring, would take account of mitigation options. Where the significance of a non-designated archaeological asset is either demonstrably of schedulable quality or there is clear evidence that this is likely to be the case, then these assets will be regarded as being of national importance."*** (our emphasis).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> South Staffordshire Council Historic Environment Site Assessment II: Stage I Report, December 2019. Paragraph 3.4

<sup>3</sup> South Staffordshire Council Historic Environment Site Assessment II: Stage I Report, December 2019. Paragraph 3.13

8. A red score is described as a **"significant effect predicted. Mitigation unlikely to be possible"**.
9. A red score is given to an indirect (setting) impact on a designated heritage asset when:

*"An indirect (setting) impact upon a designated asset is predicted that would compromise its cultural heritage value to the extent that the attributes that led to its designation, are diminished and compromised. This would involve a loss of significance that could not be resolved through mitigation."*<sup>4</sup>

10. A red score was given in the Assessment to site 536a with regard to indirect impact from allocation for development. The summary reason for the red score as given as follows:

*"Although no designated assets are located on the Site, the Grade II Listed Landywood farmhouse which has an early 16th century core, stands within 15m of the Site boundary which surrounds the Site on three sides. The Site almost certainly formed part of the farm's core landholding and its development would therefore severely impact upon the observer's ability to interpret the Listed Building's authentic rural complex. Consequently any development would need to be carefully located so as to avoid encircling the farm. Detailed assessment will be required in order to identify and protect key views both of and from the farmhouse, although it should be recognised from the outset that it is unlikely that development could be delivered within the northeastern part of this Site. No non-designated assets are recorded on the Site by the Staffordshire HER, although mitigation will be required in order to address any previously unrecorded **remains that could be present.**"*<sup>5</sup>

#### Critique of Council Assessment

11. The Assessment methodology has considered all designated heritage assets as having the same degree of heritage significance, or cultural heritage importance. This approach fails to recognise NPPF paragraph 200 which identifies assets of the highest significance being scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, grade I and II\* listed buildings and II\* registered parks and gardens and World Heritage Sites. This distinction is important in policy making and decision making as the NPPF at paragraph 199 reminds us that the more important the asset the greater the weight that should be given to its conservation, and that substantial harm or loss to these heritage assets should be wholly exceptional and only exceptional for grade II listed buildings or grade II registered parks and gardens. The only heritage asset that has the potential to be affected is a grade II listed building (Landywood Farmhouse) but the method of assessment of impact has been the same as the assessment that would

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<sup>4</sup> South Staffordshire Council Historic Environment Site Assessment II: Stage I Report, December 2019. Table 1.

<sup>5</sup> South Staffordshire Council Historic Environment Site Assessment, 2020. – Appendix 1

have been given to a Grade I listed building. This in our view is not consistent with the NPPF.

12. The Assessment methodology fails to describe the harm in terms consistent with the NPPF or the extent of harm as is required by the PPG which states that "***within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated***".
13. The Assessment states that the allocation will "***severely impact upon the observer's ability to interpret the Listed Building's authentic rural complex***". Thereby the impact is correctly recognised as being only through a change to its setting and not to the listed building itself., but setting is not itself a heritage asset nor a heritage designation<sup>6</sup> it is thereby the contribution that the site makes to the significance of Landywood Farmhouse and the impact that allocation of the site would have on that significance that is the determining factor of harm.
14. List Description for Landywood Farmhouse reads as follows:

***"Farmhouse. Early C16 core with late C19 additions and alterations. Timber framed, much replaced and added to in red brick the whole roughcast; plain tile roof; massive brick external end stack on a sandstone plinth. 2 bays of a C16 house are aligned north-south with chimney stack to the south gable; C19 extensions were added to the north and west to form a T-shaped plan. South front. C19 wing to the left: 2 storeys and gable-lit attic; bay, casements with segmental heads. Projecting gable of C16 wing to the right with contemporary stack, the upper parts rebuilt, and partially exposed timber framing in the gable of closely spaced studs and straight braces, and bracketed tie beam. In the re-entrant angle between the 2 wings is a single storey lean-to with gabled porch at its south end. Interior. Remains of 2 timber framed cross-frames with curved braces exposed collar and tie beam roof truss with raking struts and ridge piece."***

15. The List Description makes no reference to its setting or surrounds and thereby its significance is primarily derived from its physical fabric, its architectural interest. Whilst the site historically had a functional association with the listed building, being the associated farmed fields and in the same ownership<sup>7</sup> this significance is not equal to or greater than the architectural interest of the listed building itself, which is the reason for why it was listed. The site is also less significant than the contribution made by its immediate surroundings of its associated buildings and garden and treed boundary, that is consistent with that shown on 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ordnance Survey maps. It is from its immediate surrounds and curtilage where its architectural interest and its reason for listing can be best appreciated and experienced. This area does not form part of the site and would be preserved.

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<sup>6</sup> Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (2nd edition, Swindon, December 2017).

<sup>7</sup> This is confirmed by the tithe map and apportionment of 1842.



Figure 2: OS Plan 1884 showing the defined curtilage of the farmhouse and garden consistent with the current curtilage.

16. Attributing a red score, and thus substantial harm to this site is not consistent in how this level of harm has been clarified in the High Court where a judgment clarified that substantial harm would be harm that would **"have such a serious impact on the significance of the asset that its significance was either vitiated altogether or very much reduced"**<sup>8</sup>. The loss of some of its rural context or even views from or to the farmhouse resulting from the allocation of the site would not have such a serious impact on the heritage significance of Landywood Farmhouse itself to be considered as substantially harmful.
17. Despite being given a red score and where mitigation is unlikely to be possible, the summary reason for the red score does propose mitigation strategies. It recognises that development should not encircle the farm, that development be excluded from the north-eastern parcel and key views should be identified and protected. The summary thereby suggests that the impact of the allocation can in fact be mitigated to minimise harmful impact. In our view this is not consistent with the definition of a red score.
18. The extent of any harmful impact is likely to be further minimised when the extent of existing screening around the listed building is considered and the limited number vantage points to see the farmhouse and the fields together in views.

<sup>8</sup> Bedford Borough Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2013] EWHC 2847 (Admin), para. 25.

19. Any harm arising from the allocation could only be less than substantial harm, the extent of which could be lessened further or removed through mitigation. The proposed site allocation thereby cannot be assessed as substantial harm or given a red score, especially when the allocation would not result in any direct harm to the listed building.
20. The policies set out in chapter 16 of the NPPF are clear that they relate to plan-making as well as decision-making and is explicit that harm to heritage significance can be outweighed by public benefits. Compliance with the NPPF is also compliance with the statutory duty of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, this was as clarified by a Court of Appeal judgement in relation to the setting of a Listed Building. Thereby in deciding whether to allocate the site the public benefits of the allocation must also be considered. The PPG is clear that public benefits are those benefits that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 8)<sup>9</sup>.
21. When considering the site area, and especially if site 536b is also considered for allocation, which was assessed at amber, meaning that no significant effects which cannot be mitigated would arise from allocation with regard to setting, then there is an increased opportunity to mitigate against any harmful impact whilst delivering significant public benefits through layout, provision of open space, retention of views etc.

## Summary

22. The historic functional association of the site with the grade II listed building, Landywood Farmhouse does offer some contribution to the heritage significance of this designated heritage asset. However, its contribution is less than the architectural and historic interest of the building itself which was the reason for its designation, or its immediate setting and surrounds of its curtilage, which is outside of the site boundary.
23. **The method of the Council's assessment of heritage impact** is not consistent with the **Government's policies for plan-making** or decision-making as set out in the NPPF and fails to recognise that not all designated heritage assets are of the same degree of heritage significance, and that Landywood Farmhouse is a designated heritage asset of lower significance.
24. The assessment, by not fully adopting the language or considering the policies of the NPPF does not suitably reflect the different degrees of harm within heritage policy as set out in NPPF. As such this has not allowed a robust assessment of potential impact on heritage significance that can be considered to be consistent with the NPPF.
25. The scoring of the site as red, and thereby considered to substantially harmful to the significance of a grade II listed building via a change to its setting is both overstating

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<sup>9</sup> PPG paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723



the contribution of the site to the heritage significance of the building and that of the potential impact of the allocation. When the proposed allocation is considered alongside the policies of the NPPF the potential for harm could only be less than substantial, which could be mitigated by layout, screening and provision of open space to further lessen or remove harmful impact. An amber score meaning '*no significant effects which could be mitigated*' would be a more appropriate score.

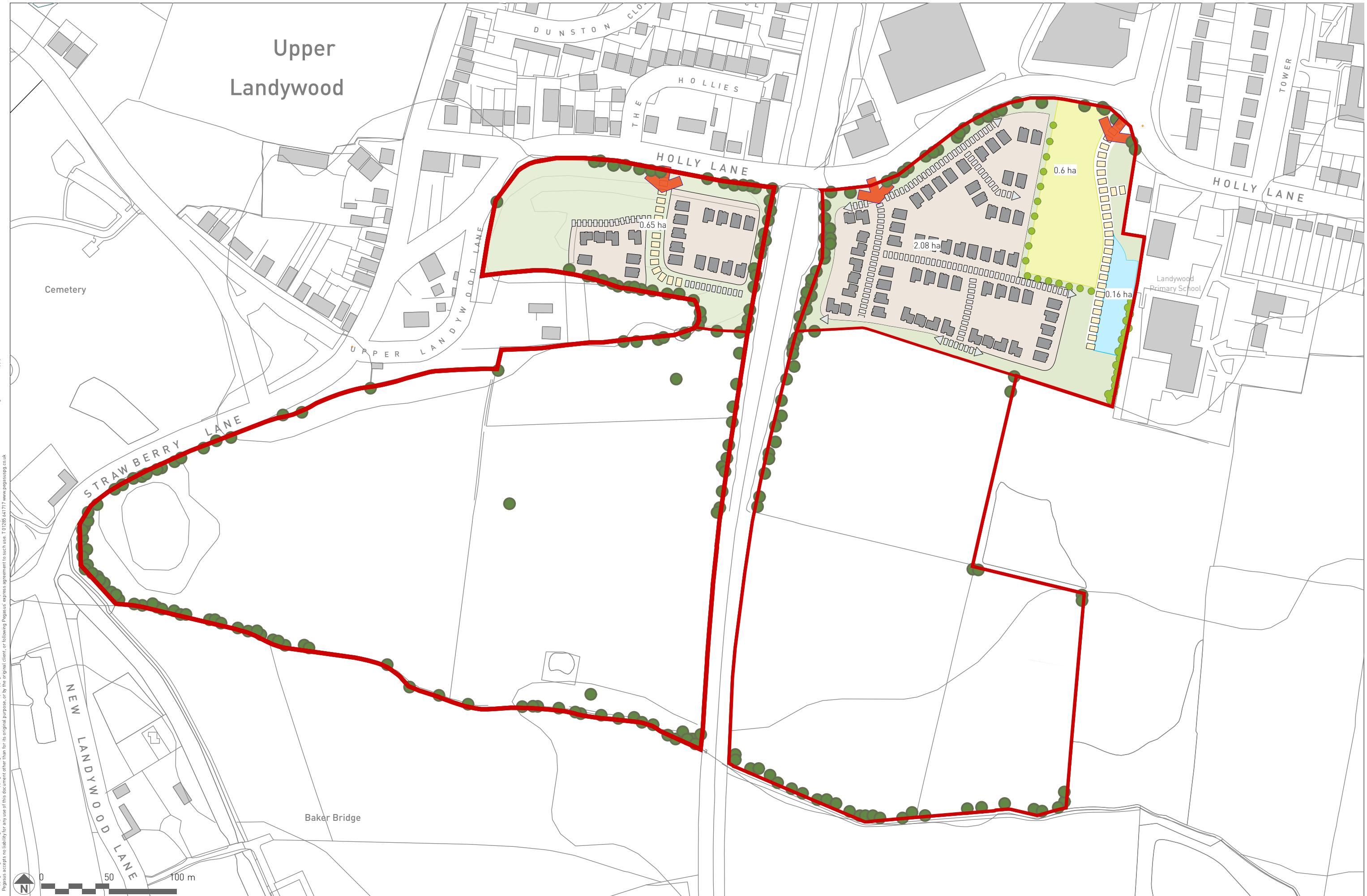
26. The allocation is also likely to bring public benefits as per paragraph 8 of the NPPF. These have not been taken into consideration as part of the scoring. Any harm would also need to be weighed against the public benefits which might outweigh the harm

Simon Britt MRTPI IHBC

Principal Built Heritage Consultant



## **Appendix 3 – Indicative Masterplan for Development Option 2**



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## Appendix 4 – Section 6 of 2019 Representations

6. LANDSCAPE, GREEN BELT & ENVIRONMENT EVIDENCE (CHAPTER 3)

6.1 This section critiques the more site specific evidence published alongside this consultation, including the 2019 Green Belt Study and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, both prepared by LUC, and other environmental constraints that are considered within the document.

South Staffordshire Green Belt Study 2019

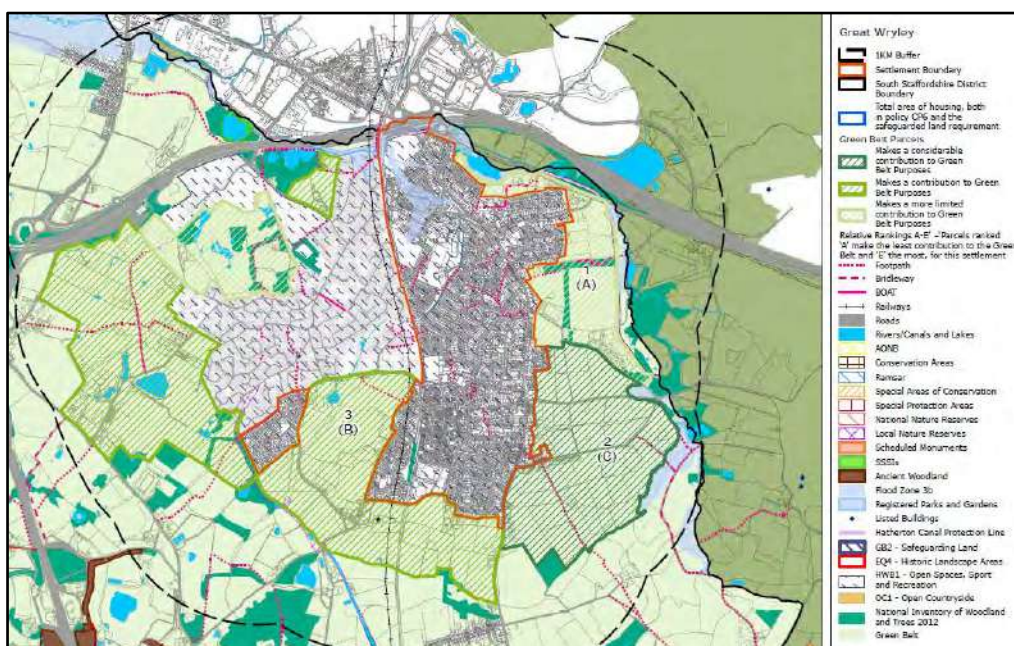
6.2 The supporting 2019 Green Belt Assessment by LUC incorporates a Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessment of various land parcels around South Staffordshire.

6.3 The Stage 1 Assessment assesses the contribution of typically large strategic Green Belt parcels against the 5 purposes of Green Belt as defined by the NPPF, whilst the Stage 2 Assessment considers sub parcels within the Stage 1 parcels and promoted sites.

6.4 Firstly, we note the approach and methodology utilised by LUC as part of the 2019 assessment is very different to the previous Green Belt assessment also carried out by LUC in 2017 for the purpose of the Site Allocations DPD. Indeed, the two assessments have resulted in very different parcel definitions and adopt a different approach altogether.

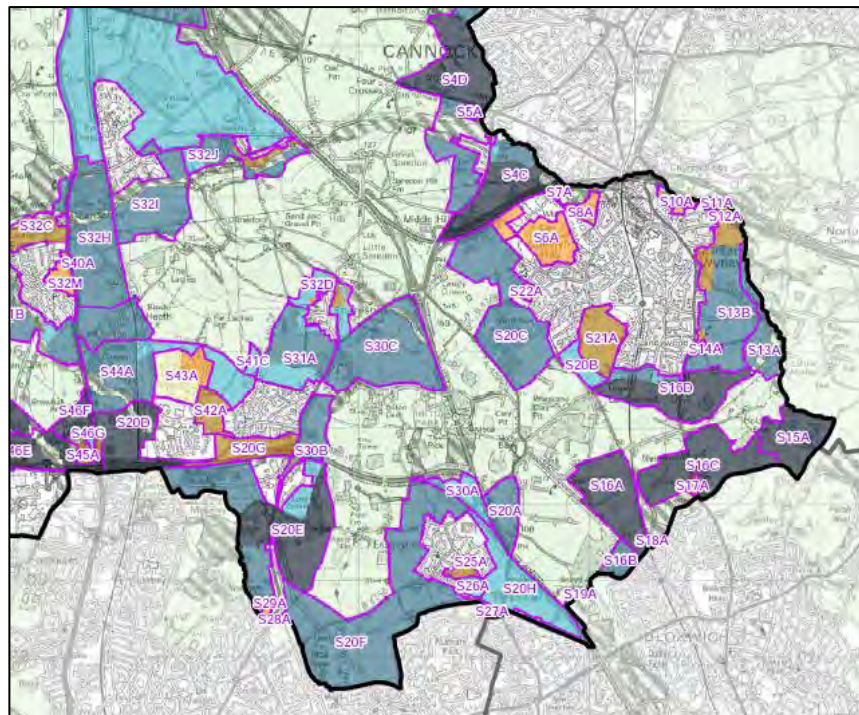
6.5 **Whilst LUC’s methodology may well have moved on, there is no suggestion in the 2019 assessment that the 2017 assessment was in some way incorrect in the conclusions that it reached. It is therefore important to note at the outset, that the 2017 LUC assessment ranked the parcel within the Wallace Land Investments site to the south of Great Wyrley as ‘making a contribution’ (mid green) to the 5 purposes of Green Belt land compared to making a ‘considerable contribution’ (dark green) or a limited contribution (light green).**

*Figure 5.1 – LUC Green Belt Study 2016*





*Figure 5.2 - LUC Green Belt Study 2019*



6.6 Whilst we do not wish to dwell on the 2017 assessment, given it seemingly will not form part of the evidence base to form the Local Plan Review, it is also worth highlighting that the site now forms part of an entirely different geographical Green Belt parcel and ranks very differently in terms of its contribution.

**Critique of LUC’s 2019 Methodology**

6.7 There are a number of issues that we wish to raise in relation to the methodology and approach adopted by LUC in the 2019 Green Belt Assessment. We set these out below in no particular order of priority.

*General Approach and Considering the Positive Role of Green Belt Land*

6.8 LUC focus on the 5 purposes of Green Belt land as part of the overall assessment, provide useful commentary on definitions in Chapter 3 of the report and then set out the methodology used to assess the contribution made towards these 5 purposes.

6.9 We agree that the primary characteristic of Green Belt land is its openness and its permanence and the fundamental aim is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open (as per paragraph 133 of the NPPF). We also agree on the 5 main purposes of Green Belt noting that these are clearly set out in the NPPF.

6.10 We accept that an assessment of Green Belt against these 5 purposes is an entirely relevant and tried and tested approach. However, we consider there to be some important omissions within the



LUC assessment when considering how one should assess the contribution made to certain purposes, which we address below under each of the purposes.

6.11 There is also a distinct lack of consideration of the different positive roles Green Belt land has to play around settlements and communities once defined. Whilst now superseded, paragraph 1.6 of PPG2 arguably provided greater clarity than its successor at paragraph 141 of the NPPF as it bulleted the **'positive role' Green Belt has 'to play in fulfilling the following objectives':**

- *to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;*
- *to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;*
- *to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;*
- *to improve damaged and derelict land around towns;*
- *to secure nature conservation interest; and*
- *to retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.*

6.12 The positive application to certain uses and objectives within paragraph 141 of the NPPF is effectively the same and states:

*'Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.'*

6.13 In the case of South Staffordshire, there is already defined Green Belt around the vast majority of **the Borough's settlements. The land within the Green Belt falls** within various different use classes including inaccessible agricultural land, accessible countryside by virtue of existing and utilised public footpaths, sports pitches, informal open space, formal open space and in certain instances, dwellings, schools and employment land. Depending on its function and form, different parcels of Green Belt land will attain differing levels of value and importance to the settlements communities they surround and certain uses, which could be associated with the health and well-being of the community by promoting physical outdoor activity from formal sport to walking, biodiversity credentials, and visual amenity and connectivity with the open countryside.

6.14 LUC may argue that such considerations will come to the fore when undertaking wider site assessments, including land use and landscape sensitivity assessment, and that they do not go to the heart of the 5 purposes of Green Belt. However, we strongly disagree.

6.15 Indeed, a good number of the above objectives go to the heart of *Purpose 1 – To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas* and *'Purpose 3 – to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment'* and therefore they will influence the ranking within these categories.

6.16 By not accounting for such issues as part of the Stage 1, Stage 2 and site-specific Green Belt appraisals, we consider there are some important considerations that have not fed into the overall scoring and assessment of certain parcels. We provide further reasoning below when addressing each of the purposes.

*Defining the Stage 1 and Stage 2 Parcels*

6.17 At paragraph 4.30 LUC state that the parcels defined as part of the Stage 1 assessment have been a result of the assessment itself rather than a product of firstly defining the parcels and then determining how each parcel contributes to the 5 Green Belt purposes.

6.18 However, we cannot see any evidence within the LUC report whereby broad areas of land have been considered in the context of the five Green Belt purposes without the parcel boundaries being in place. Indeed, each proforma, plan and table are based upon the defined parcels. Whilst these parcels do tend to follow a certain physical boundary, in many instances, those boundaries are weak and do not represent a logical Stage 1 / Strategic Parcel boundary.

6.19 **If LUC's statement at paragraph 4.30 is genuine, we would have typically expected to see schematic plans/images relating to broad areas without precise boundaries and generalised assessments associated with each of the 5 purposes that highlighted general areas.**

6.20 **The trouble with the LUC approach is that the Parcel's defined at Stage 1 do very much influence the Stage 2 and site-specific assessments, which then undermines the overall assessment of certain areas.**

6.21 Even if the parcels were then defined post the overall Stage 1 assessment, LUC would still have had to go through a process of then sub-dividing the strategic parcels up and in doing so, have still utilised physical boundaries. However, there are certain instances, where those boundaries are very weak, and therefore they do not make obvious boundaries for a Stage 2 assessment. Indeed, this would have arguably been a moot point given LUC do go onto sub-divide the Strategic Stage 1 Parcels further for the purpose of the Stage 2. However, it is at this point that we would have expected LUC to define certain parcels using more robust and obvious physical boundaries, but this is not the case because the outer extents of the Stage 1 parcels still define the extents of the sub-parcels.

6.22 Indeed, as part of the Stage 2 process, we would have expected LUC to identify a range of boundaries (perhaps of varying degrees of permeance and strength) such as railways, main roads, canals, lanes, streets, tree belts, watercourses and perhaps in certain instances field boundaries and utilised these to then reconsider the 5 purposes of Green Belt at a more refined, local and **logical scale. LUC's process is further hindered by the fact that the outer edges of the Stage 2 Parcels are effectively defined by the outer edges of the Stage 1 parcels, even if those outer edges do not follow any strong physical boundaries.**

- 6.23 The result is such that there are many instances where the Stage 2 assessment still assesses very large parcels that offer no realistic prospect for Green Belt release in their entirety. However, paragraph 139(f) of the NPPF is clear in stating that in the event that Green Belt boundaries need **to be reviewed, plans should 'define boundaries** clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent'.
- 6.24 LUC may argue that the Green Belt assessment should be undertaken independently without any eye on whether there are any exceptional circumstances to release Green Belt land or review settlement boundaries. Nevertheless, LUC would have been fully aware that South Staffordshire would be considering Green Belt release as part of the Local Plan process given the extent of the unmet need in Birmingham and the Black Country. Moreover, it would still remain prudent to assume that such circumstances might occur and therefore it is entirely relevant to assess Green Belt parcels against the 5 purposes of Green Belt by defining parcels that do adhere to this part of the NPPF.
- 6.25 LUC may then argue that they have graded different zones within the different parcels and then assess individual sites. However, their methodology and grading at Stage 1, very much influences the Stage 2 assessment and the Stage 2 assessment subsequently influences the individual site assessments (particularly bearing in mind the individual site assessments do not consider the 5 purposes of Green Belt in relation to individual characteristics of the site). Instead, the end result is partly an amalgamation of the rankings achieved under the previous Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments.
- 6.26 This all matters because the physical context of a parcel and its surroundings will have a bearing on the conclusions reached in relation to the assessment against the 5 purposes. A prime example of how the context might change is in relation to the level of existing built form within or surrounding a Green Belt parcel, which influences commentary in relation to Purposes 1, 2 and 3 in particular. Generally, a larger parcel is more likely to be described as being more open and will have proportionally less built development within it compared to the extent of open land within the parcel given openness is the key characteristic of Green Belt. However, a smaller parcel defined by stronger boundaries within the same area, might actually have a greater proportion of urbanising development within and therefore score weaker in certain categories.
- 6.27 Whilst we note parcel definition is often an area of criticism for Green Belt assessments, and we suspect that LUC have prepared this methodology to try and overcome such criticism, the overall approach does not work.
- 6.28 **Parcel S16D to the south of Landywood is a prime example of how LUC's methodology and approach** to the Stage 1 and Stage 2 parcel boundaries manifest itself in an entirely illogical assessment. It represents a sub parcel that we categorically consider would have been sub-divided further if relevant physical boundaries had been respected and acknowledged by LUC and LUC had not restricted themselves to the outer defined edges of the Stage 1 Parcel strategic assessment.

- 6.29 Half of the northern edge is logical and follows the existing, policy defined settlement edge of Landywood. Strawberry Lane also defines the parcels edge to the west and this was the western most part of Stage 1 Strategic parcel S16 in this locality. Both make sense. A good proportion of the southern edge is also defined by a watercourse, which we would accept is not the strongest possible boundary, but it also makes sense. However, when considering the extent of the parcel when travelling to the east, obvious physical boundaries for sub division have been entirely ignored.
- 6.30 Starting at the western most end of the parcel, Strawberry Lane is a semi-rural lane with residential properties located along either side, some of which fall within the parcel. Moving slightly east through the parcel is a recently redeveloped/restored Listed, large farmstead, which has been developed into apartments and also gains its access from Strawberry Lane. These properties all sit within the Green Belt, adding to its built form. Moving further east is then a railway line which has trees running along its length and powerlines/ gantries above it. These impact on the length of views across the parcel in certain directions and add to the urbanised form of the parcel. Beyond that is more open land until you reach Landywood Primary School, which is also entirely within the Green Belt, abuts the defined urban edge and impacts on the openness of the Green Belt in this location. Going further east you then reach the A34 where there are additional residential and commercial properties along part of its length within the Green Belt and within the sub parcel.
- 6.31 Parcel S16D then continues further east beyond the A34 to include a large highly developed farmstead which is directly adjacent to the existing urban edge and the A34. Again, all of this built form is within the Green Belt. Beyond that are fields associated with the farm, a Public Right of Way (the Forest of Mercia Trail) and further fields beyond that. The western most edge of Parcel S16D is defined by a single field which has weak field boundaries to the east, west and north, which all form part of the S16D outer edge boundaries to the west. In short, the extent of the sub-parcel parcel makes no sense whatsoever.
- 6.32 At the very least, the railway line and the A34 should have been utilised to split the parcel up further as they represent logical, strong physical boundaries and these parcels should have been independently assessed at the Stage 2 assessment.
- 6.33 A thorough assessment against the 5 purposes of Green Belt can then be undertaken in relation to these areas. Instead, the assessment considered the 5 purposes across what is still a significantly large area that would never be considered as a logical development area in its entirety and which has very different characteristics as you move from east to west and beyond the key boundaries associated with the railway line and the A34.
- 6.34 In addition to the shortfalls associated with the Stage 1 assessment (which could influence how the Stage 1 parcels are ultimately defined), and for all the other reasons highlighted above, we do not consider the LUC Stage 2 assessment to be credible or robust.
- 6.35 As noted above, LUC may go on to say that they then consider promoted sites and different areas within the sub parcel differently by grading areas within the sub parcel and that this overcomes our

concerns. However, the LUC assessment of the promoted sites does not consider the 5 purposes of Green Belt individually. Instead, the promoted sites are ranked further to the overall findings generated from the Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments. As such, the ranking of the individual sites cannot be regarded as robust if the Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments are flawed at the outset and particularly when the Stage 1 and Stage 2 parcels relate to substantially larger areas than the promoted site.

*Approach applied to Assessing Purpose 1*

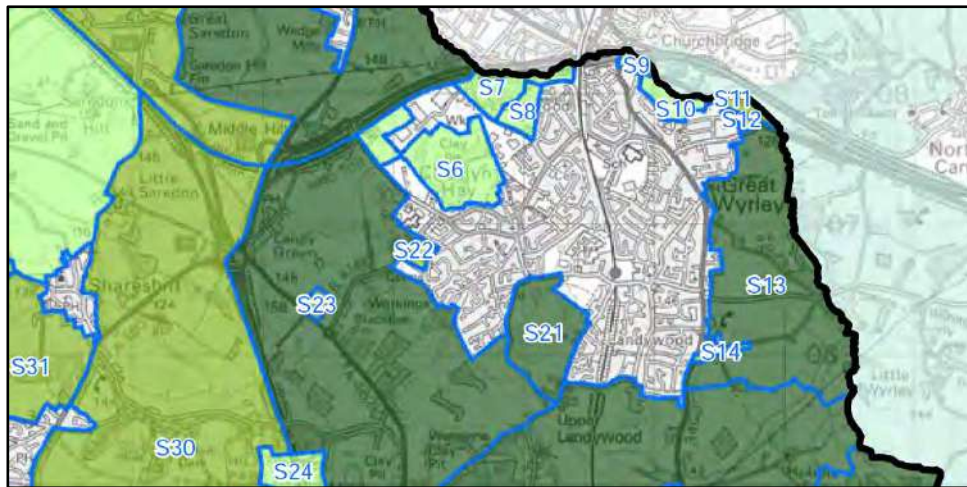
- 6.36 **Regarding the definition of 'unrestricted sprawl' and the references LUC make towards this, we are of the strong view that well planned development (including Green Belt land release) through a Local Plan is not an unchecked or unrestricted process. Indeed, Green Belt release through this process needs to be justified with exceptional circumstances, and must undergo a thorough and public examination process and account for a range of factors. In short, the Local Plan process allows for the most suitable sites to be identified for development considering a wide range of issues and it is possible for development proposals to mitigate certain impacts (including the appearance of what might otherwise be called 'sprawl').**
- 6.37 The practical day-to-day application and function of Purpose 1 of the Green Belt is principally linked to the weight afforded to the Green Belt designation as part of the development control / decision making process. Indeed, once defined, justifying inappropriate development on Green Belt through the development control process is purposefully very difficult and the clear intention of this is to check the unrestricted, piecemeal and unplanned sprawl of large built up areas. With that in mind, all Green Belt land (other than perhaps that which is already previously developed), has an extremely strong function in contributing to Purpose 1.
- 6.38 This is particularly pertinent when considering the different types of urban sprawl LUC quote at paragraph 3.17 (e.g. leapfrogging, linear development, contiguous suburban growth, etc) and the fact that the housing needs stemming from the Greater Birmingham and Black Country conurbation are spilling out and impacting on other settlements around the conurbation including more distant and smaller settlements around the Borough. For these reasons, the Green Belt around large urban areas has also stretched some distance out to try **and prevent 'leapfrogging'**.
- 6.39 With this in mind, it could be justified that the release of Green Belt land around the smaller more distant settlements with the Borough also contributes to the urban sprawl of large urban areas given it will be (in part) meeting the needs of the wider urban conurbation.
- 6.40 In light of the above, we typically afford limited weight to Purpose 1 once it has become clear that exceptional circumstances exist to warrant the review of Green Belt land. This is not to say that its current purpose would still not be strong but once it has been accepted that exceptional circumstances exist to warrant the consideration of Green Belt release in an authority, it must go hand in hand that the urban area will inevitably grow and expand onto land that is, by definition, more open in nature. The exception to any release would be if the Green Belt land within an

authority was determined to be so sacrosanct, scarce and/or performing such a strong function that the harm associated with releasing the Green Belt for development would outweigh the negative impacts of not accommodating the development needs. However, that is not the case in South Staffordshire.

- 6.41 **Regarding the definition applied to large built up areas, we agree with LUC's conclusion that the West Midlands conurbation (including Perton) and the urban area of Cannock (including Great Wyrley) represent large urban areas that need to be considered in the context of purpose 1 and as illustrated in Figure 3.1. However, for the reasons set out above, the smaller more distant settlements are still impacted upon by virtue of the development needs from this larger conurbation.**
- 6.42 Notwithstanding this point, we can agree that the greater level of sensitivity associated with Purpose 1 will be around Green Belt located closest to the large urban areas. Figure 5.1a in the LUC assessment largely reflects this. However, at odds with this are Parcels S6 to S12, which are all located to the north of **Great Wyrley and Cannock and obtain a 'weak/no contribution' ranking within LUC's Stage 1 assessment, which is reflective of the ranking applied to the most distant areas of Green Belt from the Large Urban Areas.**
- 6.43 The only explanation seems to be that these parcels would not significantly extend the existing urban extent of the large urban area in one direction (i.e. they are arguably more akin to large infill parcels of land, perhaps located between an existing urban edge and other urbanising infrastructure such as a motorway). Many are also defined by strong boundaries such as the M6 Toll Road. **As such, we do see the logic behind LUC conclusions in relation to these parcels. However, LUC's primary focus on the geographical characteristics of the parcels and their relationship to the open countryside beyond omits the fact that other important types of open land within the Green Belt will be present on the edge of large urban areas and the need to protect such land from urban sprawl will be increasingly important if that open land is put to certain beneficial uses. Indeed, the omission of any commentary or assessment in relation to how those parcels are currently used and contribute positively to wider Green Belt objectives results in distorted conclusions for Purpose 1 and other purposes in a number of instances.**
- 6.44 Indeed, LUCs assessment of Parcels S6 to S12 effectively suggests that Purpose 1 of the Green Belt has no relevance across these sites (noting **the category is 'weak/no contribution'**).



*Figure 5.3 – Purpose 1 Assessment – Parcels around Great Wyrley/ Cheslyn Hay*



- 6.45 We strongly disagree and cite Parcels S7 and S8 as a combined example given both are located adjacent to one another. The M6 Toll Road is located to the north, with Cannock beyond. Employment development and an open quarry is located to the west and residential development is located to the east. As such, it is fair to say that the two parcels have a limited relationship to the wider open countryside (which we note is protected under Purpose 3 anyway) and if the parcels were to be developed it would not extend the overall physical extent of Cannock and Great Wyrley when considered against the urban area's wider extremities to the north, south, east and west. However, their development would result in the northern extension of the urban area of Great Wyrley across land that is still very open in character and plays an important local role. Indeed, parcels S7 and S8 include a number of sports pitches and clubs, Heatherton Reservoir (which is a Local Wildlife Site) and a network of public footpaths, which are used for recreational purposes by the local community.
- 6.46 The day to day application of Green Belt policy and Purpose 1 in this location is therefore vitally important because if the Green Belt designation did not exist, these community sport, recreational and wildlife assets could come under increased development pressure from speculative development and unrestricted urban sprawl (notwithstanding other planning policies that could be applied) and could either be lost all together or displaced further afield from the community they currently serve.
- 6.47 Bearing in mind the NPPF seeks to promote the positive use of Green Belt land for biodiversity purposes and outdoor sport and recreation, we would argue that Purpose 1 in the context of Parcels S7 and S8 would hold even greater importance. For that reason, we would still class the function and practical application of Purpose 1 across these parcels as being very strong.
- 6.48 These issues could be accounted for if LUC added the following questions to the list included at paragraph 4.11:

*"To what extent does the land accommodate appropriate Green Belt uses that still contribute to openness of the Green Belt and positively contribute to the overall quality and function of the urban area (i.e. sports clubs and pitches, other recreational open space, allotments, cemeteries, etc)?"*

6.49 Those that remain open in character but also perform a strong beneficial function to the urban areas should be afforded a strong contribution.

6.50 Overall, for the Stage 1 Assessment in particular, we consider all parcels around Great Wyrley should be ranked as Strong under Purpose 1. The only exception would be land that is located on the urban edge that has been physically developed already and is therefore no longer necessary to keep within the Green Belt. For example, this could include the built part of the Landywood Primary School site located adjacent to the Wallace Land Investment site.

*Approach applied to Assessing Purpose 2*

6.51 With regard to Purpose 2, LUC confirm that Cheslyn Hay and Great Wyrley represent an urban area that should be considered as one in Table 3.1. We agree with this.

6.52 We also agree with the statement at paragraph 3.20, where LUC state:

*"As noted in paragraph 3.15 above, there is a close enough relationship between Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley, Cannock and Hedgesford for these settlements in combination to be considered a 'large built up area' for the assessment of Purpose 1; however, Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay also retain sufficient distinction from Cannock to warrant the assessment, in terms of Purpose 2, of the narrow strip of Green Belt that lies between them."*

6.53 In short, LUC recognise there is a Green Belt gap, narrow as it might be, between Cannock and Cheslyn Hay. However, this is not then depicted on Figure 3.2 where the overall area of Cannock/Cheslyn Hay and Great Wyrley are then circled as one. This needs to be rectified.

6.54 Within Chapter 4, LUC then set out a series of questions in relation to Purpose 2 which we consider are all pertinent. Within Table 4.3, LUC then highlight a number of other considerations including location and juxtaposition, the size/narrowness of the gap and connecting features. In short, if the gap is narrow, or where there are strong visual connections between the towns, LUC consider the gap should be deemed to be more fragile and afforded more protection/contribution.

6.55 We take no issue with this approach, but this does not then translate in to the ranking of sites around Great Wyrley and again the parcels to the north of the settlement, which do form part of the narrow gap between Great Wyrley and Cannock are afforded less contribution to other parcels around the settlement, which are much wider.

6.56 We also take issue with the fact that the importance of the gap between the wider Black Country conurbation and other settlements within the Borough is largely ignored. Whilst we note some of **the South Staffordshire settlements might not represent 'towns', the vast majority still have their**

own identity as settlements and therefore the extent of those settlements and the relationship with other settlements within their vicinity should be respected. Codsall, Womborne and Kinver in particular should be identified as separate settlements and circled on Figure 3.2 accordingly.

- 6.57 Whilst Essington, Fethersall and Lower Green are smaller settlements, the fact they are recognisable settlements with their own services and remain separated from the Black Country conurbation by open countryside/Green Belt also means the gaps between these settlements and the wider conurbation should also be respected and considered in full.
- 6.58 Figure 3.2 implies that these gaps hold no importance and therefore Purpose 2 in these locations does not apply. That cannot be correct, but this approach is ultimately reflected in the LUC assessment noting that the parcels between all of the above settlements and the Black Country are generally ranked with a low grading, when we would have expected a higher ranking to be afforded.
- 6.59 As one example, we would have expected land within the eastern part of Parcel S50 and the western part of Parcel S46, which separates Codsall from Wolverhampton to be afforded a strong contribution under Purpose 2 but under the LUC assessment both score weak/no contribution. Again, this cannot be correct.
- 6.60 Just to be clear, this does not mean to suggest that the gap between Codsall and Wolverhampton could not be closed under the premise of sustainable planning through the Local Plan, but to suggest this area of Green Belt does not perform this purpose is rather disingenuous and ultimately skews the entire assessment carried out by LUC.

*Approach applied to Assessing Purpose 3*

- 6.61 Purpose 3 seeks to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Within Chapter 3, **LUC's consideration of this purpose** and its definition seems to primarily focus on the definition of what constitutes encroachment i.e. does the land already contain urbanising land uses and features and how does the land relate to the wider countryside?
- 6.62 What LUC fail to consider is why it is deemed important to safeguard the countryside in the first place, particularly in the context of open countryside within the Green Belt, which is afforded greater protection to development compared to open countryside surrounding non-Green Belt enveloped towns.
- 6.63 In general terms, it is commonly accepted that countryside is valued because it is a finite resource that:
- a) provides us with food so the best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected;*
  - b) supports bio-diversity and ecological networks/systems;*
  - c) contributes to a positive sense of health and wellbeing (particularly where the countryside is accessible); and*

*d) has an intrinsic beauty, which we value.*

- 6.64 At paragraph 3.31, LUC state that the methodology used does not distinguish between different ‘degrees’ of countryside beyond considering urban influence, as this would stray into assessing the impact on landscape character.
- 6.65 Whilst we note Green Belt is not a landscape designation and therefore its landscape quality should not be the sole or primary reason to assess Purpose 3, by omitting any consideration of the **countryside’s character and how it is viewed, utilised or valued (particularly by those who live closest to it)** results in an entirely incomplete assessment of Purpose 3.
- 6.66 Indeed, Green Belt policy is a highly important component of safeguarding countryside adjacent to large urban areas and therefore it is perfectly reasonable to consider the contribution certain areas of the countryside make towards food production, health and wellbeing, bio-diversity or landscape quality. This is essential in order to determine if the extent to which Green Belt makes a valuable contribution towards safeguarding and protecting the countryside.
- 6.67 As such, in addition to the considerations LUC already apply under Purpose 3, we consider LUC should also map the following elements and consider their impact on the value/contribution that should be afforded to certain Green Belt parcels under the remit of seeking to safeguard the most valued areas of open countryside:
- Agricultural Land Values – parcels with a higher grade of agricultural land value should be afforded greater contribution;
  - Public Rights of Way or other forms of accessible land (such as common land or other land that is made open to the public) – parcels with greater accessibility should be afforded a greater contribution bearing in mind such land will promote walking and access to the open countryside provides wider health and wellbeing benefits (particularly for those living in an urban area that might otherwise have limited access to this resource);
  - Ecological areas of protection including Local Wildlife Sites, woodlands, etc on the basis that these areas and the green belt surrounding them will contribute to biodiversity; and
  - Local landscape designations (not necessarily landscape character), where the intrinsic beauty of the countryside is deemed to have a higher than normal value in planning policy terms (for instance Cannock Chase).

*Approach applied to Assessing Purpose 4*

- 6.68 We agree with LUC’s methodology in the context of this purpose and agree that Green Belt around South Staffordshire does not serve any purpose in preserving the setting of a historic town.

*Approach applied to Assessing Purpose 5*

- 6.69 In the context of South Staffordshire and the wider West Midlands conurbation, we largely agree with the conclusions reached by LUC in relation to this purpose and recognise the difficulty in determining differing levels of contribution provided by certain areas of Green Belt when it comes to considering the impact on regenerating derelict or other urban elsewhere.
- 6.70 To conclude, we raise a number of concerns with the methodology used in the LUC 2019 assessment. We fundamentally disagree with a number of aspects of the methodology and indeed with the conclusions reached for the Holly Lane, Great Wyrley site.

Site-specific Green Belt Assessment of Holly Lane Site

- 6.71 We have undertaken our own Green Belt assessment of the proposed Holly Lane site against the five purposes of the Green Belt. This is summarised as follows and also includes input from our preliminary landscape appraisal.

*Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas*

- 6.72 Release of the site from the Green Belt would not represent unrestricted sprawl. Indeed, it would be planned development delivered through a statutory Local Plan, whereby specific policies could be provided to ensure robust Green Belt boundaries are formed as part of the development. In this instance, Holly Lane to the north and Strawberry Lane to the west already provide strong defensible boundaries for the site. The northern parts of the site are contained by the existing areas of the settlement, including areas of built form; to the south, the southern boundary is defined by the enduring landscape feature of the local watercourse, associated vegetation and topographical changes of the shallow valley formation. On the basis of these physical characteristics, the **perception of 'sprawl' arising from potential development on the site will be negligible.**
- 6.73 Whilst the southern and eastern site boundaries are less defensible and well defined than the northern and western boundaries, Wallace Land Investments would be willing to invest in a strong landscape buffer to the east and south to restrict any unrestricted sprawl post adoption of the new Local Plan. Indeed, this is shown on the illustrative Masterplan.

*Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns margining into one another*

- 6.74 In the context of the Green Belt between Great Wyrley/Landywood and Bloxwich to the south, the scale and location of the site is such that it has a very limited contribution to the separation of the settlement areas. The existing separation gap between Great Wyrley and the Black Country conurbation to the south is circa 1.6km when taken from the nearest settlement boundary extent to the site (along the A34). If this site was to be developed, it would reduce this gap slightly to circa 1.4km. This would still represent a significant gap between the two settlements and indeed, ribbon development is already present along the A34 which the development site does not extend much beyond. The development of this site would not lead to the merging of settlements in a northerly, easterly or westerly direction, as the site is contained by built form or existing road

infrastructure in this regard. In short, the site does not make a significant contribution to this purpose of the Green Belt.

*Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*

- 6.75 To a large degree the site is enclosed by the urban environment, particularly on its northern and eastern edges, as well as at its north-western edge. It is also bisected centrally by prominent rail infrastructure, including overhead gantries which are highly visible urbanised features. This presents a stronger sense of the urban fringe for the site and less so, one of open countryside. Furthermore, the perception of character is limited by the lack of public access in terms of recreation, with the experience of the landscape available more generally via the local road network. As such, it does not make a particularly positive contribution in terms of providing access to the open countryside, which is one of the main objectives of the Green Belt. Accordingly, the site currently serves little function as countryside and its loss would not be unacceptable.

*Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*

- 6.76 According to the NPPF interpretation, South Staffordshire does not contain any historic towns, therefore this purpose of Green Belt is not explicitly applicable to the District. Nevertheless, at the local level analysis, a Grade II Listed Building (Landywood Farmhouse) borders the site to the west; however, the development will be sensitively designed to ensure the setting of the Listed Building and wider settlement are respected. As such, the site does not contribute to the Green Belt purpose of preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

*Purpose 5: To assist in urban regeneration, be encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land*

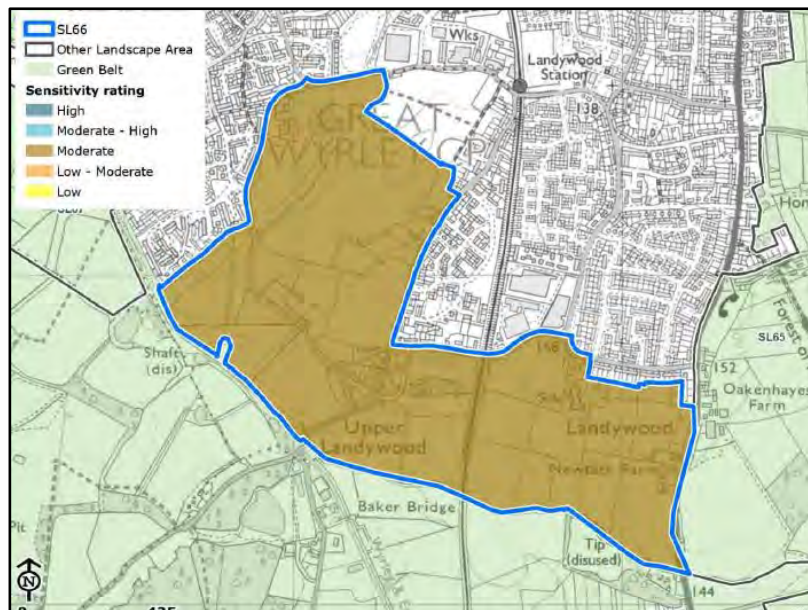
- 6.77 It is evident that across the Greater Birmingham HMA there is a significant shortfall in urban land to meet emerging development requirements and this is reflected in the emerging Local Plan Review which proposes to accept 4,000 units of this wider unmet need as well as meeting its own needs. Accordingly, the development of this site would not prejudice the recycling of derelict and other urban land within South Staffordshire, rather, it will complement these sites to ensure that emerging housing requirements will be met.
- 6.78 Accordingly, the Holly Lane site does not provide a meaningful contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt and is a highly suitable site for Green Belt release.

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (July 2019)

- 6.79 **Following on from the Council's original** Landscape Sensitivity Study 2017 update, which they undertook themselves; the Council have since commissioned LUC to prepare a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (July 2019). The Holly Lane site is assessed under parcel reference 536, albeit as part of a wider land parcel and not in isolation (see overleaf).



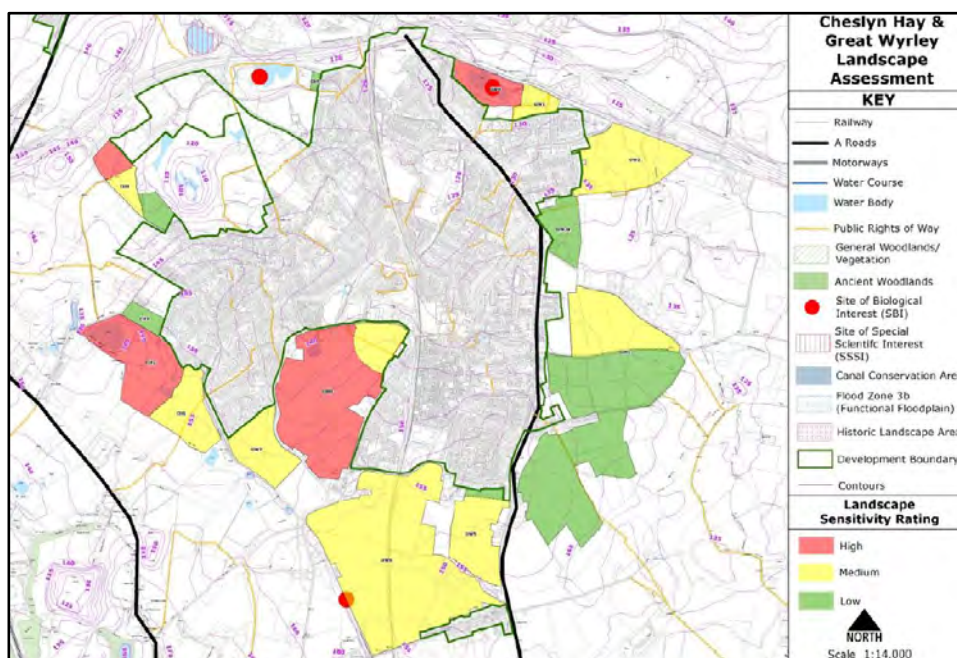
*Figure 5.3 – 2019 LUC Landscape Assessment of land south of Landywood*



6.80 Whilst we agree that the overall landscape of the Holly Lane site is moderate (we provide our own detailed landscape analysis shortly), we disagree with the approach to assess the site with the land to the east and north-west. The Holly Lane site has a very different landscape context to the infill site located to the north-west.

6.81 Indeed, this a point which was acknowledged in the Council’s 2017 Landscape Sensitivity Update. In the 2017 report, different land parcels were used, and it was concluded that the infill site to the north-west of the site was of high landscape sensitivity.

*Figure 5.4 – 2017 Council Landscape Assessment of Great Wyrley/ Cheslyn Hay*



6.82 It is not entirely clear as to why the landscape sensitivity of the adjacent site is now deemed to be lower (i.e. moderate) or why the parcels have been revised in the 2019 LUC assessment. Paragraph 3.12 of the 2019 LUC report notes the following:

*"The overall study area has been subdivided into landscape character areas, with the aim of identifying areas with similar characteristics which are therefore likely to be broadly consistent in terms of their sensitivity. These areas have been selected to avoid variation and complexities across each landscape area"*

6.83 The Holly Lane site is in landscape character area SL66, as shown on the extract above. However, we disagree that the land parcels in this area share similar characteristics and are therefore likely to be broadly consistent in terms of their sensitivity. The Holly Lane is less sensitive than the infill site to the north-west, a view shared by the Council in their previous 2017 assessment.

6.84 Overall, whilst we agree that the Holly Lane site is of moderate sensitivity, we raise concerns about the methodology in the LUC landscape report, especially in relation to how land parcels have been drawn up. We do not consider that the land parcels do always share common landscape characteristics, and that smaller level land parcels should be drawn up and assessed to provide a much more accurate understanding of landscape sensitivity on a site by site basis.

6.85 For the Holly Lane site, a preliminary landscape and visual appraisal has been prepared by Pegasus Group. The full document is contained at Appendix 3; however, a summary of the key landscape points are as follows:

- **The site comprises a relatively 'ordinary' part of landscape that includes some positive attributes, but is also influenced by a number detracting features;**
- Across the site there are different levels of physical and visual containment – the northern part of the site is, on the whole, consistent with the existing settlement edge however the parcels to the west of the rail line are contained more strongly than those to the east, despite both being relatively elevated positions;
- The southern part of the site sits lower within the landscape and physical containment is increased by virtue of the shallow valley formation – the southern boundary of the site comprises a sinuous linear belt of vegetation, aligned with a watercourse, which together form an enduring physical feature in the landscape;
- In terms of scale, layout and as a landscape characteristic, the hedgerow field pattern contributes to the local landscape character and should be used positively to influence the layout and massing of the masterplan;
- The north-eastern corner of the site is elevated relative to the surrounding landscape and there are filtered views across this to the landscape to the south;

- Overall visibility to the site from the surrounding landscape is limited – in the main this is due to the combined influence of vegetation and landform, screening views from many vantage points (albeit that higher sensitivity vantage points are relatively limited anyway);
- The rail line is relatively prominent in the local landscape context, particularly given the gantries and overhead power lines which tend to protrude above the surrounding field patterns, making it more visible and its linear form more apparent;
- Based on the landscape and visual analysis, the site has a limited role in terms of Green Belt purposes;
- The local road network on the north-western and western edges of the site comprises a series of narrow winding lanes, often lined by hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees – these are reflective of the local landscape character; and
- There is limited visual connectivity with the local and wider landscape.

6.86 The detailed findings of the landscape appraisal have informed the illustrative masterplan show in the accompanying Vision Document. Paragraph 5.9 of the Landscape Appraisal ultimately concludes the following:

*"It is considered that, with an appropriate approach to mitigation and the implementation of a robust landscape and green infrastructure strategy, a residential masterplan on the site will be physically contained and show clear defensible boundaries. Green infrastructure and open space as part of the proposals can also complement the existing recreational aspects of the landscape in respect of the transition to the wider landscape."*

6.87 Overall therefore, future development on this site is entirely acceptable from a landscape perspective.

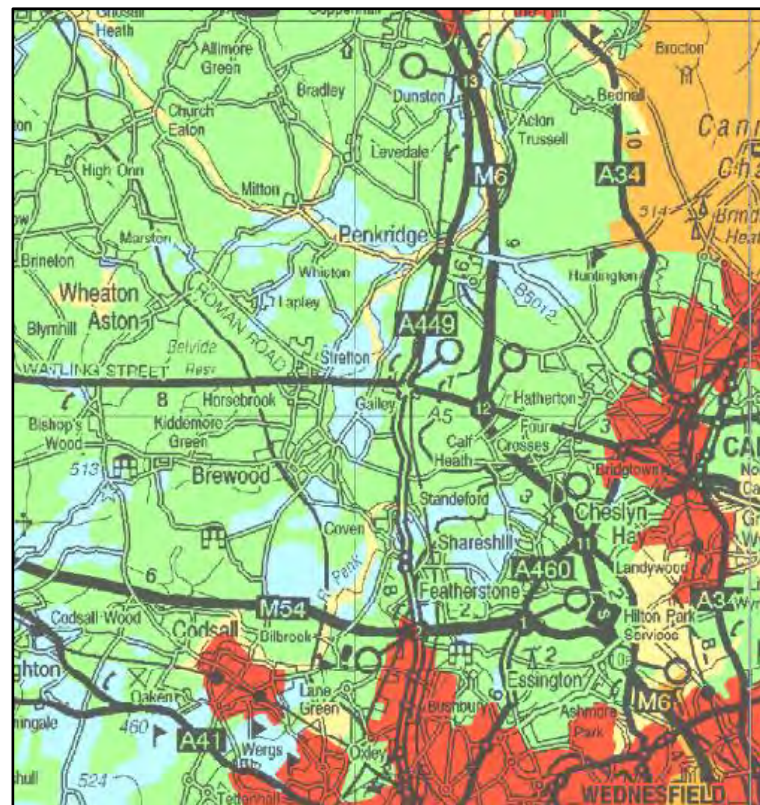
#### Other Environmental Constraints

6.88 Paragraph 6.5 of the 2019 LUC Green Belt Assessment notes how a number of constraints have been mapped in their study. This includes cultural heritage (Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens), natural heritage (such as SSSIs) and other constraints such as Common Land, Flood Zone 3 Areas and Burial Grounds.

6.89 However, the map of constraints in the Green Belt Study does not include Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (Grade 3 and above). The high-level agricultural land classification map indicates that South Staffordshire largely comprises a mixture of Grade 2 (light blue - very good) and Grade 3 (green - good to moderate) agricultural land, with limited amounts of Grade 4 (yellow). This is a constraint which should therefore be taken into consideration when establishing the spatial strategy.



*Figure 5.5 - South Staffordshire Agricultural Land Mapping / Landywood Extract*



- 6.90 As illustrated on the map contained at Appendix 5, the Holly Lane site is classified as partly Grade 4 (poor) agricultural land and partly land predominantly in urban use.
- 6.91 Agricultural land classification should be included in the site selection criteria at Appendix 6, but would also bear consideration at the strategic level, given the availability of the data, and known variations in the area.



## Appendix 5 – Vision Document





# LAND SOUTH OF HOLLY LANE, GREAT WYRLEY

V I S I O N   D O C U M E N T  
P 1 7 - 2 9 1 9 \_ R 0 0 2 | D E C E M B E R 2 0 1 9

Prepared by Pegasus Design for Wallace Land



DESIGN



ENVIRONMENT



PLANNING



ECONOMICS



HERITAGE



“The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”

(Para. 124, NPPF 2019).



Pegasus Design  
Queens House | Queen Street | Manchester | M2 5HT  
[www.pegasusgroup.co.uk](http://www.pegasusgroup.co.uk) | T 0161 393 3399

Pegasus Design is part of Pegasus Group Ltd  
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Contact: Urban Design - **Andrew Ford-Marsden / Sebastian Tibenham**

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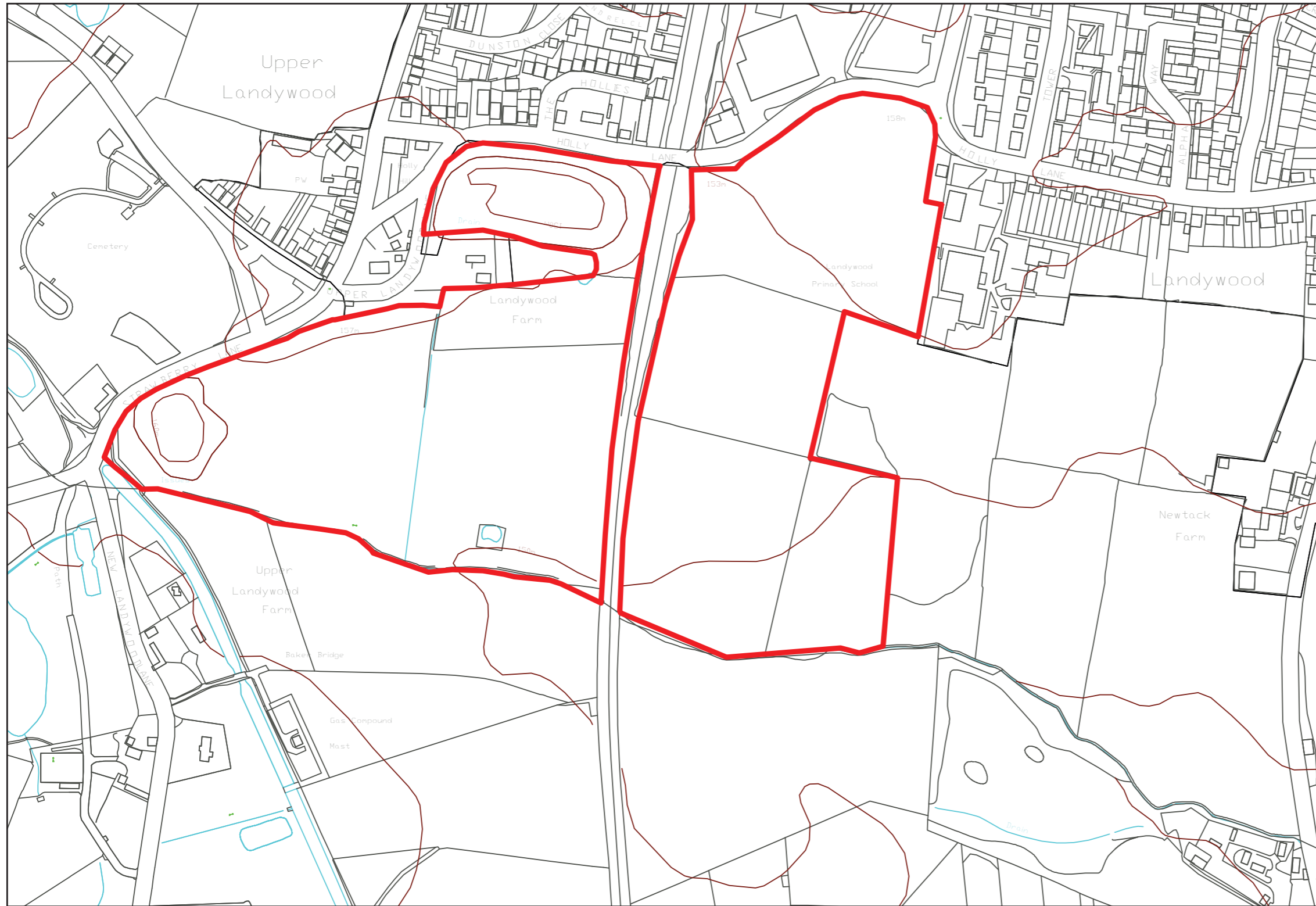


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# 01 INTRODUCTION



Site Location Plan

**KEY**

 Site Boundary

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Wallace Land Investments have an excellent track record in delivering viable development opportunities to the market and have an active interest in land located to the south of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley. Wallace have explored a number of technical, policy and environmental considerations in order to assess the site's suitability for development.
- 1.1.2 This document provides an executive summary of the site's context, in terms of the surrounding topography, natural environment, historic environment and local planning policy, including the site's current designation as Green Belt. It also looks at the context of the wider settlement, demonstrating that this site is in a highly accessible and sustainable location within the settlement.
- 1.1.3 The site does not make a significant contribution to the 5 purposes of Green Belt land. Moreover, the site would make a positive contribution to meeting the Council's future housing needs in the event that exceptional circumstances are demonstrated through the emerging Local Plan Review to release Green Belt land.
- 1.1.4 To be clear, it is our view that exceptional circumstances do exist due to the lack of available and deliverable urban

land within the wider Birmingham HMA. Indeed, the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market (GBBCHMA) Position Statement (September 2018), which includes South Staffordshire as one of 14 constituent Local Authorities, identifies a minimum housing land supply shortfall of 10,696 between 2011-2031 across the wider HMA, whilst a previous position statement from February 2018 suggested this shortfall could be as high as 60,855 when the period is extended to 2036. Whilst the aforementioned February and September 2018 Position Statements represent the latest published documents on housing shortfall, an updated Position Statement is currently being agreed between the 14 Local Authorities. This will provide the latest figures on the GBBCHMA housing shortfall, and will influence the next consultation of the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review.

- 1.1.5 The site is 23.1ha, and having carried out an assessment of the site's constraints and opportunities, an indicative masterplan has been prepared which demonstrates the site could deliver circa 350 residential homes (including affordable housing) dependant on the level of growth required in this location.

In order to meet local infrastructure needs we have included a large area of open space, of which part could form an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs) to the north east of the site. This is located as to be accessible to the wider community. In addition land has been set aside for the adjacent school to expand, and discussions with the school have confirmed a need for additional drop-off and parking facilities to alleviate congestions issues, whilst there is also an aspiration for a new 5G playing pitch intended for joint use between the school and local football club. Wallace are exploring options to help facilitate this have shown how these facilities could be incorporated on the illustrative masterplan, again maximising access to the wider community, which could deliver real benefits.

- 1.1.6 The vision is to create a high-quality development that would positively contribute to the Great Wyrley area by providing market homes for existing and new residents and affordable homes to those that have found it harder to get a foot on the housing ladder. With this investment, additional expenditure for local shops and Council Tax receipts will be collected which will assist in funding and improving local community services and facilities.
- 1.1.7 In short, the site represents a suitable, available and deliverable housing development opportunity.

## 2.2 THE NEED FOR GREEN BELT RELEASE

### Emerging Local Plan Review

- 2.2.1 This Vision Document has been produced to inform South Staffordshire Council's Local Plan Review, and is submitted in support of the Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Paper Consultation (December 2019).
- 2.2.2 South Staffordshire's current plan comprises the Core Strategy, which was adopted in December 2012, and the Part 2 Site Allocations Document (SAD), which was adopted in September 2018.
- 2.2.3 The SAD contains a policy which specifically outlines a need for a Local Plan Review. Policy SAD1 (Local Plan Review) states that the Council will carry out an early review of the Local Plan that will be submitted by the end of 2021. This process is already underway, and the Council have acknowledged that it will cover the following points, amongst other matters:
- South Staffordshire's own Objectively Assessed Housing 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.
  - 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.
  - 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.
- 2.2.4 Green Belt release will be required in South Staffordshire as 80% of the authority area is currently designated as Green Belt.
- 2.2.5 Following the Issues and Options consultation in November 2018, which set a proposed housing target and some very high level spatial options; the Council are now undertaking a second consultation on their emerging Local Plan Review, namely the 'Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery' Consultation (October-December 2019). The Strategy Paper outlines how the Council's preferred option is to take a minimum of 4,000 dwellings of the unmet GBHMA need alongside its own Local Housing Need figure of 4,845 (which equates to 254 dpa over the plan period). We have commented on this matter in detail in the accompanying representations.
- 2.2.6 The Council's current preferred spatial option proposes significant Green Belt release throughout the Borough, both through growth to existing settlements, urban extensions to adjacent urban areas and even a new settlement. However, it does not propose to allocate any additional sites in Great Wyrley. As discussed in detail in Section 3 of this Vision Document, Great Wyrley is a highly sustainable settlement- being one of only five Tier 1 settlements in the whole of the District. Great Wyrley, and in particular the land south of Holly Lane site, is therefore very well placed to accommodate additional growth to meet emerging development requirements.

## **Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study**

- 2.2.7 The Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study, produced by GL Hearn in February 2018, is an evidence base document which explores where this future growth might be accommodated, and this identifies Great Wyrley within a wider area considered appropriate for proportionate dispersal for between 500 and 2,500 dwellings (referred to as location PD3 and covering the area extending south east from Cannock to Walsall).
- 2.2.8 The supporting text notes that: “Whilst the Green Belt in this location separates the various towns from one another, and more generally between Birmingham and Lichfield/Rugeley, there could be opportunities for accommodating various scales of development on the complex urban edges which characterise the area. Given the character of the settlement pattern, significant compromise to the strategic function of the Green Belt is unlikely with this kind of development, although the issue of local separation and settlement identity would need to be scrutinised.”

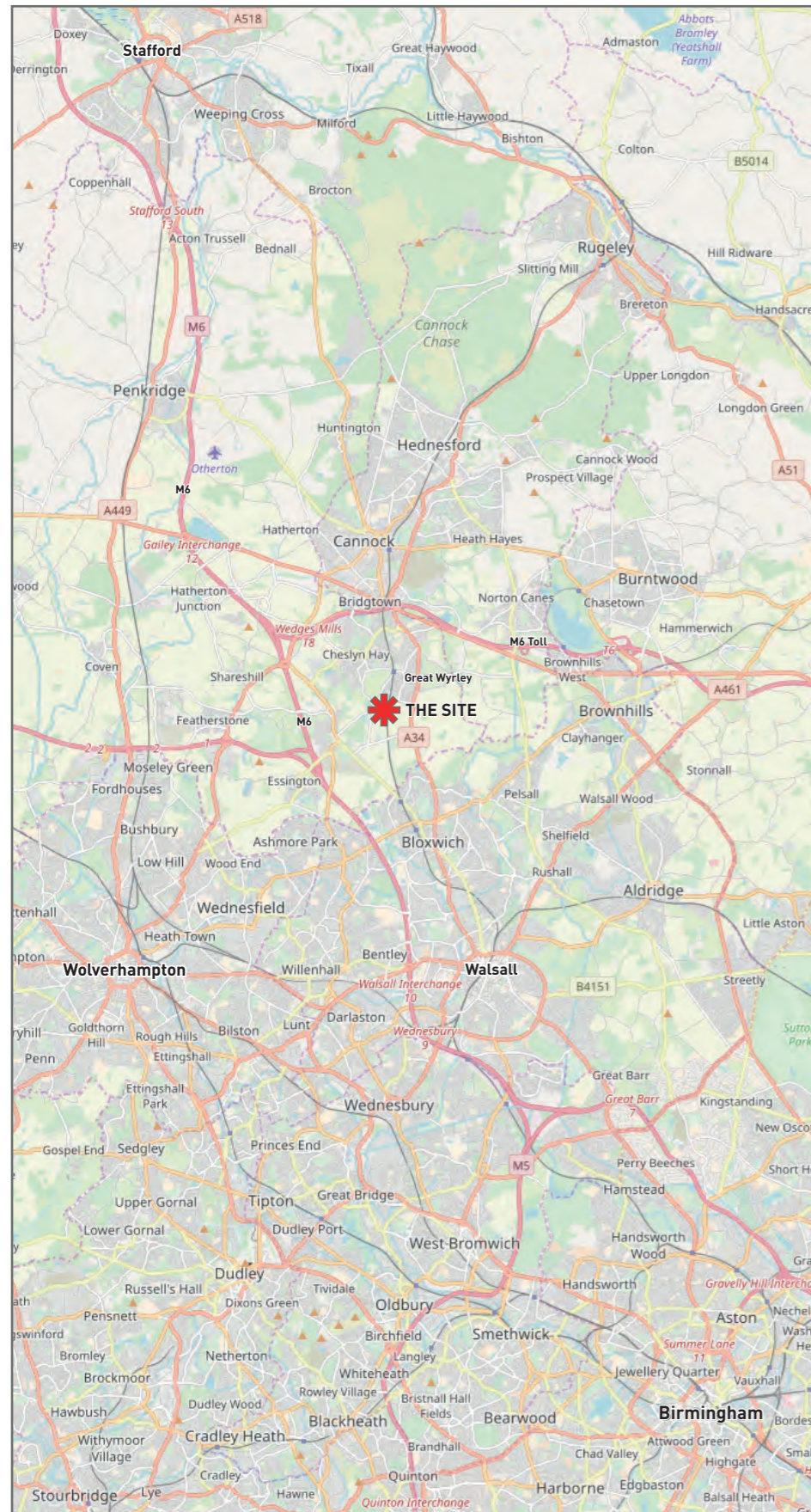
- 2.2.9 As will be demonstrated later in this document, there is good level of separation between Great Wyrley and the Black Country conurbation to the south, and development in this location would not greatly reduce this, nor would it compromise local identity, suggesting this would be a suitable location for growth.

## **Policy Summary**

- 2.2.10 As such, there is a clear and compelling need to release further Green Belt land in South Staffordshire to meet emerging housing requirements, both locally and regionally. The following section looks at Great Wyrley and its capacity to accommodate growth in more detail and ultimately concludes that the settlement is highly sustainable and suitable to accommodate future housing development in the Local Plan Review.



# 03 SETTLEMENT CONTEXT



## 3.1 SETTLEMENT CONTEXT

### Position in Settlement Hierarchy and Capacity for Growth

- 3.1.1 Great Wyrley is one of nine Main Service Villages within the top tier of the adopted settlement hierarchy, whilst Cheslyn Hay, another Main Service Village, adjoins the settlement to the west, bisected by the railway line running north to south.
- 3.1.2 The Settlement Study that informed the Core Strategy confirmed that Great Wyrley was the third largest settlement (with an estimated population of 11,236 in 2010), it also ranked third for service provision; whilst Cheslyn Hay was the 5th largest settlement at 7,539 and ranked 6th for service provision.
- 3.1.3 Furthermore, the Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Paper of the Local Plan Review has also confirmed Great Wyrley's role as a high performing settlement within the settlement hierarchy. Indeed, Great Wyrley is classed as a Tier 1 settlement (greatest access to services and facilities) at the very top of the settlement hierarchy. There are only five tier 1 settlements, which include both Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay (which are considered as one settlement, as are Codsall/ Bilbrook; meaning in reality there are only 3 Tier 1 settlements, the other being Penkridge). This further highlights the strong sustainability credentials of Great Wyrley.
- 3.1.4 Despite this high level of sustainability, Great Wyrley saw relatively minor growth within the adopted Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPD, with 151 units allocated from a total of 2,680 across the 2 documents (equating to just 5.6%), and this was largely due to the settlement being constrained by Green Belt. Appendix 4 of the Spatial Housing Strategy Paper further confirms this, with only 384 dwellings in the form of commitments, allocations or safeguarded land to be delivered in Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley between 2018-2037. The Council's current preferred option for growth does not propose to allocate any additional development in the area, meaning that Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley will deliver just 4.3% of overall planned growth in South Staffordshire up to 2037. This is in comparison to 10.6% in Penkridge and 17.8% in Billbrook/Codsall, which are the only other Tier 1 Settlements in the District.



## Settlement Context Plan

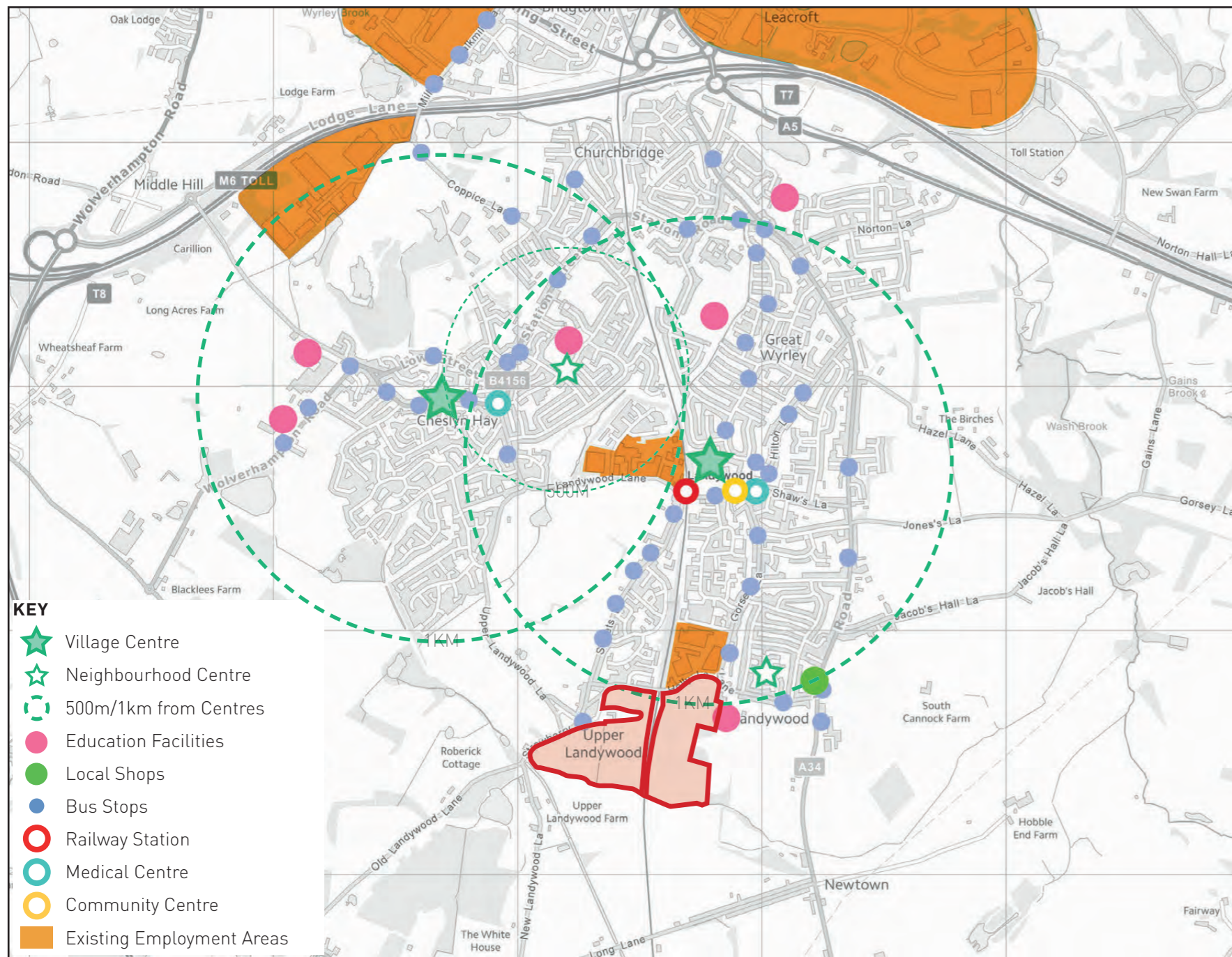
- 3.1.5 Although Great Wyrley has in the past been restricted to relatively low levels of growth due to its Green Belt constraints, the Local Plan Review will be reviewing existing Green Belt boundaries across South Staffordshire. Great Wyrley is clearly well positioned to accommodate further growth, as it is a highly sustainable settlement which has seen relatively little growth in recent years. It is also well related to the Black Country conurbation to the immediate south where much of the future housing need is being generated.
- 3.1.6 The following sections look at where future growth might go within the settlement taking account of local services as well as landscape and environmental constraints.





# 03 SETTLEMENT CONTEXT

## Facilities and Services Plan



### Access to Key Services

- 3.1.7 Great Wyrley is well served by local services, with a Village Centre at Quinton Court in the centre of the settlement, containing a Co-op, Post Office and approximately 20 unit shops, along with a Community Centre and GP Surgery. There is a smaller Neighbourhood Centre to the south of the settlement at Towers View Road containing 7 small unit shops, and isolated retail units along the Walsall Road to the east of the settlement including an off-license and convenience store. There are also several employment areas within the settlement, off Landywood Lane near the Village Centre and at Holly Lane to the far south.
- 3.1.8 Cheslyn Hay also contains a Village Centre and Neighbourhood Centre at High Street and Glenthorne Road respectively towards the centre of the settlement, and a large employment park off Coppice Lane to the north west of the settlement.



3.1.9 In respect of education facilities, there are three primary schools and one secondary school in Great Wyrley, with Landywood primary school in the far south of the settlement. Cheslyn Hay contains a further two primary schools and one secondary school.

3.1.10 Research into school capacity has revealed space in all of the schools above, this is demonstrated in the table below:

	On roll	Capacity	Spaces
<b>Landywood Primary School</b>	321	342	21
<b>Moat Hall Primary School</b>	296	525	229
<b>Great Wyrley High School - Now Great Wyrley Academy</b>	609	1,119	510
<b>St Thomas More Catholic Primary School</b>	198	190	-2
<b>Glenthorne Community Primary School</b>	266	285	19
<b>Cheslyn Hay Sport and Community High School</b>	1,286	1,302	16
<b>Cheslyn Hay Primary School</b>	415	475	60
<b>TOTAL</b>	3,385	4,238	853

Sources:  
<https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>

3.1.11 In terms of public transport, Landywood Train Station is close to the village centre. London Midland trains operate from this station and provide direct access to Cannock and Birmingham New Street at an operational frequency of two service per hour. There are bus stops spread throughout the settlement, with services linking to Cannock, Wolverhampton and Walsall. Of most note is the X51 bus service, which provides direct access into Birmingham City Centre. This service runs 2-3 services per hour and provides access to Birmingham in 63 minutes.

3.1.12 The Holly Lane site is within 1.3 km of the railway station and village centre, and the neighbourhood centre is just 300m north east of the site. Of particular note in relation to the proximity of the neighbourhood centre to the site, Manual for Streets Guidance (2007) notes how a range of facilities should be accessed within a 10 minute (800m) walk. The Neighbourhood Centre is well within this distance and provides a number of local facilities within an acceptable walking distance from the Holly Lane site.

3.1.13 Landywood Primary school also adjoins the site to the north east and there are bus stops located along both Strawberry Lane to the immediate west of the site boundary and along Holly Lane to the north (both of which are served by the X51 bus route). Notably, all of these bus stops are within 400m of the northern section of the site, which is commonly referred to as an acceptable walking distance to bus stops.

3.1.14 The site therefore benefits from a highly sustainable location in relation to Great Wyrley's existing local facilities and services. In more general terms, it is clear that it is a sustainable settlement, with the southern end better served by retail services and bus stops while the north and west of the settlement are generally better located for education facilities.





## Infrastructure challenges in Great Wyrley

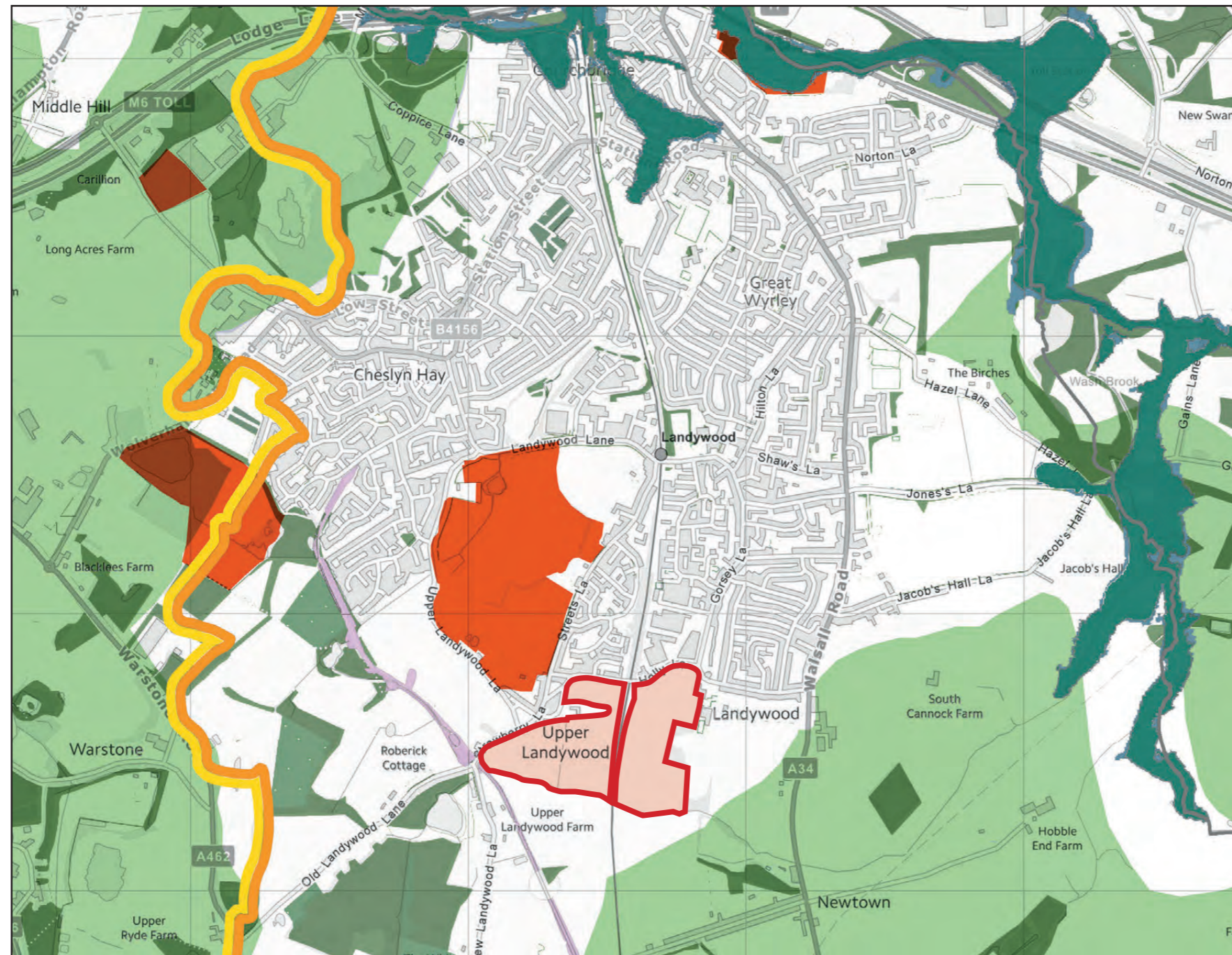
- 3.1.15 There are known to be major traffic congestion issues around Landywood primary school at peak times (drop off/ pick up), which have been exacerbated by its growth in recent years to a two form entry school and aspiration to expand to a three form entry. This causes conflicts amongst staffs, parents, residents, HGVs serving the adjacent Business Park, and even emergency vehicles, with backed up traffic from the school gates and parents parking over resident's drives (as shown on the plan below). Given the existing highways and parking issues taking place at the school during drop off and pick up times, an opportunity exists for the Holly Lane site to provide a solution in the form of new parking infrastructure.
- 3.1.16 There is also understood to be a shortage of playing pitches in the area, both for the school and local football club Great Wyrley Juniors FC.
- 3.1.17 Accordingly, Wallace are working with the school to address these issues by investigating whether a drop off and parking area and new 5G sports pitch can be accommodated within the Holly Lane site, and this matter is addressed in more detail in section 5.

## Congestion Plan





## Settlement Context - Landscape and Natural Environment



### KEY

Site Location

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

Planning for Landscape Change: SPG to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 - Appendix 1: Maps and Plans

Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes (left of line)

Coalfield Farmlands (right of line)

### LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY RATING

High

### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Woodland

Local Nature Reserve

### AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

Grade 3 - Good

### FLOOD RISK

Flood Zone 3

Flood Zone 2

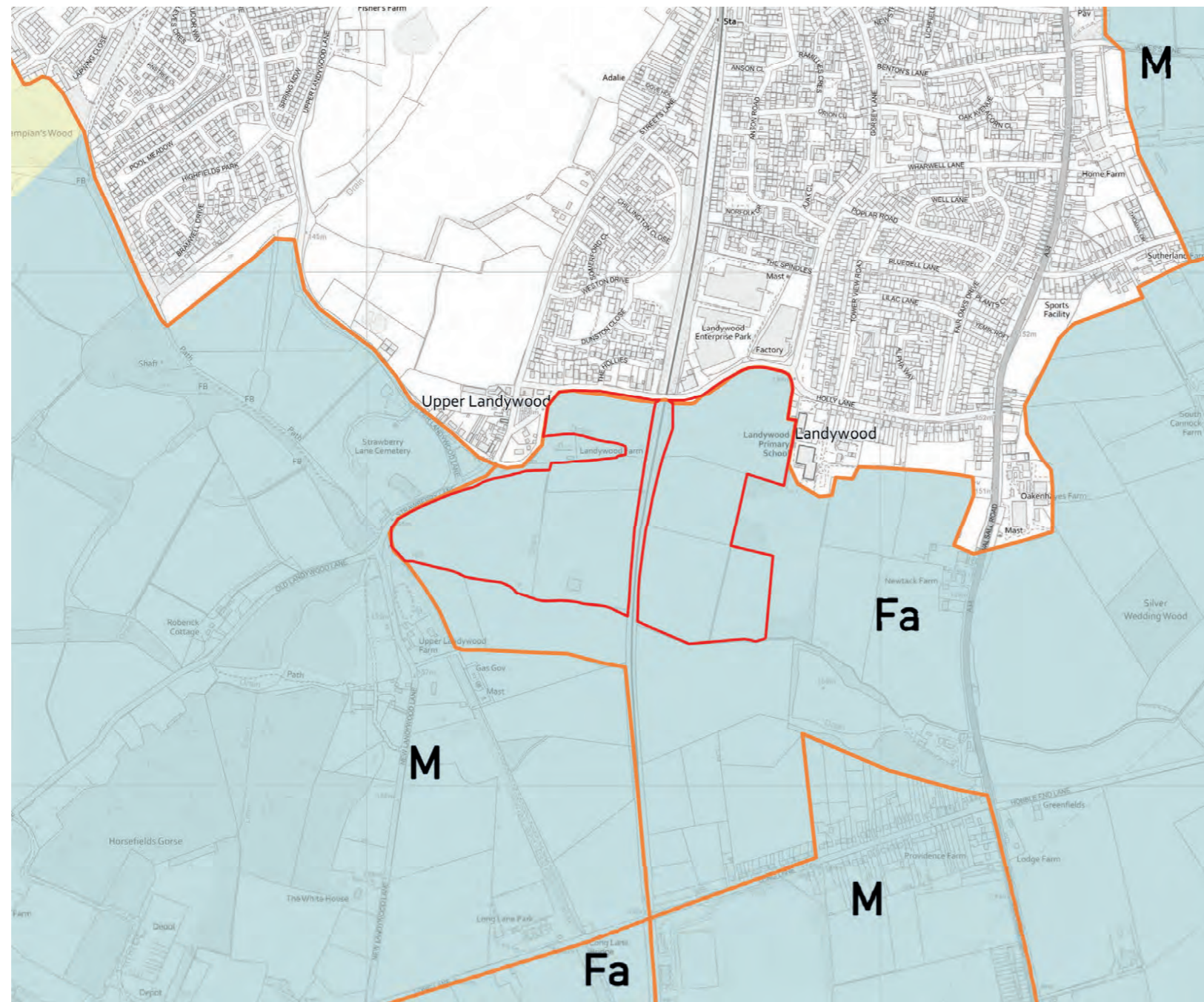




## 3.2 Landscape and Natural Environment

- 3.2.1 The landscape character around Great Wyrley is defined as being part of National Character Area 67 Cannock Chase and Cank Woodlands. The key characteristics of this broad area include:
- A varied landscape ranging from the open heathlands and plantations of Cannock Chase, through towns, reclaimed mining sites and new developments, to dense urban areas.
  - Heathland and associated acid grassland were once much more extensive, although significant tracts still remain. Post-industrial sites and remnant countryside within the urban areas provide a mosaic of additional valuable habitats.
  - The settlement pattern is complex and contrasting, with some areas densely populated and others relatively sparse. The conurbation includes a mosaic of urban areas, former industrial land and patches of farmland, with an extensive urban fringe.
  - The extensive networks of canals and railways reflect the industrial history of the area.
- 3.2.2 At a County level, Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay are in a transitional area of landscape character, the Staffordshire Landscape Guidelines defining two broad types to the west, the 'Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes' and to the east the 'Coalfield Farmlands' respectively; the urban extents of the two settlements forming part of the variation and transition between these two landscape types.
- 3.2.3 At a more local level the landscape around Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay has been considered as part of a council's Landscape Sensitivity Study (prepared in 2015 and updated in 2017 and within the 2019 LUC Landscape Assessment. We raise a number of concerns with the 2019 LUC Landscape assessment in the accompanying Representations, albeit agree that the landscape sensitivity of the Holly Lane site is moderate.
- 3.2.4 Whilst we raise concerns with some significant inconsistencies between these landscape studies in our accompanying representations, a key point of note is the fact that the land parcels surrounding the existing settlement boundary of Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay are assessed as having either low or moderate landscape sensitivity in the 2019 LUC study. This indicates that the settlement as a whole is well placed to accommodate higher levels of growth in the future to meet emerging development requirements.
- 3.2.5 In terms of natural environment constraints, woodlands and plantations are evident around the settlement with a number creating a defined edge, particularly to the south west of Cheslyn Hay and along the former canal which is also a nature reserve.
- 3.2.6 Flood Zones 2 and 3 effect land to the north of the settlement near to the M6 Toll and A5.
- 3.2.7 Grade three and above agricultural land is also evident to the west of the settlement and the south east, as illustrated on the plan opposite.

## Landscape Character Plan



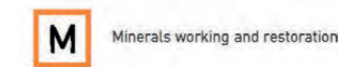
### KEY



### Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment: Landscape Character Types



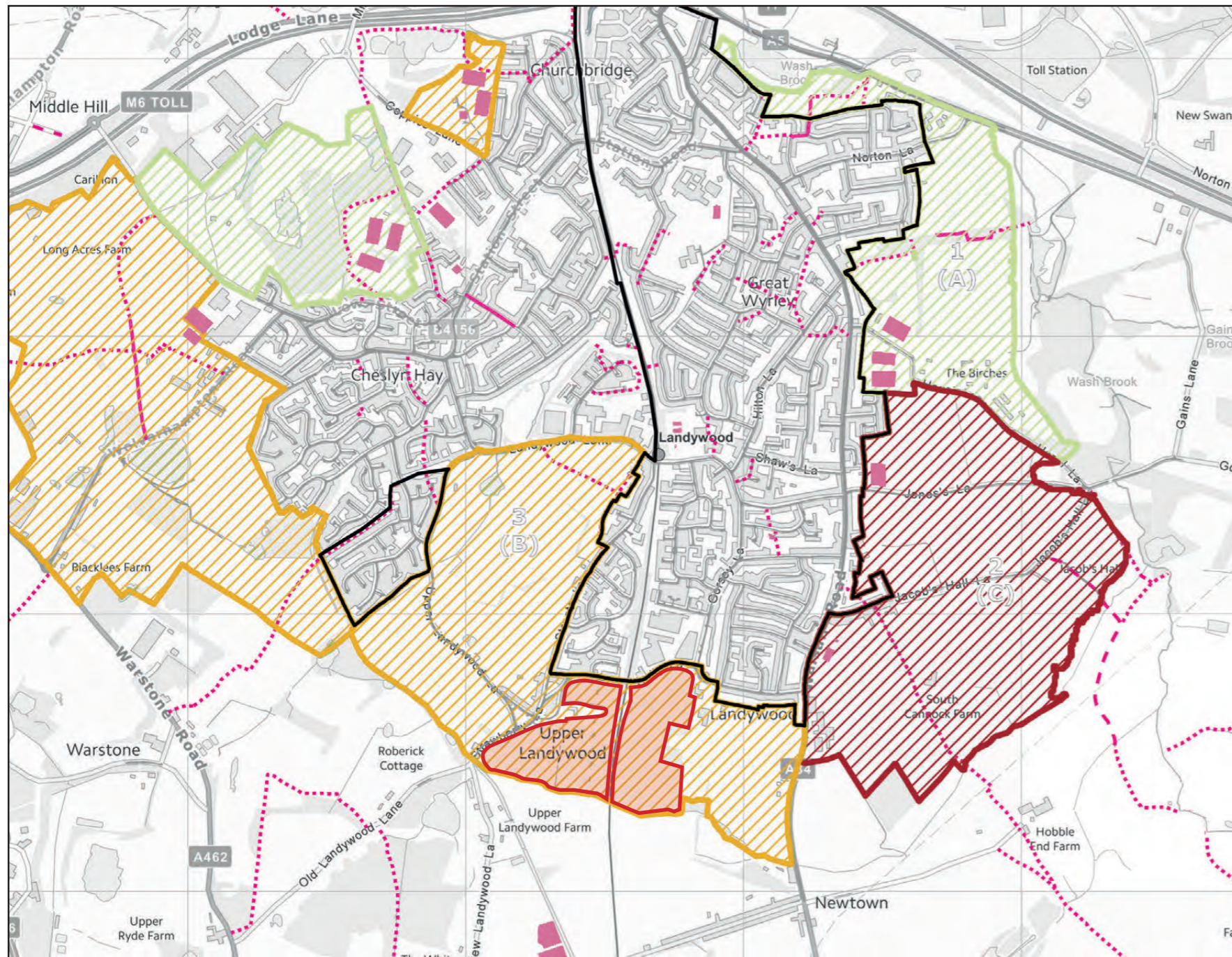
### Landscape Character Sub-Types





# 03 SETTLEMENT CONTEXT


## Settlement Context - Green Belt Contribution Map




### KEY

 Site Boundary


### GREEN BELT CONTRIBUTION

 Makes a considerable contribution

 Makes a contribution

 Makes a more limited contribution

 Playing Pitches

 Existing Footpaths



## 3.3 Green Belt Policy Context

- 3.3.1 The site is currently designated as Green Belt land and sits on the defined urban edge of Great Wyrley.
- 3.3.2 Noting the exceptional circumstances to release Green Belt land, the council originally commissioned LUC to carry out a Green Belt assessment in 2016 which assesses parcels of land around the settlement and their contribution to the five principles of Green Belt (as now defined by paragraph 133 of the NPPF).
- 3.3.3 Land south east of the settlement is confirmed to make a 'considerable contribution' to Green Belt purposes, whilst the appraisal site makes a 'contribution'.
- 3.3.4 LUC have since produced an updated Green Belt Assessment in 2019. We raise a number of concerns with the methodology and findings of the Assessment in the accompanying representations. In particular, we disagree with how the different parcels have been identified and how purposes 1 to 3 have been applied, We also strongly dispute that the Holly Lane site (parcel reference 536) would result in high to very high harm if released from the Green Belt.
- 3.3.5 In light of our concerns with the 2019 LUC Green Belt Assessment, and the 2019 LUC Landscape Assessment, our analysis is still based on the previous 2016 Green Belt and 2017 Landscape Assessments. Until the issues we have raised about the updated 2019 Assessments have been addressed, we consider that ours (and the Council's) previous analysis of the settlement of Great Wyrley remains valid.



# 03 SETTLEMENT CONTEXT



3.3.6 Release of the site for development would require the Green Belt boundary to be amended but this can be done in a manner that would not undermine or conflict with the five principal purposes of the Green Belt as follows:





**1) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.** Release of the site from the Green Belt would not represent unrestricted sprawl. Indeed, it would be planned development delivered through a statutory Local Plan, whereby specific policies could be provided to ensure robust Green Belt boundaries are formed as part of the development. In this instance, Holly Lane to the north and Strawberry Lane to the west already provide strong defensible boundaries for the site. The northern parts of the site are contained by the existing areas of the settlement, including areas of built form; to the south, the southern boundary is defined by the enduring landscape feature of the local watercourse, associated vegetation and topographical changes of the shallow valley formation. On the basis of these physical characteristics, the perception of 'sprawl' arising from potential development on the site will be limited.

Whilst the southern and eastern site boundaries are less defensible and well defined than the northern and western boundaries, Wallace Land Investments would be willing to invest in a strong landscape buffer to the east and south to restrict any unrestricted sprawl post adoption of the new Local Plan. Indeed, this is shown on the illustrative Masterplan.

**2) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.** In the context of the Green Belt between Great Wyrley/Landywood and Bloxwich to the south, the scale and location of the site is such that it has a very limited contribution to the separation of the settlement areas. The existing separation gap between Great Wyrley and the Black Country conurbation to the south is circa 1.6km when taken from the nearest settlement boundary extent to the site (along the A34). If this site was to be developed, it would reduce this gap slightly to circa 1.4km. This would still represent a significant gap between the two settlements and indeed, ribbon development is already present along the A34 which the development site does not extend much beyond. The development of this site would not lead to the merging of settlements in a northerly, easterly or westerly direction, as the site is contained by built form or existing road infrastructure in this regard. In short, the site does not make a significant contribution to this purpose of the Green Belt.

**3) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.** To a large degree the site is enclosed by the urban environment, particularly on its northern and eastern edges, and to a lesser extent on its western edge. It is also bisected centrally by prominent rail infrastructure. This presents a stronger sense of the urban fringe for the site and less so, one of open countryside. Furthermore, the perception of character is limited by the lack of public access in terms of recreation, with the experience of the landscape available more generally via the local road network. As such, it does not make a particularly positive contribution in terms of providing access to the open countryside, which is one of the main objectives of the Green Belt. Accordingly, the site currently serves little function as countryside and its loss would not be unacceptable.

**4) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.** According to the NPPF interpretation, South Staffordshire does not contain any historic towns, therefore this purpose of Green Belt is not explicitly applicable to the District. Nevertheless, at the local level analysis, a Grade II Listed Building (Landywood Farmhouse) borders the site to the west; however, the development will be sensitively designed to ensure the setting of the Listed Building and wider settlement are respected. As such, the site does not contribute to the Green Belt purpose of preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

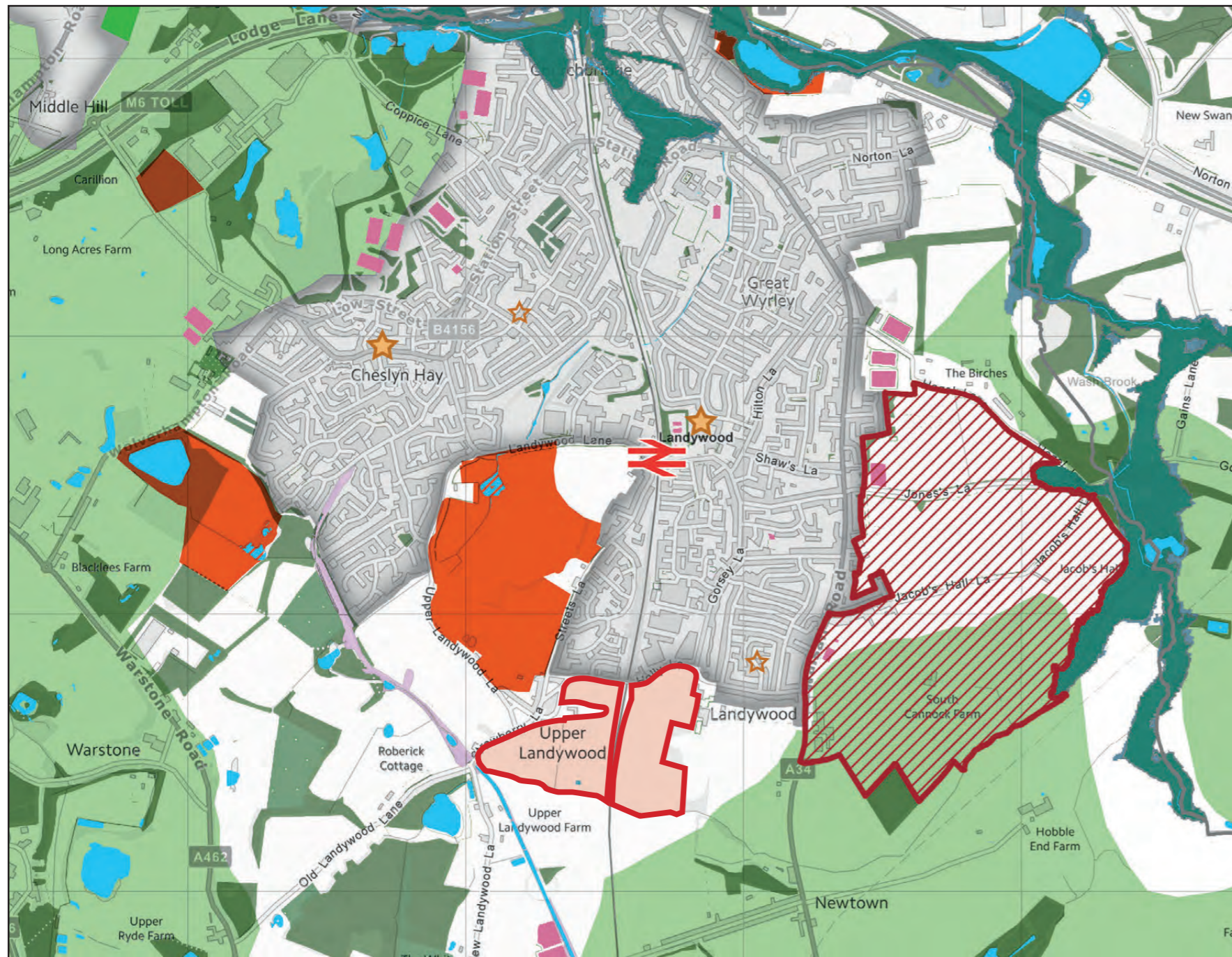
**5) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.** It is evident that across the Greater Birmingham HMA there is a significant shortfall in urban land to meet emerging development requirements and this is reflected in the emerging Local Plan Review which proposes to accept 4,000 units of this wider unmet need as well as meeting its own needs. Accordingly, the development of this site would not prejudice the recycling of derelict and other urban land within South Staffordshire, rather, it will complement these sites to ensure that emerging housing requirements will be met.

3.3.7 Accordingly, the Holly Lane site does not provide a meaningful contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt and is a highly suitable site for Green Belt release.



# 03 SETTLEMENT CONTEXT

## Settlement Context - Summary Plan



### KEY

Site Boundary

### AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

Grade 2 - Very Good

Grade 3 - Good

Urban Area

### FLOOD RISK

Water Bodies

Flood Zone 3

Flood Zone 2

### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Local Nature Reserve

Woodland

### GREEN BELT CONTRIBUTION

Makes a considerable contribution

### LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY RATING

High

### KEY FACILITIES

Village Centre

Neighbourhood Centre

Train Station

Playing Pitches





### 3.4 Summary of Settlement Constraints

- 3.4.1 The findings of the Council's 2016 Green Belt Review have been mapped, along with areas of high landscape sensitivity (as identified in the 2017 Landscape Assessment) and other environmental features to give a full picture of the constraints and opportunities around the settlement.
- 3.4.2 This wider analysis clearly demonstrates that the Holly Lane site is relatively unconstrained and a logical location for additional growth in the context of Great Wyrley. In Green Belt terms it is considered of medium importance ('makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes'), albeit this covers a much larger area (Parcel 3b) including the land further north west off Streets Lane; whilst our analysis in section 3.3 has demonstrated that the site itself makes a limited contribution to the Green Belt purposes.
- 3.4.3 In landscape terms, the area is considered to be of 'medium' sensitivity in the 2017 Landscape Assessment, but again this covers a much larger area extending further south and east than the site boundary, and there is likely to be some further localised variations in sensitivity based on the proximity and prominence of the existing urban edge. As such, sub-areas closer to the settlement edge, such as the Holly Lane site are likely to be lower when considered in further detail. The land is also Grade 4 agricultural land, according to the high level agricultural land map, so is not best and most versatile.
- 3.4.4 Moving on to the other areas of the settlement where development might be directed, the land to the south west of Great Wyrley (north west of the Holly Lane site) falls within the same medium importance Green Belt parcel (3b); however the bulk of it is considered to have 'high' landscape sensitivity, dropping to 'medium' on the outer fringe, as this currently provides physical separation between the two settlements Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay and would lead to significant coalescence.
- 3.4.5 That said this location has reasonable access and is well connected to the train station and Village centre, and the northern part of the site closest to the settlement has been allocated for 35 units (Site 136) in the adopted Site Allocations DPD. However the land around it to the south and west has also been adopted for off-site open space, whilst there is a cemetery further south which would constrain further development.



# 03 SETTLEMENT CONTEXT



3.4.6 The land to the south east of the settlement, around Jacobs Hall Lane and Jones Lane comprises a series of open agricultural fields. Whilst the majority of this land is considered to have 'low' landscape sensitivity (with the parcel between Jones Lane and Hazel Lane classified as 'medium') this land falls within Green Belt parcel 2c which is considered to be of high importance ('makes a considerable contribution to Green Belt purposes'). This is mainly due to the openness of the countryside in this location and the level of encroachment that development would bring. The agricultural land map suggests there are areas of grade 3 agricultural land in this location, which could be considered best and most versatile. In accessibility terms this land is a little detached from the station and Village Centre and the nearest bus stops are just beyond the recommended 400m distance; whilst both Jacobs Hall Lane and Hazel Lane would require significant upgrades to provide vehicular access to any significant development in this area.

3.4.7 The land further north and east of the settlement lies within Green Belt Parcel 1a which is considered of low importance ('makes a more limited contribution to Green Belt purposes'). In landscape terms the western part, adjacent to the settlement edge is determined to be 'low' sensitivity and the northern part as 'medium' sensitivity. The remaining, eastern part is more open, but remains enclosed by a strong presence of trees and woodland to the north, east and south, much of which is designated woodland, which may generate ecological constraints. The agricultural land map suggests there are areas of grade 3 agricultural land in this location, which could be considered best and most versatile. There is also a public footpath crossing this area from east to west.

3.4.8 Several sites were considered for allocation in this area, however this area is relatively detached from the main services in the settlements, and Hazel Lane and Love Lane would require significant upgrades to support vehicular access to any significant residential development. There are also more site-specific constraints such as a sewer easement on one parcel and the presence of sports pitches on some of the land.



- 3.4.9 There is also a small area of available land to the north of the settlement contained by the motorway, albeit a large proportion of this area is formed of a large waterbody, which is a site of biological importance, so would only be able to support modest development in any event. This forms part of Green Belt Parcel 1a which is considered low importance, however part of the site is considered to be of 'high' landscape sensitivity, with the remainder 'medium'. This location is close to the A34 and A5 but connecting to these would likely require significant junction improvements, and bus stops are beyond the recommended 400m distance. This area is well connected to schools, but distant from the station and village centre.
- 3.4.10 Therefore a review of the available land across the wider settlement clearly demonstrates that the Holly Lane site is relatively unconstrained when compared to surrounding parcels and as such represents a logical location for future development, and a suitable candidate for Green Belt release as part of the emerging Local Plan Review. The next section looks at the site in more detail.



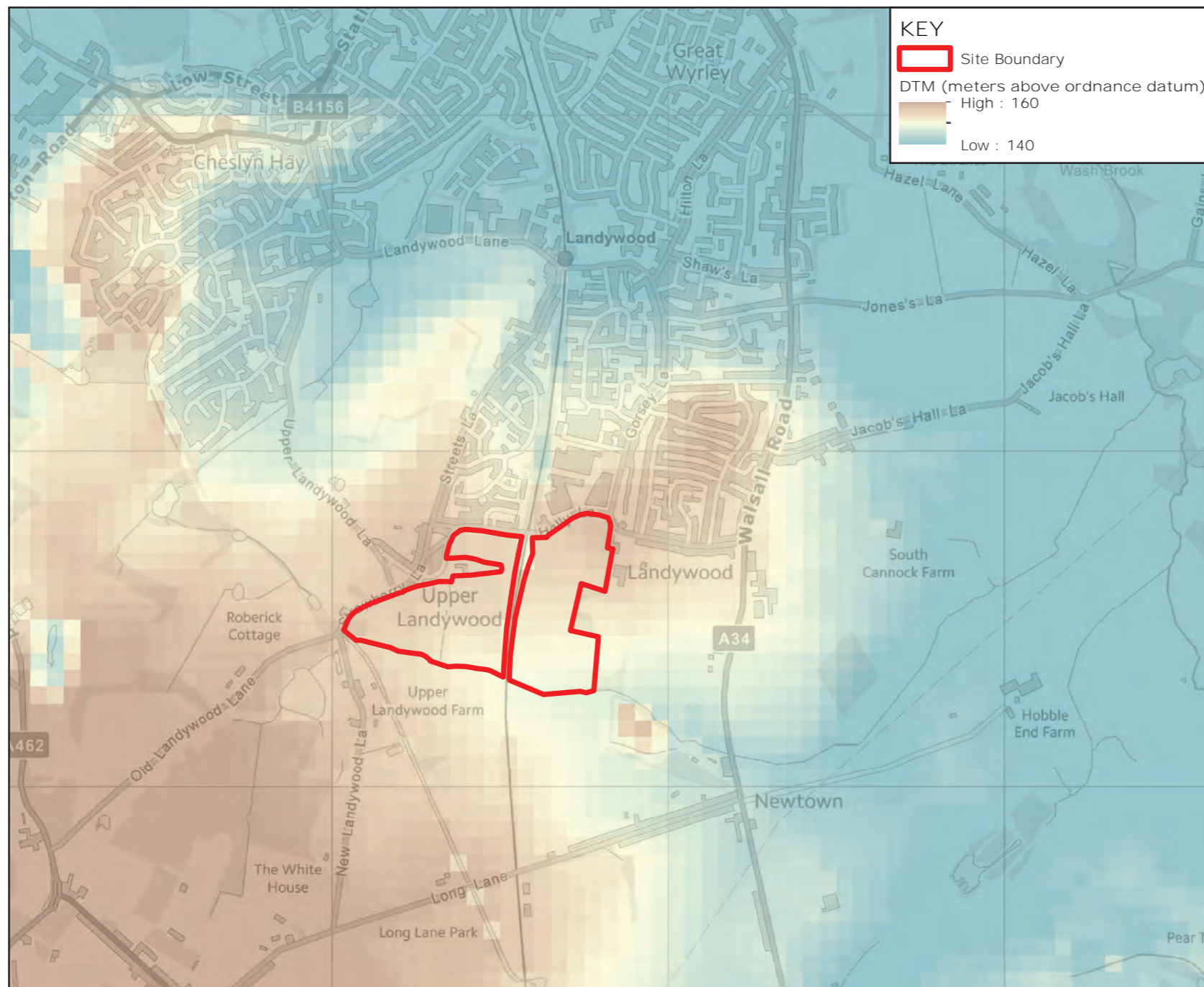


# 04 SITE CONTEXT





## Topography Plan



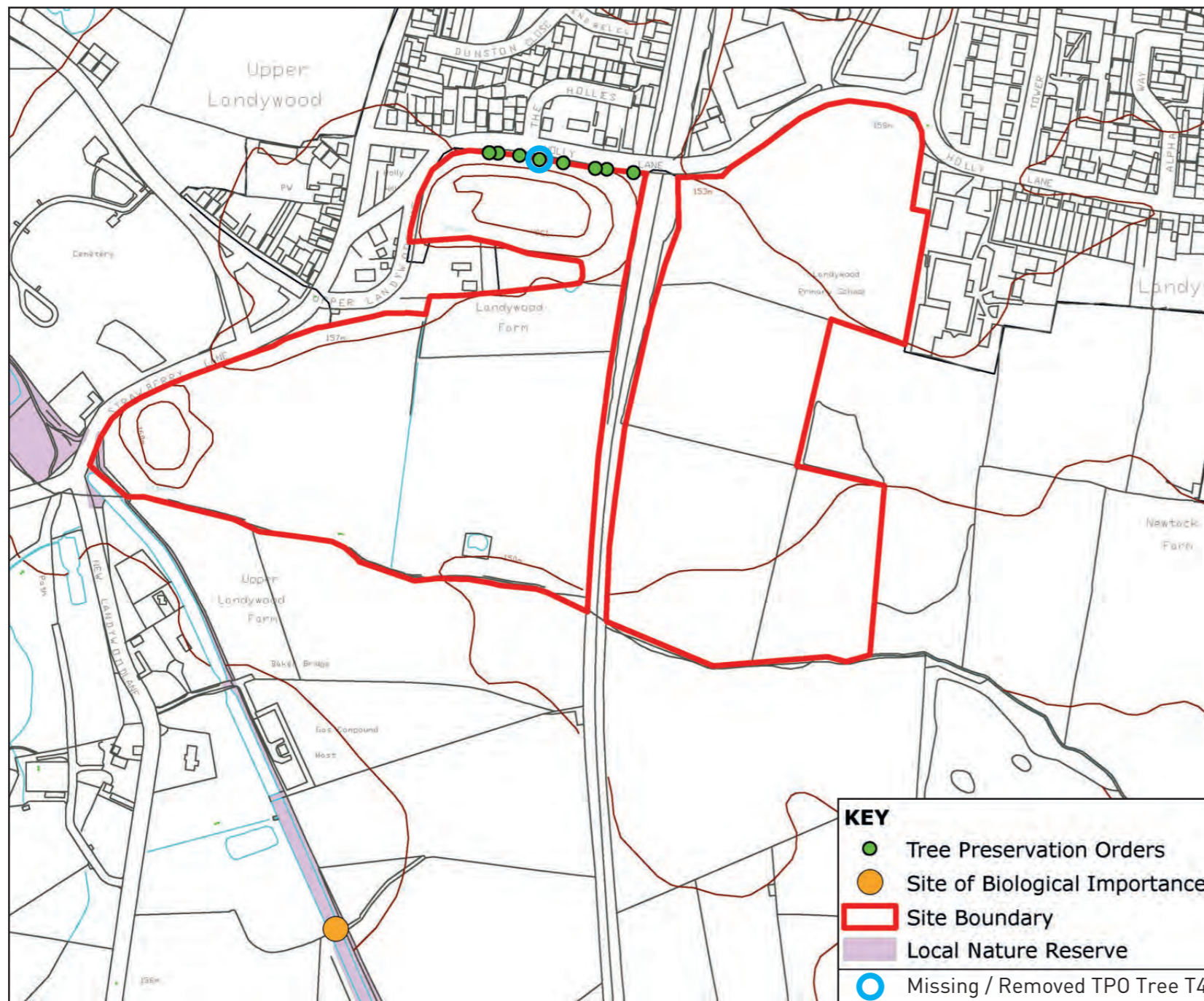
### 4.1 TOPOGRAPHY & PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

4.1.1 The site is bound by Holly Lane and existing development to the north, Landywood Primary School to the east, with agricultural land to the south east, south and west. It is not unduly constrained by its physical surroundings for the following reasons:

- The site's topography is relatively flat and perfectly developable for residential dwellings.
- Land to the north is characterised by existing residential dwellings and associated urban uses such as the business park, school and local shops, meaning the site is seen in the context of existing urban development.
- The railway line that bisects the site is in a cutting and is well screened by trees and planting, providing both visual and acoustic screening.
- The long site frontage along Strawberry Lane and Holly Lane ensures a deliverable access solution.



## Natural Environment Plan

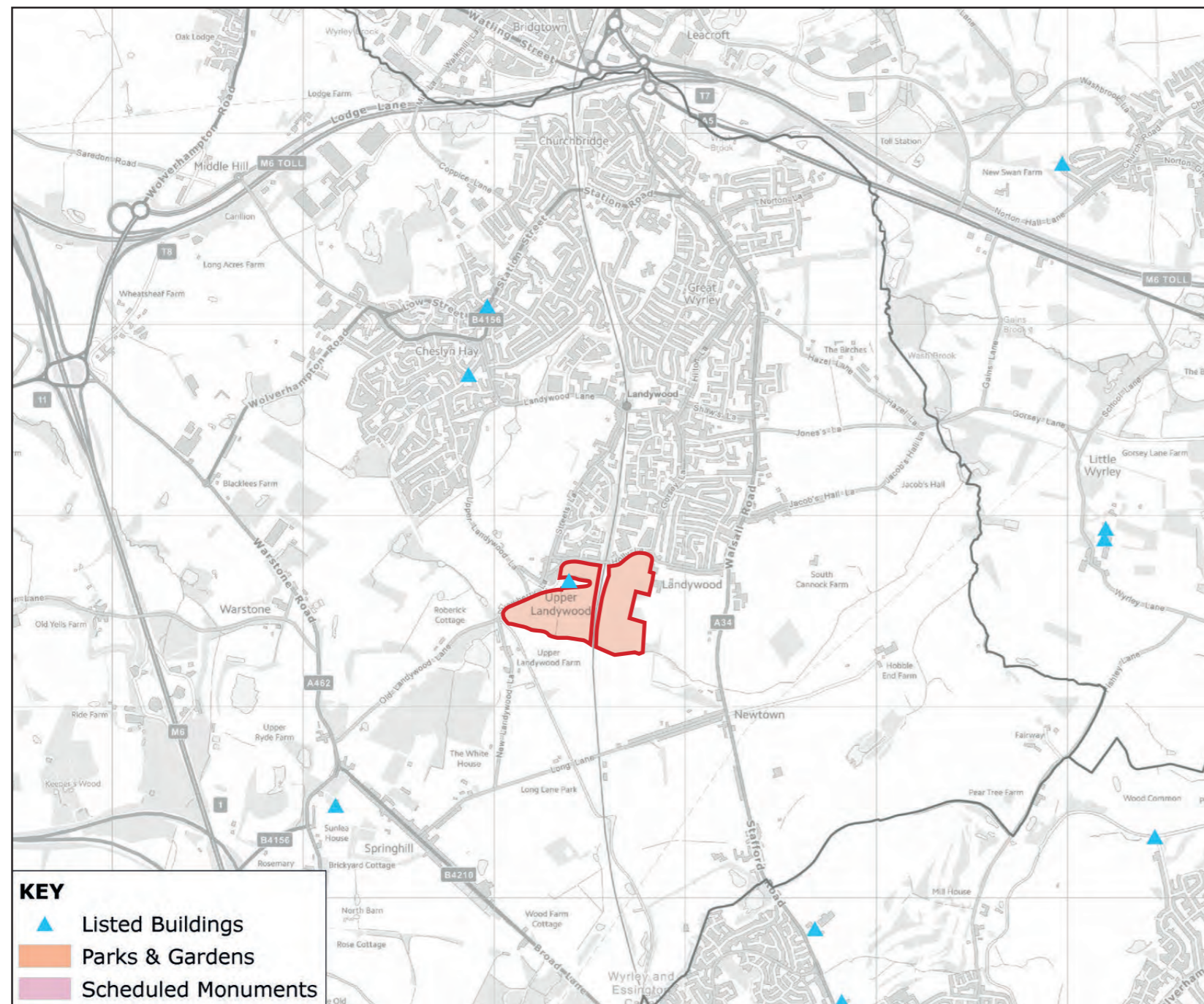


## 4.2 Natural Environment

- 4.2.1 The site is largely unconstrained in environmental terms for the following reasons:
- It is not located within a flood zone.
  - It is not subject to a statutory environmental designation.
  - There are limited optimal habitats within the site, which is made up of agricultural fields, and there are no ponds.
  - The agricultural land classification for the site is Grade 4 and therefore not best and most versatile.
- 4.2.2 There are Tree Preservation Orders covering 8 trees along the northern boundary of the site with Holly Lane, to the west of the railway line. One of these (T4 on the Tree Preservation order 17 1975) is no longer present. The 7 remaining trees will be retained and incorporated into the development as a positive landscape feature. Initial assessments confirm that this can be achieved without impacting on the access strategy.
- 4.2.3 The Wyrley & Easington Canal Local Nature Reserve runs in close proximity to the south-western boundary of the site, albeit is not located within the site boundary itself. The development proposals will give this nearby Local Nature Reserve careful consideration at the detailed design stage, albeit this does not pose as a constraint to the development of this site.
- 4.2.4 An initial desktop assessment does not reveal any obvious ecological constraints. Detailed ecology reports will be submitted to the Council as required, as the emerging Local Plan Review process progresses.



## Historic Environment Plan



### 4.3 Historic Environment

4.3.1 The site is relatively unconstrained when considering the historic environment and associated assets for the following reasons:

- Whilst the Grade II Listed Landywood Farmhouse immediately borders the site to the west, the concept masterplan takes account of this through sympathetic landscaping and screening to minimise any impact on the setting of these buildings;
- There are no local designated heritage assets within or close to the site;
- There are no conservation areas within or close to the site;
- There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within or close to the site; and
- There are no Registered Parks or Gardens near the site.

4.3.2 In short, there are no heritage constraints that would prevent residential development coming forward on this site.



## 4.4 Landscape and Visual Analysis

### Landscape Character Context

- 4.4.1 Section 3.2 of this Vision Document has already outlined the landscape character around the settlement of Great Wyrley as a whole. Notably, the Holly Lane site is located within Landscape Character Type 'Coalfield Farmlands', which encompasses an extensive area of landscape that extends between the north-eastern edge of the Wolverhampton conurbation (including Wednesfield), towards Cannock and Burntwood/Brownhills, and thereafter between Burntwood and Lichfield.

### Visual Context

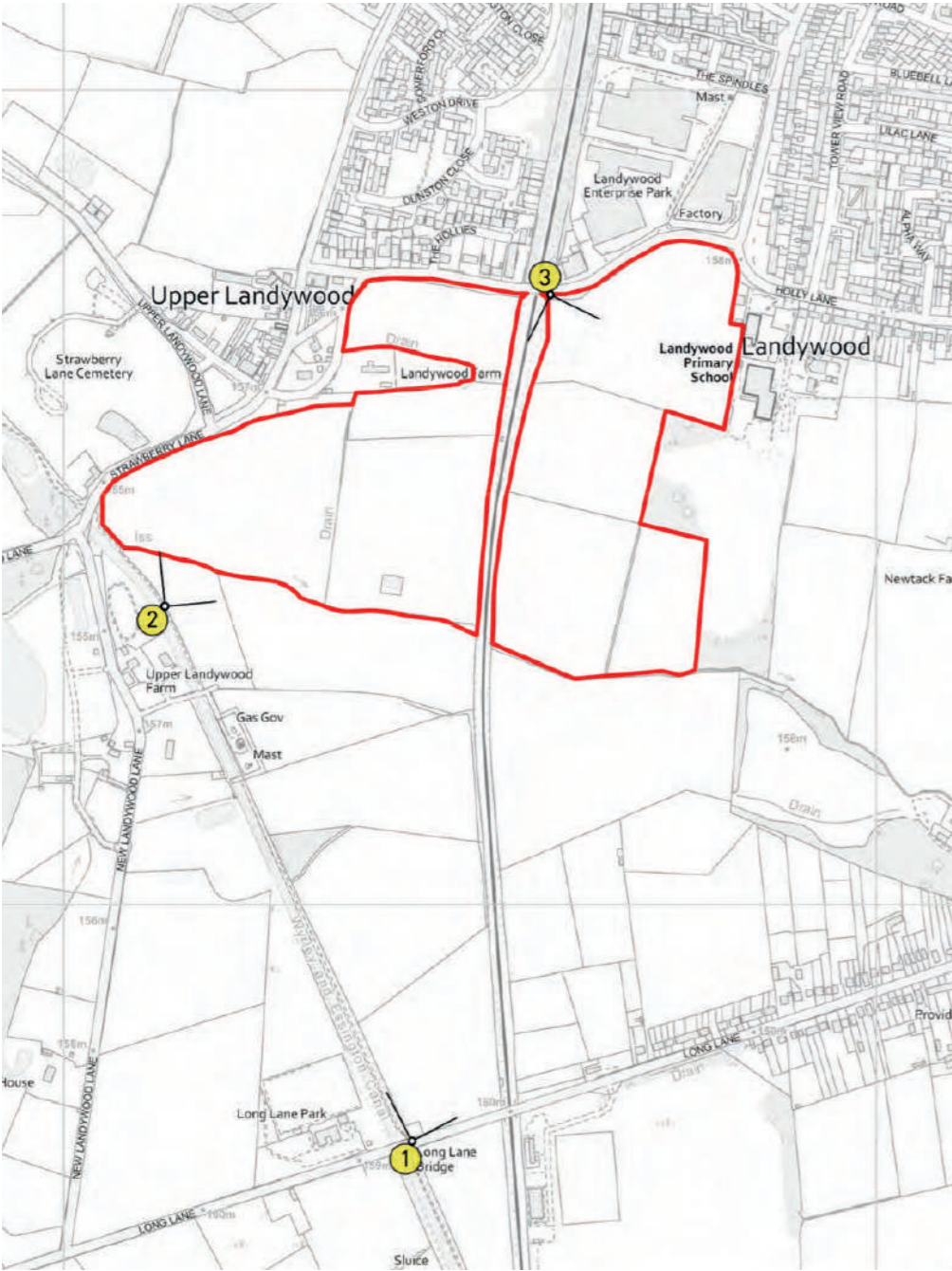
- 4.4.2 Landscape analysis of the existing visual context of the Holly Lane site has been undertaken, to identify key views and any potential landscape impacts which may arise from the development proposals. This analysis has helped to establish the visual envelope of the site, which is the area of landscape from which a site or a proposed development will potentially be visible. The visual envelope of the site is summarised as follows:

- To the north, the visibility of the site is restricted by the existing settlement edge of Landywood. The north-western field parcel is contained to the north, west and south by residential development and to the east by the rail line – associated vegetation filters views however occasional views from Holy Lane are available. The north-eastern parcel is restricted by the industrial/commercial built form, however filtered views into the field parcel are available along the northern boundary of Holly Lane, which is defined by broken lengths of hedgerow with mature trees;

- To the east, views to the site are generally restricted by the combined influence of vegetation and landform which serve to restrict inter-visibility with the wider landscape. A general lack of public access (via PROW) also limits availability of views. The existing school buildings also partially screen views to the site from the east;
- To the south, there are views toward the wider extent of the site from Long Lane, however further south (toward Bloxwich) views to the site tend to be screened by the combined influence of landform and vegetation. A lack of public access (in terms of PROW) also limits available views; and
- To the west, views of the site tend to be limited by the more extensive tree and woodland cover. There tends to be a better network of PROW in this area, however the combination of landform and vegetation tends to screen views. Some short distance views from the Wyrley and Essington Canal LNR are available, limited to the northern section and the sections closer to Long Lane are situated in a deeper cutting.



# Key View and Viewpoint Locations Plan



View 1



View 2

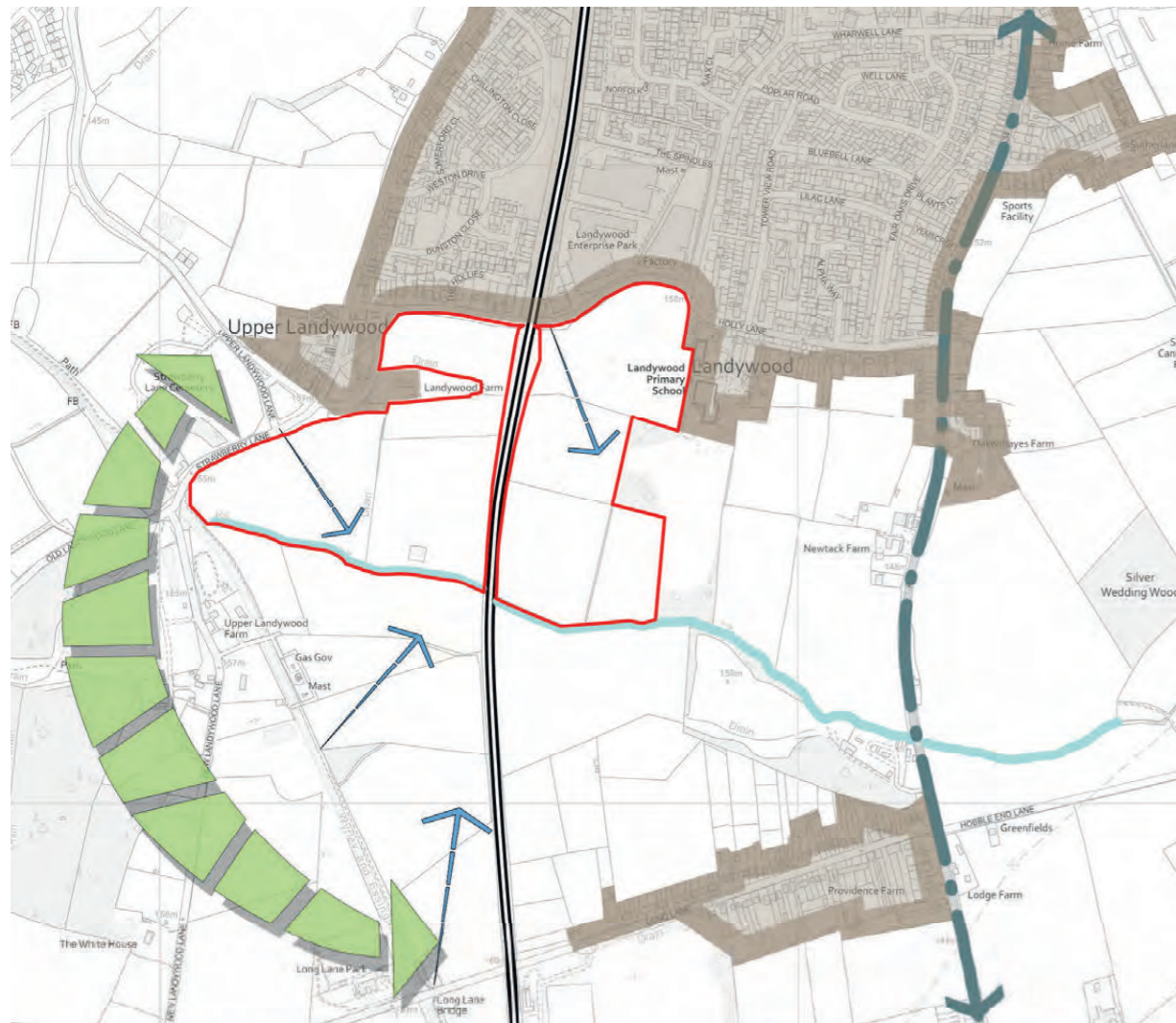


View 3



# 04 SITE CONTEXT

## Landscape and Visual Analysis Plan



### KEY

- Site boundary
- Local watercourse
- Prominent rail infrastructure
- Key highways corridor
- Physical containment of settlement patterns
- Landscape infrastructure and enclosure
- Localised views

## Landscape Framework Plan



### KEY

- Site boundary
- Existing vegetation
- Indicative development areas
- Linear green infrastructure retained
- Potential access options
- Potential location for attenuation
- Linear landscape buffer
- Potential Green Belt boundary



## Landscape and Visual Analysis

4.4.3 Following the identification of key landscape views and the visual baseline, the contextual landscape and visual analysis for the site is summarised as follows:

- The site comprises a relatively 'ordinary' part of landscape that includes some positive attributes, but is also influenced by a number detracting features;
- Across the site there are different levels of physical and visual containment – the northern part of the site is, on the whole, consistent with the existing settlement edge however the parcels to the west of the rail line are contained more strongly than those to the east, despite both being relatively elevated positions;
- The southern part of the site sits lower within the landscape and physical containment is increased by virtue of the shallow valley formation – the southern boundary of the site comprises a sinuous linear belt of vegetation, aligned with a watercourse, which together form an enduring physical feature in the landscape;

- In terms of scale, layout and as a landscape characteristic, the hedgerow field pattern contributes to the local landscape character and should be used positively to influence the layout and massing of the masterplan;
- The north-eastern corner of the site is elevated relative to the surrounding landscape and there are filtered views across this to the landscape to the south;
- Overall visibility to the site from the surrounding landscape is limited – in the main this is due to the combined influence of vegetation and landform, screening views from many vantage points (albeit that higher sensitivity vantage points are relatively limited anyway);
- The rail line is relatively prominent in the local landscape context, particularly given the gantries and overhead power lines which tend to protrude above the surrounding field patterns, making it more visible and its linear form more apparent; and

- The local road network on the north-western and western edges of the site comprises a series of narrow winding lanes, often lined by hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees – these are reflective of the local landscape character.

## Landscape and Visual Summary

- 4.4.4 The preliminary landscape and visual assessment has established that overall visibility to the site is limited, due to the combined influence of vegetation and landform, which screen views from many vantage points. There are also limited Public Rights of Ways in the area.
- 4.4.5 Landscape analysis has informed the formation of the illustrative masterplan and has identified localised views that will need be considered when developing the site.
- 4.4.6 Overall, development of the Holly Lane site is acceptable from a landscape perspective, benefitting from moderate landscape sensitivity as confirmed in the LUC 2019 landscape assessment.



# 05 ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

## Illustrative Masterplan





## 5.1 Illustrative Masterplan

- 5.1.1 The illustrative design proposals have been informed by the local context of the site, its surroundings, constraints and opportunities.
- 5.1.2 The key drivers behind the design are:
- Distinctiveness - Creating a new settlement edge to Great Wyrley, dependant on the level of additional development required, with respect to the existing urban form and surrounding environment.
  - Landscape – Respecting existing landscape features and field patterns within the site whilst creating a strong and defensible boundary to the south which will contain and screen the development.
  - Green Infrastructure – Responding to the existing green infrastructure and creating new opportunities for ecological enhancement including a potential SANGS area to the north of the site, along with increased connectivity, public open space and sustainable drainage solutions.
  - Accessibility – Up to three access points from Strawberry Lane and Holly Lane close to the existing services in Great Wyrley.
- 5.1.3 As such, the site could provide circa 350 high quality homes, dependant on the level of growth required within Great Wyrley, and therefore presents a flexible option for the Council. The proposals also include land for the adjacent Landwood Primary School.
- 5.1.4 The proposals also include an area of land that could be gifted to the adjacent Landywood Primary School for use as a drop-off parking area and playing pitch. This follows discussions with the Primary School who have advised of highway issues around the School during drop off and picking up hours, as well as a desire to expand the School which will necessitate additional infrastructure provision. It is understood that the school is submitting a separate letter to the Council as part of this consultation, confirming their aspirations for these facilities and the discussions which have taken place with Wallace to date.
- 5.1.5 The Masterplan shows an area of land which could be developed as a 5G sports pitch, to supplement the existing sports pitches which are often unusable in the winter conditions due to boggy conditions. This facility could also serve the local amateur football club Wyrley Juniors FC, outside school hours, who have over 80 teams and a real shortage of pitches.
- 5.1.6 Potential options for the new drop-off area and sports pitch would be designed in a way that the sports pitch can operate separately from the school to allow easy access by the wider community and Wyrley Juniors. The proposed parking (circa. 40 spaces) would service a dual purpose as both a drop-off area for the school, as well as for future users of the sports pitch (i.e. the wider community and Wyrley Juniors).
- 5.1.7 The most northern residential parcels would be contained by existing development on three sides, and therefore more urban in character, with the potential for higher densities; whilst the southern parcels could be characterised by lower density 'urban fringe' style development.
- 5.1.8 At either scale, the proposals will be sensitive to the local context, creating a new rural to urban transition along the southern edge of Great Wyrley.
- 5.1.9 The development will have a clearly legible hierarchy of streets providing connectivity and access to local facilities, with clear access into the site and good pedestrian linkages to the surrounding area.
- 5.1.10 The layout and urban form of the scheme will be such that it maximises the potential of the site.



## 6.1 Socio Economic Benefits of The Proposal

6.1.1 The development of the Holly Lane site for 350 dwellings will support the local labour market and could generate the following economic benefits:

- **Employment supported by the construction phase:** The proposed development could support an estimated 126 temporary jobs per annum during the 5.5-year build programme. This comprises on-site construction roles, as well as indirect/induced jobs supported in the wider supply chain.
- **Contribution of construction phase to economic output:** The proposed development could generate an additional £39.6million of gross value added (GVA) during the construction period for the West Midlands economy.
- **Increased Council Tax income:** The construction of the new homes could generate just under £600,000 per annum in additional Council Tax, once fully developed and occupied.
- **New Homes Bonus revenue:** The proposed development has the potential to generate around £1.9 million in New Homes Bonus revenue for South Staffordshire District Council and £468,000 for Staffordshire County Council.
- **Growing labour force:** Based on the current demography of South Staffordshire, approximately 436 economically active and employed residents are estimated to live in the new dwellings once the site is fully built and occupied. These residents, along with those who are not economically active, will be spending money in the local economy.
- **Household spend:** Once built and fully occupied, the households are estimated to generate expenditure in the region of £8.8 million per annum. While not all of this spend will be in the local area, it is reasonable to assume that a substantial proportion will be retained within South Staffordshire.



## 7.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 Wallace Land Investments are committed to promoting this site through the emerging South Staffordshire Local Plan Review for a high-quality development scheme, capable of delivering circa 350 residential dwellings (including affordable homes), dependant on the level of growth required, on the southern edge of Great Wyrley.
- 7.1.2 The proposals also provide a large area of open space to the north east of the site on the Holly Lane frontage, which could form an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs) if this is required on-site, which will be located so that it will be directly accessible to the wider community. In addition land has also been set aside in the far north east corner of the site to allow the adjacent school to expand, and discussions with the school have confirmed a need for additional drop-off and parking facilities to alleviate congestions issues, whilst there is also an aspiration for a new 5G playing pitch intended for joint use between the school and local football club, and both of these features are included in the illustrative masterplan and would deliver clear community benefits..
- 7.1.3 Due to the significant development pressures that the wider Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area face, there is a need to reconsider South Staffordshire's Green Belt boundaries to ensure that emerging housing needs are met in a sustainable manner. Indeed, Policy SAD1 of the South Staffordshire Site Allocations Document explicitly acknowledges the need to undertake a Local Plan Review, which will in part consider the role that South Staffordshire can play in meeting the overspill needs from the GBHMA.
- 7.1.4 Great Wyrley is identified as one of the most sustainable Main Service Villages within South Staffordshire, and the Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study has also included it within an area of potential growth.
- 7.1.5 A review of the wider settlement context in terms of accessibility, landscape, Green Belt and other physical features has confirmed that the Holly Lane site is relatively unconstrained when compared to surrounding parcels and as such represents a logical location for development, and release from the Green Belt as part of the emerging Local Plan Review.
- 7.1.6 The site does not make a significant contribution to the principal purposes and objectives of the Green Belt and could be released from the Green Belt in a planned manner through the emerging South Staffordshire Local Plan Review. It can be delivered in a manner that will utilise existing boundaries including Strawberry Lane and Holly Lane, and sufficient land is available to ensure that robust and defensible landscape boundaries can be established to the south.
- 7.1.7 It is a highly sustainable site and has excellent access to existing schools, shops, bus stops and Landywood Railway Station, which provides direct access to Birmingham City Centre through a 35 minute commute.
- 7.1.8 The site is also unconstrained in terms of the natural, historic and physical environment and is therefore evidently available, suitable and deliverable.



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Pegasus Design

Queens House  
Queen Street  
Manchester  
M2 5HT

T 0161 393 3399

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## **Appendix 6 – 2021 Pegasus Representations to Local Plan (Preferred Options)**



SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW  
PREFERRED OPTIONS (NOVEMBER 2021)

REPRESENTATION BY MILLER HOMES (FORMERLY  
WALLACE LAND INVESTMENTS)

LAND SOUTH OF HOLLY LANE, GREAT WYRLEY

Date: December 2021

Pegasus Reference: KW/GL/P17-2919/R005v1

## Pegasus Group

Queens House | Queen Street | Manchester | M2 5HT

T 0161 393 3399 | W [www.pegasusgroup.co.uk](http://www.pegasusgroup.co.uk)

Birmingham | Bracknell | Bristol | Cambridge | Cirencester | Dublin | East Midlands | Leeds | Liverpool | London | Manchester |  
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Miller Homes are promoting the land located to the south of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley, South Staffordshire. This comprises 23.1 Ha of agricultural fields set across two parcels, split by a railway line, which is currently designated as Green Belt.
- 1.2 These representations welcome and support the decision of the Council to allocate part of **Miller's** landholding at Holly Lane Landywood for housing development in the emerging Local Plan (Site 536a / Development Option 1 – 3.95 Ha), demonstrating that it is a sustainable location for development, within in one of the district's **top tier settlements**.
- 1.3 However for the reasons set out, we also consider there to be justification to extend the allocation further to accommodate the parcel to the west (Development Option 2 – 5.9 Ha) as this increase in scale can offer additional benefits and infrastructure, with negligible additional impacts, given that the characteristics of the two parcels are very similar.
- 1.4 Furthermore, we reiterate our previous position that the full 23 Ha site south of Holly Lane (Development Option 3) is available, suitable and deliverable and would form a logical and sensitive extension to Great Wyrley.
- 1.5 The submitted plans clearly illustrate how the site can provide a land parcel to the neighbouring primary school to allow for potential infrastructure improvements, including a large drop off area for the school and sports pitch for wider community use.
- 1.6 Generous areas of open space can also be provided across the site in convenient locations, to not only benefit the new residents but the existing community too. This will help to mitigate any impacts on the Cannock Chase Conservation Area and help to relieve existing pressures.
- 1.7 Great Wyrley is a highly sustainable settlement, with its Tier 1 status fully justified, and the fact it is conjoined with another Tier 1 settlement in Cheslyn Hay, makes it an obvious location for additional growth, beyond the modest level it is ascribed in the current plan. Our previous critique **of the Council's Green Belt and Landscape evidence has also highlighted various methodological flaws and inconsistencies**, which have contributed overly negative assessment of the land around Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley.
- 1.8 In respect of housing need it is our view that the baseline OAN figure should be increased, above and beyond the standard housing calculation figure which should be viewed as a minimum. Furthermore, the additional 4,000 dwellings proposed is lacking in justification and does not go far enough to meet the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area, given the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities. We also note that the proposed supply identified within the plan should surpass the housing target to provide a choice of sites, and flexibility to account for any under delivery over the plan period.

- 1.9 In overall terms, these representations have identified several factors that inform the case for a higher housing land requirement e.g. economic growth and infrastructure improvement strategies; an insufficient land buffer on the proposed requirement; and an insufficient level of unmet need from the wider GBHMA. On the matter of unmet need, it is clear that there is yet to be agreement on the full extent of the shortfall, albeit there is a residual shortfall of at least 30,000 to be met by between 6 and 10 GBHMA authorities (including South Staffordshire), which would require South Staffordshire to take a further 3,000 – 5,000 homes, above the 4,000 already agreed, which would increase their total required supply by 30 – 50%.
- 1.10 The plan should also consider safeguarding land for longer term needs, to align with national policy and the approach taken in previous plans, and should consider the wider Holly Lane site for safeguarding at the very least.
- 1.11 Overall, for the reasons discussed in detail in these representations, respectfully request that the Council consider the full Holly Lane site for allocation in the next stage Local Plan, or at the very least extending site 536a to take in the land to the west, as a first phase, with the wider site safeguarded, to assist meeting the district **and wider region’s needs**.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Pegasus Group are instructed by Miller Homes (formerly Wallace Land Investments) to make representations to the South Staffordshire Local Plan Preferred Options consultation, which ran between 1<sup>st</sup> November and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021, in relation to their land interests south of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley.

2.2 Pegasus Group have submitted representations on behalf of Wallace Land Investments to the previous consultations in November 2018 (Issues and Options) and December 2019 (Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure), in relation to the same landholdings; however Wallace have since been acquired by Miller Homes in 2021.

### Miller Homes Land Interests

2.3 **Miller Homes is one of the nation's most respected homebuilders** having built around 100,000 homes since establishing in 1934. Miller operate across nine regions from Scotland down to Central and Southern England delivering to all sectors of the market, from apartments, and family homes to affordable housing and regeneration schemes.

2.4 Miller are currently completing over 3,000 plots a year with 17,000 plots in their strategic land pipeline. They have an excellent track record in terms of delivery and ensure sites are swiftly brought forward once secured through site allocations and planning applications.

2.5 Miller Homes are promoting the land located to the south of Holly Lane, Great Wyrley, South Staffordshire. This comprises 23.1 Ha of agricultural fields set across two parcels, split by a railway line, which is currently designated as Green Belt.

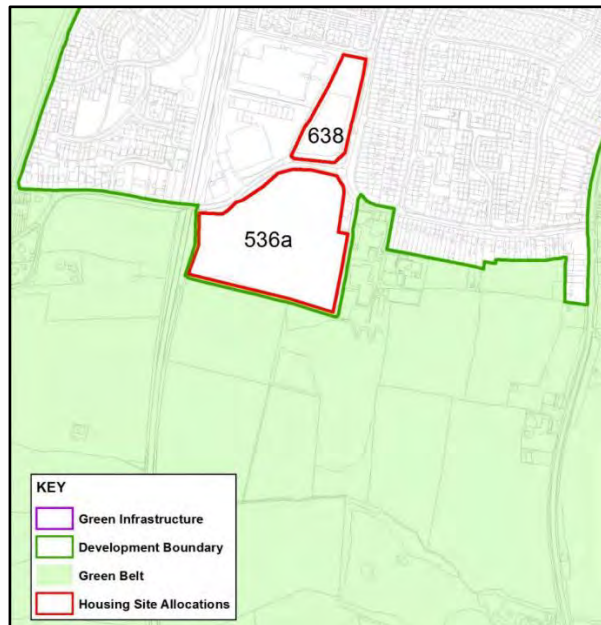
*Figure 2.1 – Miller Homes Ownership*





- 2.6 The north-eastern section of the Holly Lane site, measuring 3.95 Ha, has now been identified as a residential led allocation in the Preferred Options plan (Site reference 536a). The allocation has an indicative capacity of 84 dwellings, along with a requirement to provide drop off parking for the adjacent Landywood Primary School, and an element of specialist older persons housing.

*Figure 2.2 – Proposed Allocation*



- 2.7 At the outset, we fully welcome and support the decision of the Council to allocate part of Miller’s landholding for housing development in the emerging Local Plan, demonstrating that it is a sustainable location for development, in one of the district’s **three top tier settlements**.
- 2.8 These representations detail our support for this draft allocation, commentary on the supporting evidence base and also commentary on the proposed housing target, spatial strategy and development management policies.

#### Representation Structure

- 2.9 Following this introductory section, our Representations are structured as follows:
- In Section 3 we provide a site-specific assessment of the draft 536a housing allocation and wider Holly Lane site, including commentary on the supporting evidence base documents;
  - In Section 4 we provide commentary on the proposed Housing Requirement;
  - In Section 5 we provide commentary on the proposed Spatial Strategy;
  - In Section 6 we provide commentary on the proposed Development Management Policies; and
  - In Section 7 we provide a summary of our overall conclusions.

3. SITE SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT: LAND SOUTH OF HOLLY LANE

Draft Housing Allocation 536a - Development Option 1

3.1 Chapter 5 of the Preferred Options Consultation Paper outlines the proposed housing allocations which will assist in meeting **South Staffordshire’s emerging housing requirements**. Under Policy SA5: Housing Allocations, the table confirms that the land south of Holly Lane site is proposed to be partially allocated for housing development, with a site area of 3.95 Ha and an indicative capacity of 84 dwellings (which is a standard calculation based on 70% developable area and density of 30 dph:

*Figure 3.1 - Proposed Site Allocation:*

Village/ Town	Site Ref No.	Use	Site location	Minimum Capacity (dwellings)	Proforma Page Number
<b>Tier 1 Settlements</b>					
Great Wyrley	536a	Residential (including specialist housing and school parking)	Land off Holly Lane	84	111

3.2 Page 111 (Appendix C) then provides a more detailed pro-forma of the site, confirming that this relates to the north-eastern extent of the Holly Lane land parcel:

3.3 The proforma also confirms the key infrastructure requirements as follows:

- Deliver on site drop off parking to serve Landywood Primary School;
- Deliver on site specialist older persons housing; and
- 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.

3.4 We fully support the identification of this site for housing allocation. Indeed, we have continually advocated in our previous representations that the Holly Lane site is available and highly suitable for Green Belt release and housing development; and is now under the control of a national housebuilder. In terms of the minimum capacity, we understand the 84 dwellings suggested is based on standard density calculations applied to all sites, however for the reasons we set out in the following section, we believe this site has capacity for at least 100 dwellings.

- 3.5 **This is supported by the Council’s Evidence Base**, which confirms that this draft allocation is suitable for housing development. Our commentary on the supporting evidence base is provided below.

*Housing Site Selection Topic Paper September 2021*

- 3.6 This Topic Paper has been prepared in support of the Preferred Options Consultation, providing the rationale for the proposed allocations with site proformas and associated commentary for both allocated and omission sites.

- 3.7 Draft allocation 536a is assessed at Appendix 3 of the report, where it is ultimately scored green for allocation, and it is concluded that:

***"Having regard to all site assessment factors set out in the proforma, the northern part of the site is considered to perform better than other site options and could deliver the Council’s preferred spatial strategy if delivered alongside Sites 523, 119a, 136, 638, 704, SAD Site 141, SAD Site 136 and SAD Site 139."***

- 3.8 We are wholly supportive of this conclusion, and as set out in our previous representations in detail, the site is suitable for allocation from all technical aspects (highways, heritage, landscape, Green Belt etc).

- 3.9 The only minor comment we would make is to the following, which is listed under the known site constraints category: *'Development would result in loss of agricultural land'*.

- 3.10 Whilst the site does comprise agricultural land, it is Grade 4, which is classified as poor, and not BMV, therefore this is not considered a material constraint.

- 3.11 Notably, paragraph 5.4.9 of the Site Selection Topic Paper states that the sites proximity to local shops and public transport means it may also be a suitable opportunity to address the acute local need for specialist elderly housing in Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley. We explore this matter in further detail below.

*Specialist Housing: Local Need & Site Allocations Topic Paper (September 2021)*

- 3.12 This Topic Paper explores specialist housing needs in South Staffordshire, focussing on older people (aged 75+) and people with disabilities (aged 65+).

- 3.13 Page 11 of the report discusses elderly need, with reference to the findings of the 2021 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Figure 7 of the report summarises the findings of this assessment, replicated at Figure 3.1 over the page.

- 3.14 Paragraph 4.3 of the Topic Paper explains how these figures are calculated. In summary, the District wide figure (86 and 22) is average provision of type of accommodation per 1,000 over 75s across the Local Planning Authority, and the SHMA recommends that these rates are



maintained over the plan period. This average is therefore applied to the individual settlement, to which relative level of provision per 1,000 over 75s in each settlement (with the shortfall/overprovision in brackets).

*Figure 3.2 - Prevalence rate of specialist housing compared to district average*

<b>Current Prevalence rate</b>	<b>Sheltered/retirement</b>	<b>Extra care/Supported Living</b>
District wide	86	22
Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley	49 (-37)	0 (-22)
Codsall/Bilbrook	64 (-22)	7 (-15)
Penkridge	122 (+36)	95 (+73)
Brewood	44 (-42)	0 (-22)
Huntington	112 (+26)	0 (-22)
Kinver	122 (+36)	0 (-22)
Perton	66 (-20)	73 (+51)
Wombourne	110 (+24)	53 (+31)

3.15 The findings of this assessment suggests that Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay needs 37 'sheltered/retirement' units and 22 'extra care/supported living' units to maintain the district average, which equates to 59 units in total.

3.16 It is important to note that the use of an average figure across the district does not necessarily translate to an accurate and demonstrable case for need on a settlement/site by site basis. Indeed, paragraph 7.14 of the SHMA (the evidence from which the above figures are taken), accepts that this methodology has the potential to overestimate demand:

*"Whilst the SHOP tool advocates increasing the prevalence rate of both forms of housing to the national ideals that it has defined, feedback from the stakeholder consultation indicated that, across the county, the Housing LIN model outputs have overestimated demand, and also that, within South Staffordshire, there are instances of reports of low demand for the facilities that have been newly built to meet **this need.**"*

3.17 This is because it only confirms the relative amount of specialist provision compared to the number of people over 75, rather than the actual number of elderly people that are seeking specialist accommodation, as many over 75s prefer to remain in their existing homes and adapt them as appropriate as their needs change. Indeed, it follows that in many cases the reason for there being a high proportion of over 75s in a settlement will be because the existing (non-specialist) housing stock and level of services is suited to them, and this is very much the case in Landywood which has a high proportion of bungalows and good level access to local shops and services. As such a higher proportion of older people in an area, could have an inverse relationship with the amount of specialist accommodation required.

3.18 We would also note that the 'sheltered/retirement' and 'extra care/supported living' categories do not directly align with the definitions of older peoples housing in the PPG/ and footnote 63 of

SHMA. We understand these definitions to cover the following but would appreciate further clarification on this as the Local Plan progresses:

- Sheltered/ retirement – relates to individual homes with on-site support/ warden; and
- Extra care/ supported living – comprises more of a retirement community/ village, with individual flats/ bungalows but with 24 hour care on site and communal areas.

3.19 Finally we would note that it may not be practical or commercially viable for each settlement to meet its identified deficiency in each type of provision. This is because specialist elderly accommodation facilities tend to have a set model and format, often focussing on one type of provision (i.e. a care home, or a sheltered accommodation scheme, rather than mixed), with a minimum number of bed spaces required to justify the on-site care facilities.

3.20 To be clear, we are not suggesting that there is no demand for elderly accommodation in this location or that it cannot be provided on this site, however we reserve our position to comment further in terms of the need and format of any specialist elderly accommodation in Great Wyrley/Cheslyn Hay as the evidence base and Local Plan progresses, and accommodate it into our proposals accordingly.

*Proposed Development of Allocation 536a (Development Option 1)*

3.21 As previously noted, the site proforma for draft allocation 536a suggests a minimum capacity of 84 no. dwellings, the delivery of on-site specialist older persons housing and the delivery of on-site drop off parking to serve Landywood Primary School. With regards to the latter, the Council will recall that previous iterations of the Masterplan for Holly Lane already showed a drop off parking area for the adjacent school in this area of the site. Indeed, this has come about through ongoing dialogue with the Primary School, with Miller offering a parking area on site to help alleviate existing parking and congestion issues on Holly Lane (as explained in our representations to the 2019 Spatial Growth Strategy with associated letter of support from the school at Appendix 4 of those reps). At this stage the exact layout, form and number of spaces this parking area should provide has not been confirmed, however the school remain supportive and discussions on the detail will continue as the proposals evolve.

3.22 Previous iterations of our Masterplan also showed a new 3G sports pitch alongside the drop off area for use by the school and wider community, which was again worked up in dialogue with the school, who indicated there was a shortfall in playing pitches across Cheslyn Hay / Great Wyrley. It is pertinent that the playing pitch and parking area, and associated area of land, were offered up on the premise of the full 23 Ha site being allocated.

3.23 **That said, the Council’s ‘Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan’ (September 2020) prepared by KKP has recommended that new pitches be provided at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre and Great Wyrley Academy instead, so does not support the provision of a pitch here.**

- 3.24 Based on the evidence base and analysis in this section we have prepared a Parameters Plan for the site (attached at Appendix 1 and included below). However, given the lack of clarity over the type and form of elderly provision, and the level off drop off parking required, we have not broken this down by individual use.
- 3.25 Instead this plan shows a net developable area of 3.15 Ha, which is more than sufficient for 84 dwellings to be provided, indeed at a density of 35 dph, which would be in keeping with surrounding built form, this would give an indicative capacity of 100 dwellings.

*Figure 3.3 - Parameters Plan of Proposed Allocation 536a*



- 3.26 It also shows two vehicular access points from Holly Lane, which have been confirmed as deliverable by Miller’s highways consultant Sweco. These provide the potential for the different uses within the site to have their own dedicated accesses (for example, the residential use could be accessed from the western access point, and the elderly provision and drop off area from the eastern access point) which will reduce conflicts between the uses from a highways/ circulation perspective and also provide differentiation from a commercial perspective if these uses are ultimately managed by separate operators.
- 3.27 Ultimately, the revised Parameters Plan demonstrates that draft allocation 536a is deliverable and can react flexibly to the suggested infrastructure requirements as the evidence base evolves.
- 3.28 Notwithstanding the above, and our support for the draft allocation, we still believe that the wider Holly Lane site is suitable and deliverable for additional development, as set out below.

Holly Lane Northern Parcels - Development Option 2



3.29 Miller have previously put forward the site below for allocation, as a potential first phase of the wider Holly Lane site, which includes allocation 536a along with the land to west of the railway line, in a site totalling 5.9 Ha in total.

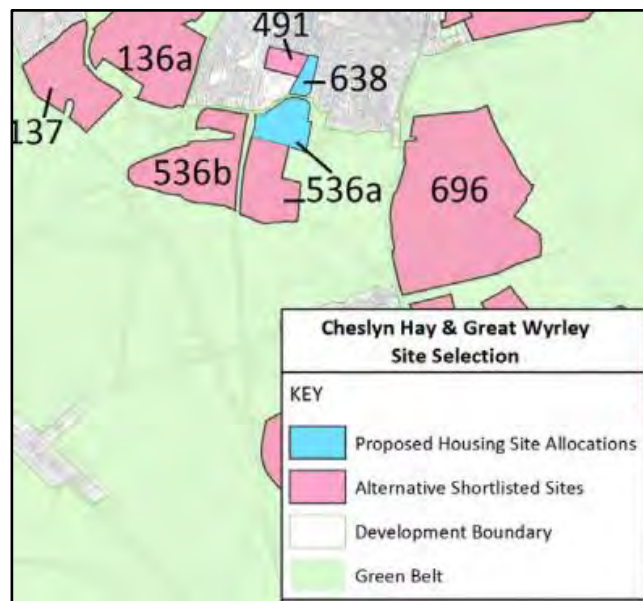
*Figure 3.4 - Proposed Development Option 2: Holly Lane Northern Parcels*



3.30 In our view, there is a compelling case to allocate this additional land west of the railway line, on the basis that it is very similar in character to site 536a, and therefore if the evidence supports the release of the land to the east, it should also support the release of the land to the west (which is referred to as site 536b in the Council’s evidence base).

3.31 The 2021 Site Selection Paper confirms that the north-western extent of the Holly Lane site is assessed as part of the wider 536b land parcel:

*Figure 3.5 – Plan of sites assessed in Great Wyrley / Cheslyn Hay*



3.32 Appendix 3 of the Site Selection Topic Paper includes a pro forma for the wider site 536b which notes the following:

- In relation to Green Belt Harm, it is stated that this is 'High' on 1.9ha of land on northern part of the site. This is identical to the findings of the assessment for draft allocation 536a, with that Proforma confirming Green Belt Harm to be 'High' on 3.95ha in the northern part of the site (adjacent Holly Lane)<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the level of Green Belt harm is adjudged to **be the same on both land parcels in the Council's evidence base, therefore the case for allocation of both sites in Green Belt terms is identical.** This, however, has not translated through to the allocation stage, with the north-eastern section being allocated and the north-west section not.
- Landscape sensitivity is classed as moderate for parcel 536b. This is again identical to parcel 536a, which is also classed as moderate, but has not translated into an allocation for the land to the west.

3.33 **The Council's evidence base therefore indicates** predominantly positive and almost identical findings for both land parcels, which are consistent with a large number of other sites identified for allocation. However; ultimately this has led to different outcomes in terms of allocations. Indeed, these similarities are summarised in the table below (Figure 3.6), where we replicate the **Council's overall conclusions in relation to the two assessed parcels.**

*Figure 3.6 - Summary conclusions of parcels 536a and 536b, taken from Site Selection Topic Paper*

Summary conclusions for parcel 536a (partial allocation)	Summary conclusions for parcel 536b (omission)
<p><u>Key positives and negatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern part of site is similar Green Belt harm to the majority of land around the <b>village (site is 'high'), but land to south is very high harm</b></li> <li>• Similar landscape sensitivity to the majority of land around the village (site is <b>'moderate'</b>)</li> <li>• Major negative impacts predicted against the landscape criteria in the Sustainability Appraisal, but failing to consider such areas for development may result in an unsustainable pattern of development and would run contrary to the Association of Black Country Authorities' <b>proposed use of the Green Belt/landscape evidence base as</b></li> </ul>	<p><u>Key positives and negatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern part of site is similar Green Belt harm to the majority of land around the village (site is <b>'high'), but land to south is very high harm</b></li> <li>• Similar landscape sensitivity to the majority of land around the village (site is <b>'moderate'</b>)</li> <li>• Major negative impacts predicted against the landscape criteria in the Sustainability Appraisal, but failing to consider such areas for development may result in an unsustainable pattern of development and would run contrary to the Association of <b>Black Country Authorities' proposed use of the Green Belt/landscape evidence base as</b></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> It is pertinent to note that 'High' is not the highest level of Green Belt Harm ascribed in the South Staffs Green Belt Review (there is a 'Very High' score as well) and that many of the proposed allocations are in areas of 'High' harm (with at least one in an area of 'Very High' harm).

<p>set out in Duty to Co-operate correspondence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highways authority advise against allocation of full site due to surrounding road network.</li> <li>Site could provide land adjacent to neighbouring school with need for increased parking capacity.</li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Having regard to all site assessment factors set out in the proforma, the northern part of the site is considered to perform better than other site options and could deliver the <b>Council's</b> preferred spatial strategy if delivered alongside Sites 523, 119a, 136, 638, 704, SAD Site 141, SAD Site 136 and SAD Site 139.</p>	<p>set out in Duty to Co-operate correspondence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highways authority advise against allocation of full site due to surrounding road network.</li> <li>Historic Environment Site Assessment indicates the potential for significant effects that may not be mitigated</li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Having regard to all site assessment factors set out in the proforma, the site is not considered to perform so well compared to other site options that it should be allocated instead of, or in addition to, Sites 523, 119a, 136, 638, 704, 536a, SAD Site 141, SAD Site 136 and SAD Site 139.</p>
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3.34 The site similarities are also evident in the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal (August 2021), which confirms that both parcels have identical scoring post mitigation (which are again consistent with the scores on a number of other allocated sites), see Table 6.1 of the SA as replicated below.

*Figure 3.7 – Sustainability Appraisal scores for parcels 536a and 536b*

Site Reference	1 Climate Change Mitigation	2 Climate Change Adaptation	3 Biodiversity & Geodiversity	4 Landscape & Townscape	5 Pollution & Waste	6 Natural Resources	7 Housing	8 Health & Wellbeing	9 Cultural Heritage	10 Transport & Accessibility	11 Education	12 Economy & Employment
536a	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	-	+	-	0	-	-	-
536b	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	-	+	-	0	-	-	-

3.35 It is evident from Figure 3.6 above that the only difference between the two parcels is in relation to heritage matters, with the Historic Environment Site Assessment (HESA) 2020 indicating that the development of site 536b would have the potential for significant effects that may not be mitigated. We address this below.

*Heritage Considerations - Landywood Farmhouse*

3.36 The site contains no designated or non-designated heritage assets but is within the vicinity of the Grade II Listed Building known as Landywood Farmhouse. This is located outside of the red line boundary to the south west of the site. The HESA does acknowledge this fact, giving site 536b a green score '**No concerns identified, on current evidence**' in terms of its direct physical impact on heritage assets, which we fully agree with.



- 3.37 However in respect of indirect impacts, on the setting and character of the adjacent Listed Farmhouse **the HESA scores the site as red, which means 'significant effect predicted. Mitigation unlikely to be possible'.**
- 3.38 Pegasus Heritage has provided a Note which addresses the findings of the 2020 Assessment, contained at Appendix 2. The Note should be read in full, however it ultimately disagrees with **the Council's assessment based on the following conclusions:**
- The historic functional association of the site with the Grade II listed building, Landywood Farmhouse does offer some minor contribution to the heritage significance of this designated heritage asset. However, its contribution is less than the architectural and historic interest of the building itself which was the reason for its designation, or its immediate setting and surrounds of its curtilage, which is outside of the site boundary.
  - **The method of the Council's assessment of heritage impact is not consistent with the Government's policies for plan-making or decision-making as set out in the NPPF and fails to recognise that not all designated heritage assets are of the same degree of heritage significance, and that Landywood Farmhouse is a designated heritage asset of lower significance.**
  - The assessment, by not fully adopting the language or considering the policies of the NPPF does not suitably reflect the different degrees of harm within heritage policy as set out in NPPF. As such this has not allowed a robust assessment of potential impact on heritage significance that can be considered to be consistent with the NPPF.
  - The scoring of the site as red, and thereby considered to be substantially harmful to the significance of a Grade II listed building via a change to its setting, is both overstating the contribution of the site to the heritage significance of the building and that of the potential impact of the allocation. When the proposed allocation is considered alongside the policies of the NPPF the potential for harm could only be less than substantial, which could be mitigated by layout, screening and provision of open space to further lessen or remove harmful impact. An amber score meaning **'no significant effects which could be mitigated'** would be a more appropriate score.
  - The allocation is also likely to bring public benefits as per paragraph 8 of the NPPF. These have not been taken into consideration as part of the scoring. Any harm would also need to be weighed against the public benefits which might outweigh the harm.
- 3.39 Ultimately, we disagree that this site scores red in terms of its indirect heritage impact, and instead should be amber: 'no significant effects which could be mitigated'. Indeed, development proposals could carefully respect Landywood Farmhouse through mitigation, ensuring that heritage is not a technical constraint which would prevent residential development on this site.
- 3.40 Given that heritage impact is seemingly the only difference between the two land parcels at the northern extent of the Holly Lane site, the findings of which we disagree with, it is clear that both

of these land parcels are nearly identical in terms of site characteristics. Indeed, our previous representations have discussed the similarities in detail in respect of Landscape and Green Belt matters and **the Council's** own evidence base comes to the same view.

- 3.41 Therefore, there is a justified and robust planning case to extend the draft Holly Lane allocation to incorporate the land to the west of the railway line. This is not only due to the similar site characteristics outlined above, but also due to the extensive housing needs of the district and wider region, which have not been fully accounted for in the current plan, and which address in more detail in Section 4 of this report.
- 3.42 As such we have prepared a Parameters Plan for the extended site, shown below and attached at Appendix 3, and again we have not broken this down by individual use to provide flexibility to respond to the detailed requirements of the site as the evidence base evolves.

*Figure 3.8 – Parameters Plan for Development Option 2*



- 3.43 The plan shows an enlarged net developable area of 3.9 Ha, with the western parcel including generous areas of open space (0.75 Ha) and a stand-off from the Listed Farmhouse. At a density of 35 dph this would give an indicative capacity of 137 dwellings, which would provide additional levels of much needed housing, and additional flexibility to provide a more meaningful element of specialist elderly housing and/ or an enlarged drop off area.
- 3.44 The western parcel includes a further access point from Holly Lane, which has been confirmed as deliverable by Sweco and provides further flexibility and opportunities to provide differentiation

between the different uses, which will have operational and commercial benefits. Indeed, the western parcel could potentially deliver the elderly housing element as a standalone use.

3.45 Therefore the Parameters Plan demonstrates that both the Holly Lane Northern parcels (Development Option 2) are deliverable and provide increased flexibility in meeting the infrastructure requirements of the site as the evidence base evolves.

3.46 We therefore politely request that the Council expand the proposed Holly Lane allocation (536a) to include the land west of the railway line, which represents a highly suitable and sustainable housing site with near identical characteristics (in technical terms) to the current proposed allocation to the east.

3.47 In our view, this enlarged allocation should be viewed as the first phase of the full Holly Lane site, which we still consider to be deliverable for the reasons set out below.

#### Wider Holly Lane Site - Development Option 3

3.48 As noted, Miller are still promoting the full 23 Ha Holly Lane site, as shown below, and still believe this to be suitable and deliverable in light of the evidence base and emerging housing requirements.

*Figure 3.9 - Proposed Development Option 3: Wider Holly Lane site*



3.49 We have already explained how the entire Miller landholding has been assessed in the Site Selection Paper under site proformas 536a and 536b. These assessments concluded that the northern land parcels are less sensitive in terms of Green Belt harm and that the southern land areas would cause 'very high' harm to the Green Belt. It is also stated that the highways authority



advise against allocation of the full site due to capacity issues in the surrounding road network. We deal with these two matters in turn below.

#### Green Belt

- 3.50 In respect of Green Belt matters, our previous Representations commented on this matter in great detail – including concerns regarding the methodology of the 2019 LUC Assessment (which has not been updated) as well as the site-specific findings relating to the Holly Lane site. We do not wish to repeat the contents of our previous representations in full, however we do provide an extract of the relevant section (6) from our 2019 representations at Appendix 4, and our site-specific Green Belt assessment of the entire Holly Lane site below, which considers the full 23 Ha site against the 5 green belt purposes as set out in paragraph 138 of the 2021 NPPF:

*Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas*

- 3.51 Release of the site from the Green Belt would not represent unrestricted sprawl. Indeed, it would be planned development delivered through a statutory Local Plan, whereby specific policies could be provided to ensure robust Green Belt boundaries are formed as part of the development. In this instance, Holly Lane to the north and Strawberry Lane to the west already provide strong defensible boundaries for the site. The northern parts of the site are contained by the existing areas of the settlement, including areas of built form; to the south, the southern boundary is defined by the enduring landscape feature of the local watercourse, associated vegetation and topographical changes of the shallow valley formation. On the basis of these physical **characteristics, the perception of 'sprawl' arising from potential development on the site will be negligible.**
- 3.52 Whilst the southern and eastern site boundaries are less defensible and well defined than the northern and western boundaries, Miller would be willing to invest in a strong landscape buffer to the east and south to restrict any unrestricted sprawl post adoption of the new Local Plan. Indeed, this is shown on the illustrative Masterplan (see Figure 3.5).

*Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another*

- 3.53 In the context of the Green Belt between Great Wyrley/Landywood and Bloxwich to the south, the scale and location of the site is such that it has a very limited contribution to the separation of the settlement areas. The existing separation gap between Great Wyrley and the Black Country conurbation to the south is circa 1.6km when taken from the nearest settlement boundary extent to the site (along the A34). If this site was to be developed, it would reduce this gap slightly to circa 1.4km. This would still represent a significant gap between the two settlements and indeed, ribbon development is already present along the A34 which the development site does not extend much beyond. The development of this site would not lead to the merging of settlements in a northerly, easterly or westerly direction, as the site is contained by built form or existing road infrastructure in this regard. In short, the site does not make a significant contribution to this purpose of the Green Belt.

*Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*

- 3.54 To a large degree the site is enclosed by the urban environment, particularly on its northern and eastern edges, as well as at its north-western edge. It is also bisected centrally by prominent rail infrastructure, including overhead gantries which are highly visible urbanised features. This presents a stronger sense of the urban fringe for the site and less so, one of open countryside. Furthermore, the perception of character is limited by the lack of public access in terms of recreation, with the experience of the landscape available more generally via the local road network. As such, it does not make a particularly positive contribution in terms of providing access to the open countryside, which is one of the main objectives of the Green Belt. Accordingly, the site currently serves little function as countryside and its loss would not be unacceptable.

*Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*

- 3.55 According to the NPPF interpretation, South Staffordshire does not contain any historic towns, therefore this purpose of Green Belt is not explicitly applicable to the District. Nevertheless, at the local level analysis, a Grade II Listed Building (Landywood Farmhouse) borders the site to the west; however, the development will be sensitively designed to ensure the setting of the Listed Building and wider settlement are respected. As such, the site does not contribute to the Green Belt purpose of preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

*Purpose 5: To assist in urban regeneration, be encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land*

- 3.56 It is evident that across the Greater Birmingham HMA there is a significant shortfall in urban land to meet emerging development requirements and this is reflected in the emerging Local Plan Review which proposes to accept 4,000 units of this wider unmet need as well as meeting its own needs. Accordingly, the development of this site would not prejudice the recycling of derelict and other urban land within South Staffordshire, rather, it will complement these sites to ensure that emerging housing requirements will be met.
- 3.57 Accordingly, the entire Holly Lane site does not provide a meaningful contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt and is a highly suitable site for Green Belt release.

Highways

- 3.58 In respect of highways, we take note of the Highways authority summary advice '*against allocation of the full site due to surrounding road network*' with the supporting highways comments at Appendix 2 (of the Site Selection Paper) **giving both parcels a yellow score** ('Ok in principle subject to significant highways improvements') **then noting:**

*'Ok in principle subject to smaller site release and significant highways improvements to Holly Lane railway bridge crossing'.*

- 3.59 We dispute this position, as our initial highways investigations undertaken by Sweco have confirmed that a development of up to 350 homes could be served from the three proposed

vehicular accesses on Holly Lane without significantly impacting the local highway network or the Holly Lane Bridge. Indeed, we have also demonstrated through our vision document and representations how the provision of a drop-off parking area for the school within the site, will actually alleviate existing congestion issues in the site.

- 3.60 No additional evidence has been provided to confirm the issues with the Holly Lane Bridge or the type of improvements that might be required, and there is no exploration as to whether an increased scale of development here could help to fund and deliver such improvements, which could provide a real infrastructure improvement for the settlement.
- 3.61 In addition to the above, we have also comprehensively demonstrated that the whole Holly Lane site is suitable for development from all other technical aspects/considerations. Indeed, our previous Vision Document, which has already been before the Council but is replicated again at Appendix 5, provides full details on this matter.
- 3.62 Notwithstanding the above, there are other potential planning benefits in allocating the full site here. Firstly, it could provide significant levels of additional housing to help meet emerging needs of South Staffordshire, and the wider Birmingham region, which we believe have not been properly accounted for in the current plan, and which address in more detail in Section 4.
- 3.63 It also provides increased capacity for elderly provision, and the potential for a larger specialist facility that could meet needs beyond the immediate area.
- 3.64 Furthermore, the wider site still has the potential to deliver a new 3g sports pitch, or alternative form of recreation development, alongside a school parking drop-off area, which aligns with the plans ethos of being infrastructure led. Indeed, paragraph 5.9 the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (September 2021) confirms that improvements to sport and leisure facilities in the District is a key infrastructure priority.
- 3.65 **However, as noted previously the Council’s ‘Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan’ (September 2020) does not support the provision of a pitch here.**
- 3.66 It does confirm at page 20, that there is an insufficient supply of full size 3G pitches to meet current and anticipated future demand for football in South Staffordshire, with page 21/22 confirming a current shortfall of two full size 3g pitches, and potential shortfall of three in the future (based on a need for 7 and existing provision for 4). It goes on to state that:

*"In the North-East Analysis Area, providing a second pitch at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre is considered to be an option. The site already hosts a full size 3G pitch so therefore has an operational structure in place and providing a second pitch would create a multi-pitch hub site. An alternative option could be Great Wyrley Academy, which expresses an aspiration to host a pitch."*



- 3.67 So the suggestion is that this need in this area can be met by additional pitches at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre (which the Infrastructure Plan confirms is already being investigated/ costed) and by Great Wyrley Academy, based on an expression of interest. We understand these are favoured locations to the Holly Lane site as they are existing recreation facilities more centrally located in the settlement.
- 3.68 Whilst we do not dispute this assertion, we would note that the feasibility of a pitch at Great Wyrley school does not appear to have been investigated. Therefore it would seem prudent to keep other options, such as the Holly Lane/ Landywood Primary School site, **open. What's more,** we understand Great Wyrley has the largest junior football club in the Midlands, Wyrley Juniors FC, who have 64 teams, and high demand for such facilities, as set out in their letter to Wallace dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019, which was submitted to the Council on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020.
- 3.69 Whilst this has presumably been factored into the KKP evidence (which suggests 223 affiliated teams in South Staffs currently and a further 33 expected in the future), there would seem to be no harm in exploring additional provision, particularly where a credible proposal has been presented which could benefit a school and wider community, as is the case here.
- 3.70 In this instance, locating a pitch on land adjacent to Landywood School, along with a drop off-parking area will make this a genuinely dual-purpose facility, with an extra pitch and drop off parking for the school during school hours (to supplement the existing pitches which are often unusable in winter due to boggy conditions, and to alleviate congestion at drop off and pick up times. The parking and pitch can then be used by the wider community (including Wyrley Juniors) outside school hours, and can even make use of some of the schools changing facilities, which face out onto this area, and can be accessed independently of the school.

*Figure 3.10 - Illustrative plan of proposed sports pitch and drop-off area*



- 3.71 Finally, in terms the KKP approach to centralising sports provision in hub locations, whilst this unarguably has benefits with economies of scale etc, it **doesn't** give an even spatial distribution of pitches across the settlement and could generate unsustainable travel patterns with increased car trips to access these central facilities.
- 3.72 We have provided a more detailed masterplan for the wider site in the past, and one is included in the Vision Document at Appendix 5; however in line with the plans provided for Options 1 and 2 we provide a higher level parameters plan below (attached at Appendix 6).

*Figure 3.11 – Parameters Plan for Development Option 3*



- 3.73 The plan shows four accesses, with three on Holly Lane and one further south west on Strawberry Lane, with two for each part of the site, allowing an access loop through both parcels (such that neither are reliant on a single point of access). As with the other development options, this offers good flexibility for a range of potential uses to come forward on the site with the potential for their own independent access.
- 3.74 The plan shows a total net developable area of 15 Ha, with generous areas of open space and drainage attenuation around the southern boundary of the site, and stand offs around the Listed Farmhouse. Even at a reduced average density of 30 dph (which would be more in keeping with the more rural fringe character of the southern section of the site) this would give an indicative capacity of 450 dwellings, which would make a significant contribution to meeting housing needs, and significant additional flexibility to provide a larger elderly housing element, drop off area and even a sports pitch/ recreation facility.

- 3.75 Finally we would request that if the wider Holly Lane site is not considered for allocation, that it be identified as safeguarded land (please see our comments in section 5), such that it could form a later phase to the development of the northern parcels (Options 1 and 2), as part of a future Local Plan review, and provide certainty and comfort to Miller to provide the necessary infrastructure and futureproofing into the current development (in terms of access routes etc).



4. HOUSING NEED (CHAPTER 4)

4.1 The total housing requirement is now 8,881 over the 20 year period from 2018 to 2038 which equates to 444 dwellings per annum. This total requirement has increased very slightly since the 2019 Spatial Housing Strategy (when it was 8,845), albeit the Standard Method requirement has actually dropped from 254 to 243 dpa<sup>2</sup>, but with the addition of 750 completions between 2018 and 2021 and the 4,000 unmet need from the wider GBHMA.

*Figure 4.1 – Overall Housing Requirements*

South Staffordshire’s own housing need using the government’s standard method (2021-2038)	4,131
Completions in the District since the start of the plan period (2018-2021)	750
Additional housing to contribute towards the unmet needs of the GBHMA	4,000
<b>Total number of dwellings to be planned for</b>	<b>8,881</b>

**Table 7: Housing Target**

4.2 Miller contend that the proposed housing requirement figure of 8,881 is too low and that there are a number of factors at play in South Staffordshire, and the wider Greater Birmingham Region that would justify an increase to this figure, to ensure a positively prepared plan in line with paragraph 35 of the 2021 NPPF. We outline these factors below, with reference to the current national guidance.

National Guidance on Housing Need

4.3 In terms of national policy, NPPF Paragraph 61 states that (our emphasis):

*To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.’*

4.4 Paragraph 11 also notes that for plan-making, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means that ‘*all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure...*’

4.5 As such, the Standard Methodology figure must be treated as the minimum starting point for housing delivery. This is supplemented with additional detail in the NPPG<sup>3</sup>, which states that the Local Housing Need (LHN) provides a minimum starting point in determining the number of homes

<sup>2</sup> As of March 2021, using the 2014 SNHP over the period 2021 – 2031 with 2020 affordability ratios

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 2a-010-20201216

needed, it also states that government is committed to ensuring that more homes are built and that government support ambitious authorities who want to plan for growth.

4.6 This paragraph then sets out the circumstances when it might be appropriate to plan for a higher housing need than the Standard Method indicates, including:

- where there are deliverable growth strategies for the area (e.g. Housing Deals);
- where there are strategic infrastructure improvements that are likely to drive an increase in the homes needed locally,
- where an authority has agreed to take on unmet need from neighbouring authorities, or
- where previous levels of housing delivery or assessments of need are significantly greater than the Standard Method.

4.7 In addition, paragraph 2a-015-20190220 confirms that *'Where a strategic policy-making authority can show that an alternative approach identifies a need higher than using the Standard Method, and that it adequately reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals, the approach can be considered sound as it will have exceeded the minimum starting point.'*

4.8 Whilst South Staffordshire are proposing an approach that exceeds the minimum requirement, it **is our strong view that this doesn't reflect the circumstances in** South Staffordshire and the wider Greater Birmingham area (as referenced in paragraph 10 of the PPG), or the demographic trends or market signals (as referenced in paragraph 15 of the PPG). As such, it is our strong view that a far greater uplift is required.

#### Meeting South Staffordshire Needs

4.9 In line with the guidance above, we set out the relevant circumstances that would support an **uplift to the standard methodology for meeting South Staffordshire's own needs (before moving on to meeting unmet need in the wider region, other market signals, and supply side considerations)**.

#### *Growth Strategies*

4.10 NPPG guidance notes how there may be justification to exceed the standard method figure if there are growth strategies in the area, for example where funding is in place to promote and facilitate additional growth. As summarised below, there are economic growth strategies in the South Staffordshire area which justify the standard housing method being exceeded in the District.

4.11 Firstly, South Staffordshire is part of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Deal, which was agreed by Government in March 2014. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has secured £82.3m to support economic growth in the area, with £14.1m of funding committed between 2016 and 2021. Furthermore, the substantial investment from Government is expected to generate at least £19m of additional investment from local partners

and the private sector, creating a total new investment package of £101.3m for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire area.

4.12 In addition, the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Strategic Economic Plan (April 2018) outlines strategic employment sites that are identified as priorities in the LEP area, which includes the Bericote Four Ashes and Featherstone sites which are both located in South Staffordshire District. Both sites will clearly generate significant jobs in South Staffordshire, which will in turn increase housing demand in the area. Indeed, the Four Ashes site will provide 900,000 sq ft of industrial floor space and accommodate over 1,000 jobs, and has outline planning consent in place. Since then the West Midlands Interchange has gained consent through the DCO process, which will generate further jobs growth, which we come on to below.

4.13 Finally, the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP now has a Local Industrial Strategy in place, which was adopted in March 2020 (so since the last draft of the local plan). This aims to boost investment in the area by focussing on the following strengths, and needs to be taken into consideration when establishing the housing need requirement for the District:

- manufacturing and materials innovation;
- energy innovation and low carbon adoption;
- connectivity; and
- a strong and growing visitor economy.

4.14 To conclude, the aforementioned economic growth strategies provide justification for exceeding the minimum standard method housing figure in the South Staffordshire context.

#### *Strategic Infrastructure Improvements*

4.15 NPPG Guidance also outlines how strategic infrastructure improvements that are likely to drive an increase in the homes needed locally provide justification for exceeding the standard housing method figure.

4.16 As part of the Preferred Options consultation, the Council has published an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2021). Whilst a number of the infrastructure projects in the plan relate to education, additional car parking provision etc, others are transport related such as road infrastructure improvements to help deliver the ROF Featherstone Strategic Employment site, and upgrades to Gailey Island associated with WMI. We have already outlined the economic growth benefits that will arise from the strategic employment sites, with the planned highways infrastructure helping to unlock their potential.

4.17 Table 6.1 of the South Staffordshire District Integrated Transport Strategy (October 2017) outlines potential and planned infrastructure projects in the District. Notably, **Landywood Railway Station features in the Plan, including the 'Landywood rail station gateway project' and the aim**



to provide earlier and later trains and a half-hourly off-peak service from Landywood (which has now been achieved).

- 4.18 At the higher level the HS2 proposals, although not yet fully confirmed, is a key infrastructure project with a proposed new station in Stafford to the north. South Staffordshire District borders Stafford District to the north, therefore there will be evident economic growth benefits for South Staffordshire arising from the proposals<sup>4</sup>. For example, spurred on by HS2 connectivity at Stafford, Stoke and Macclesfield, the Cheshire & Staffordshire HS2 Growth Strategy aims to deliver 100,000 new homes and 120,000 new jobs by 2040.
- 4.19 South Staffordshire is also likely to see significant benefits arising from the development of the West Midlands Interchange (WMI) which represents a strategic infrastructure project that achieved consent through the DCO process in May 2020. Once complete, the Interchange is expected to deliver up to 8 million sq ft of logistics floorspace and support around 8,500 jobs and given its location, it is reasonable to expect a good proportion of these to be taken by South Staffordshire residents – either existing or new people attracted to the area by new employment opportunities.
- 4.20 Finally, Highways England are at an advanced stage in the DCO process to secure a new Link Road between the M6 and M54, to reduce pressure on the A460, at an estimated cost of £779m, and this clearly represents a significant piece of strategic infrastructure that will support additional growth in the future. This has been through an examination with the Secretary of State for Transport due to provide a decision by April 2022.
- 4.21 Therefore, the above infrastructure improvements and projects need to be taken into **consideration when establishing South Staffordshire’s housing requirement.**

*Previous Delivery*

- 4.22 Previous delivery is broadly in line with the Standard Method figure of 243, averaging out at 252 dpa since 2001 and 249 over the Core Strategy period (2014/15-2018/2019/2)<sup>5</sup>. That said estimated delivery for the year 2020/21 was 413<sup>5</sup>, with projected delivery at an average 342 dpa from 2020 – 2025, **according to the Council’s ‘Housing Monitoring and Five Year Housing Land Supply’ document, dated April 2020;** which, if realised, might support an uplift in the requirement in the coming years.

*Previous Assessments/SHMAs*

- 4.23 Whilst there is a May 2021 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), prepared by HDH Planning & Development, published alongside the current Preferred Options this does not seek to establish an objectively assessed housing need (OAN) figure instead it simply applies the standard

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hs2.org.uk/why/connectivity/>

<sup>5</sup> According to government live table 122

method, which we acknowledge is in line with current PPG guidance. That said it actually applies the previous SM figure of 254 dpa, which was updated in March 2021.

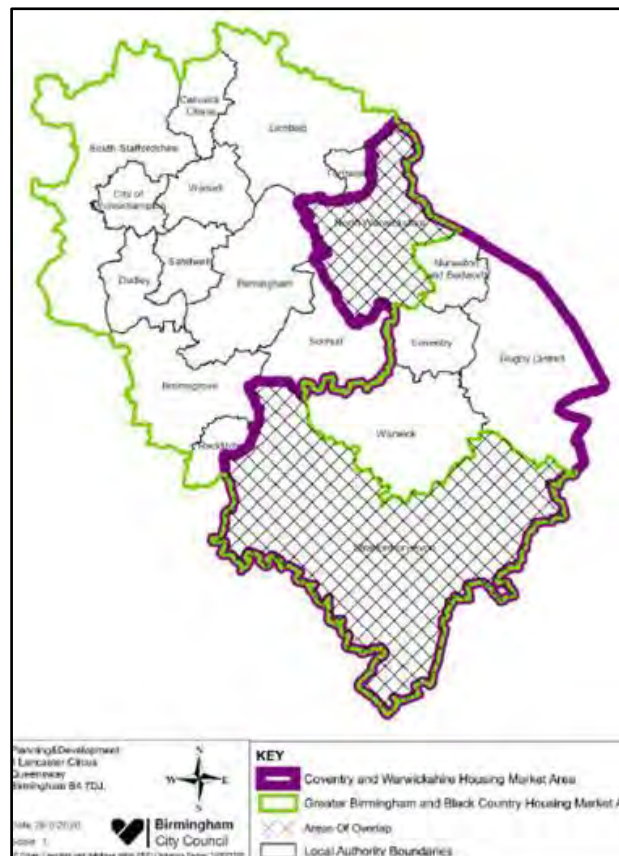
- 4.24 The last assessment to fully consider need, beyond the standard method, was the March 2017 Black Country and South Staffordshire SHMA, prepared by Peter Brett Associates. Table 7.1 of the report states that the OAN requirement for South Staffordshire is 270 dpa. This OAN figure covers the time period 2014 to 2036, and was calculated taking into account market signal adjustments, economic growth etc. Paragraph 7.30 confirms that the OAN figure does not include meeting unmet housing needs from elsewhere in the Housing Market Area (HMA).
- 4.25 However, paragraph 7.31 of the 2017 SHMA notes how there is scope for South Staffordshire to offset some of the wider unmet cross-boundary need, because demand for new homes in this area is higher than other parts of the HMA. We fully agree with this assertion, as discussed in detail below.

#### Meeting Wider Unmet Needs within Greater Birmingham

- 4.26 Paragraph 4.12/ Table 7 of the Preferred Options document confirms that South Staffordshire will accommodate up to 4,000 dwellings towards the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA, which is unchanged from the previous Spatial Growth Strategy consultation in November 2019, and the Issues and Options consultation in November 2018.
- 4.27 We repeat our previously raised concerns on this matter, namely that we do not consider that the 4,000-unit uplift goes far enough to meet the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area, given the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities who are unable to sufficiently contribute to the wider Greater Birmingham needs. Whilst it is welcomed that South Staffordshire District Council is looking to contribute towards the delivery of unmet needs from the wider GBHMA, the 4,000 figure does not appear to be based on robust evidence of site capacity and constraints within the relevant local authorities.
- 4.28 Firstly however, it is important to note that the full extent of the shortfall/unmet need in the GBHMA is still unclear with no recent agreement or position statement from the 14 Local Planning Authorities of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA).
- 4.29 However, the Black Country Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) and supporting evidence base, which consulted between August and October 2021, provided an updated position on unmet need in the wider area (since the last full position statement from 2018 which suggested a shortfall of 6,100 homes to 2036).
- 4.30 Indeed, suggested a shortfall of 28,239 homes by 2039 from the 4 Black Country authorities alone, which is still significant (and could well rise once Birmingham/ Solihull etc confirm their position to 2039). This was calculated on the following basis:

- Housing need in the Black Country has increased from 3,150 dwellings per annum (or 63,000 total from 2006- 2026) in the adopted plan, up to 4,004 dpa (or 76,076 from 2020-2039) in the current draft plan, largely **due to the government’s new standard method** applying an uplift of 35% to Wolverhampton as one of the 20 largest cities in the UK.
- Black Country have identified an urban capacity of 39,257 homes (and 205 Ha of employment land), which they think can be increased further to 40,117 with additional sites; however this could generate a shortfall of as much as 35,959 homes (and 300 Ha of employment land), which would need to be met through Green Belt release or by adjacent authorities through the duty to cooperate. Much of this shortfall is due to increased demand for employment land in the urban area (both in terms of competition for new sites and retention of existing ones – which had been expected to become available for residential development).
- It is suggested that adjacent authorities have agreed to take between 8,000 and 9,500 homes (including the 4,000 volunteered by South Staffordshire) and 102-173 Ha of employment land; whilst the Black Country Green Belt Review has suggested suitable Green Belt capacity of 7,720 homes and 47,8 Ha of employment; however this would still leave a residual shortfall/ unmet need of 28,239 homes and 211 Ha of employment land up to 2039 from the Black Country alone.

*Figure 4.2 – Map of Authorities in Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area*





4.31 **It is pertinent that his doesn't account for other unmet needs across Greater Birmingham, and** we know that Birmingham itself had unmet needs of 38,000 back in 2018 (along with smaller shortfalls in Bromsgrove and Tamworth). The latest GBHMA position statement from July 2020 confirms that this wider shortfall is down to 2,597 dwellings by 2031 but acknowledges that unmet need beyond that has not been confirmed and is likely to be significant.

*6.3 It is, however, now apparent that there will be a HMA shortfall post 2031, with the Black Country alone estimating a shortfall of 29,260, which it will consider through the Black Country Plan review. The scale of the post 2031 shortfall for Birmingham, and potentially other authorities, is not yet known, therefore the post 2031 shortfall for the whole HMA cannot yet be calculated. It is evident, however, that a number of HMA local plan reviews (e.g. South Staffordshire, Lichfield and Cannock Chase) are considering levels of growth above local need, up to and beyond 2031. There may also be scope for contributions from local authorities outside the HMA but with a strong functional link to it, such as Shropshire, to help address the shortfall up to and beyond 2031.*

4.32 It suggests adjacent authorities are making a contribution, but this has already been factored into **Black County's figures and there is still close to a 30,000 shortfall which will be inflated further by Birmingham's residual unmet need beyond 2031.**

4.33 As such, this indicates the remaining 10 authorities in Great Birmingham and other adjoining authorities (such as Shropshire and those in Coventry and Warwickshire HMA as shown in Figure 4.2 above) will have to take considerably more in their emerging plans than they are currently proposing. Overall needs have also increased since July last year with the 35% uplifts for Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

4.34 It is also notable that the majority of the remaining authorities have either:

- Adopted or progressed plans in recent years that do not meet their own needs in full (Birmingham, Cannock Chase, Redditch, Tamworth and now Black Country); or
- Adopted or progressed plans that already include provision some of this unmet need (Lichfield, Solihull, North Warwickshire, Stratford on Avon and South Staffs).

4.35 Therefore this 30,000 is in addition to existing provision in plans (so on top of the 4,000 South Staffordshire have agreed to take) and will have to be met by those authorities that can meet their own needs.

4.36 If you were to divide this shortfall evenly among the 10 authorities (excluding the 4 Black Country authorities), then this would be a further 3,000 dwellings (taking South Staffordshire's total to 7,000). If you were to divide by the 6 authorities that have suggested they can meet their own needs then this would be a further 5,000 dwellings (taking South Staffordshire's total to 9,000).

- 4.37 Therefore, even with the evident uncertainty around the extent of housing shortfall, the 4,000 unmet need figure suggested by South Staffordshire is not clearly justified. We consider there to be significant scope to increase the proportion that South Staffordshire takes of the unmet GBBCHMA housing need. The District covers a significant geographical area that wraps around the Major Urban Area along the western and north western boundaries of the Black Country. The District is also free of significant physical and environmental constraints and has strong functional links with the Black Country and Birmingham. These opportunities for increasing housing growth are less prevalent in the majority of other LPAs across the HMA, including the Black Country Authorities, Birmingham City, Tamworth Borough and Redditch as noted above.
- 4.38 Therefore, there is a compelling case to increase the proportion that South Staffordshire takes of the unmet housing need above 4,000 dwellings. The apportionment of unmet need across the relevant LPAs should be based on a robust capacity study, as opposed to figures which do not appear to be justified or based on demonstrable evidence. It is a matter of strategic, cross-boundary importance that the housing needs of the GBBCHMA are met, based on robust capacity evidence.
- 4.39 On a final note, the strong economic and geographic links that South Staffordshire shares with the Black Country and Birmingham is crucial to meeting the housing needs of the wider HMA. As we explain throughout these representations, Great Wyrley and the Land South of Holly Lane site in particular is well placed to meet these housing needs, benefiting from an excellent location in relation to the adjoining Black Country conurbation, and with direct rail connections to Birmingham City Centre.

#### *Market Signals and Employment Trends*

- 4.40 When considering the level of new housing provision required in South Staffordshire, it is helpful to look at past employment trends in the area, which are a relevant market signal in line with para 2a-015-20190220 of the NPPG, as housing need will be driven to a large extent by changes in the labour market. This section analyses the latest jobs data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It focuses on South Staffordshire, along with the benchmark areas of the West Midlands and Great Britain.
- 4.41 ONS data allow for long-term analysis of past trends in employment going back to 1998. As a result of changes to the methodology used in producing the data, it is not possible to look at trends over a continuous period. The following timeframes have been analysed to allow for this fact:
- 1998-2008: Jobs data published as part of the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) by ONS.
  - 2009-2015: Jobs data published as part of the Business Register & Employment Survey (BRES) by ONS.
  - 2015-2020: Jobs data published by ONS as part of the BRES.

- 4.42 Figure 4.3 shows jobs in South Staffordshire between 1998 and 2008, along with the benchmark areas. The District saw total employment increase by around 3,000 from 1998-2008, equating to annual growth of 1.1%. This was above the annual increases in West Midlands and Great Britain of 0.3% and 0.9% per annum respectively.

*Figure 4.3 - Jobs Change, 1998-2008*

	1998	2008	Absolute Change	% Annual Change
South Staffordshire	27,000	30,000	3,000	1.1%
West Midlands	2,291,000	2,355,000	64,000	0.3%
Great Britain	24,355,000	26,677,000	2,322,000	0.9%

Source: Annual Business Inquiry

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

- 4.43 Figure 4.4 shows the jobs change in South Staffordshire and the selected benchmark areas between 2009 and 2015. The District experienced jobs growth of 2% p.a. over this timeframe, equating to around 4,000 more jobs. This was higher than the increases of 0.8% p.a. in the West Midlands and 1% p.a. in Great Britain over the same timeframe.

*Figure 4.4 - Jobs Change, 2009-2015*

	2009	2015	Absolute Change	% Annual Change
South Staffordshire	31,000	35,000	4,000	2.0%
West Midlands	2,403,000	2,523,000	120,000	0.8%
Great Britain	27,858,000	29,548,000	1,690,000	1.0%

Source: Business Register & Employment Survey

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

- 4.44 Figure 4.5 shows employment change between 2015 and 2020. South Staffordshire saw no employment growth over this period. By contrast, both the West Midlands (0.8% p.a.) and Great Britain (0.5% p.a.) saw job numbers increase.

*Figure 4.5 - Jobs Change, 2015-2020*

	2015	2020	Absolute Change	% Annual Change
South Staffordshire	36,000	36,000	-	-
West Midlands	2,547,000	2,645,000	98,000	0.8%
Great Britain	29,819,000	30,547,000	728,000	0.5%

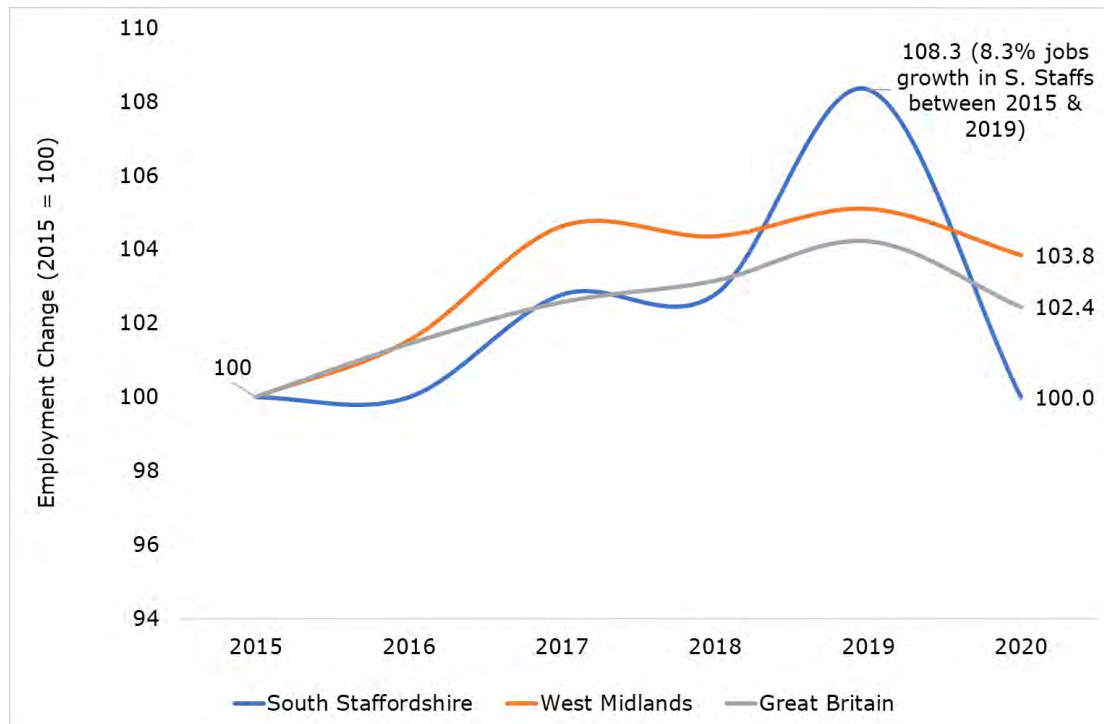
Source: Business Register & Employment Survey

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

- 4.45 The main reason for South Staffordshire seeing not employment growth between 2015 and 2020 is because employment in the District fell by 3,000 (from 39,000 to 36,000) between 2019 and 2020, reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. If the period covering 2015-19 is analysed, **i.e. before the pandemic, South Staffordshire's labour market experience growth of 8.3% (3,000 additional jobs)**. As shown in Figure 4.6, the District outperformed the region and Great Britain in terms of jobs growth over this timeframe.



Figure 4.6 - Jobs Change, 2015-2020 (2015 = 100)



Source: Business Register & Employment Survey

- 4.46 The ABI and BRES data indicate that South Staffordshire’s labour market performed strongly between 1998 and 2019, with the Covid-19 pandemic impacting on job numbers in 2020. At a national level the 2021 Budget highlighted that the UK economy is expected to return to pre-Covid levels by the end of 2021. This is based on independent forecasts produced by the Office for Budget Responsibility, with growth in 2021 expected to be 6.5% and then 6% in 2022. This puts the economy in a strong position to grow from 2022 onwards. Even accounting for the impact of the pandemic on South Staffordshire labour market, the historical trend data suggest **the District’s economy is strong enough to see a good level of recovery in line with expected UK-wide trends.**
- 4.47 As it stands, South Staffordshire is planning for delivery of 243 dwellings per annum, which is based on housing need derived from the standard method, which does not take into account economic growth aspirations, for example. This means the benefits associated with HS2 and WMFI are unlikely to be factored into the calculation. Given the expected benefits associated with the WMFI and HS2, along with **South Staffordshire’s strong labour market performance up to 2019,** it does not seem unreasonable to expect the District to see strong jobs growth over the next 10-15 years. This is likely to place further pressure on the housing market and lead to increased demand for homes in South Staffordshire. More sites could therefore be required in order to meet this increased demand, and the site on Land to the South of Holly Lane can help meet future housing need.

#### Providing a Buffer to Overall Supply

- 4.48 In addition to the housing requirement issues set out above, the Local Plan Review must also consider the total supply figure required to ensure that this overall requirement is met, and surpassed.
- 4.49 As noted, the housing target suggested in the Preferred Options 8,881 over the 20 year period from 2018 to 2038.
- 4.50 Table 8 suggests a total supply of 9,584 dwellings. A windfall allowance of 450 dwellings has been added on top of this, bringing the overall land supply figure to 10,034.
- 4.51 Therefore, the total proposed supply exceeds the target by 1,153 dwellings or 12.9%. Miller raise concerns with this level of headroom as it does not allow sufficient flexibility to provide a choice and range of sites and to allow for under delivery of allocated/ committed sites, particularly given the number of strategic sites and level green belt release proposed.
- 4.52 We also consider the level of windfall (450 or 4.7%) is optimistic, as sources of windfall supply will inevitably dry up once the plan is in place and as more sites are allocated. The figure is also unchanged since the previous consultation even though two years have passed, and also given the table already picks up a large number of single dwelling consents in the smaller settlements, so this could be considered double counting.
- 4.53 Paragraph 60 of the 2021 NPPF is clear that the Government have a continued commitment to significantly boost the supply of homes. Paragraph 23 of the NPPF also notes how strategic policies should provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed needs over the plan period, in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For this reason, Miller advocate that a higher land supply buffer is used in order to provide greater certainty that development requirements will be met.
- 4.54 Indeed, the HBF commonly recommend a 20% buffer is added to housing land supply which aligns with the recommendations from the Local Plan Expert Group (LPEG) during 2016. The inclusion of such a buffer would provide much greater flexibility for delivery slippage or elongated delivery timescales, and it is important to note that the housing requirement should be viewed as a **minimum, which Council's should be seeking to surpass in line with the presumption in favour** of sustainable development. Furthermore, the 20% buffer would provide greater choice and competition in the land market and greater flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.
- 4.55 Providing a 20% buffer on the proposed requirement equates to which would generate a total supply of 10,657 and require allocations for a further 623 dwellings and this would increase further should a higher requirement/ unmet need figure be progressed, as we have advocated.
- 4.56 It is possible that additional safeguarded land could also be considered to provide the relevant flexibility and potentially contribute to this buffer, as we come onto in section 5, and whilst this

should obviously be targeted towards the next plan period (currently post 2038) and not relied on as part of the current planned supply, it would allow it to be brought forward and allocated as part of a future Local Plan review (i.e. whenever the emerging plan is 5 years old, so potentially from 2029), and could even include mechanisms allowing earlier release if housing delivery slips below a certain level (see example in section 5).

- 4.57 To conclude, all of the reasons outlined above provide justification for a higher housing requirement which exceeds the minimum starting point provided by the standard method (243 dpa), with a further uplift to deal with wider unmet need, in addition to what South Staffordshire have already agreed to accommodate (4,000 dwellings).



5. PROPOSED SPATIAL STRATEGY (POLICY DS3 – CHAPTER 4)

Question 5 - Do you support the policy approach in Policy DS3 – The Spatial Strategy to 2038?

5.1 Table 8 and Policy DS3 set out the updated spatial strategy, which is replicated below. As with our previous representations, Miller are generally supportive of the principles which underpin the strategy, which is based on Option G from the 2019 Spatial Growth Strategy, as it provides a mixture of site sizes and development distribution across the geographic area of South Staffordshire. However we do raise concerns over the following elements of the plan.

Growth in Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley

5.2 In overall distribution terms, since Option G in 2019, it seems more growth is going to Tier 1 Villages (32.7% up to 39.7%), less in Tier 2 Villages (21.3% down to 17%), roughly the same in Tier 3 and 4, and less in strategic sites/ urban extensions (37.6% down to 29.6%); which presumably is largely based on the emerging evidence base in respect of deliverability.

*Figure 5.1 – Proposed Spatial Strategy and Proportion of Housing Delivery*

Spatial Housing Strategy 2018 - 2038		Indicative minimum dwelling numbers 2018-2038 <sup>7</sup>		
Location	Total proportion of housing delivery	Existing planning permissions and allocations	Safeguarded land	New allocations
<b>The district's rural area</b>				
<b>Tier 1 villages</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>1151</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>1939</b>
Penkridge	17.2 %	504	88	1129
Codsall/Bilbrook	16.7 %	423	584	666
Cheslyn Hay/Great Wyrley	5.8 %	224	218	144
<b>Tier 2 villages</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>370</b>
Wombourne	8.0 %	289	280	239
Brewood	1.8 %	76	63	43
Kinver	2.5 %	123	82	44
Perton	3.7 %	226	150	0
Huntington	0.9 %	9	39	44
<b>Tier 3 villages</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>81</b>
Essington	2.3 %	235	0	0
Coven	1.1 %	64	48	0
Featherstone	1.2 %	84	39	0
Shareshill	0.0 %	1	0	0
Wheaton Aston	1.0 %	67	0	37
Pattingham	0.5 %	7	17	22
Swindon	0.3 %	8	0	22
<b>Tier 4 villages</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>30*</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Growth in other rural locations and Tier 5 settlements	2.6%	258*	0	0
<b>Areas adjacent to neighbouring towns and cities</b>				
Employment-led growth at Land at Cross Green (Brewood and Coven Ward)	12.0%	0	0	1,200
Northern edge of the Black Country at Land north of Linthouse Lane (Essington Ward)	12.0%	0	0	1,200
Western edge of the Black Country at Land at Langley Road (Wombourne North and Lower Penn Ward)	3.9%	0	0	390
South of Stafford at Land at Weeping Cross (Penkridge North East and Acton Trussell	1.7%	0	0	168

5.3 We welcome the fact that Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley is now proposed for some additional growth and allocations (including site 536a south of Holly Lane), reflecting its status as one of the highest performing settlements in sustainability terms

5.4 However, it is our strong view that Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley is still underrepresented compared to the other Tier 1 Villages, as it only receives approximately 1/3 of the growth of the other two tier 1 villages of Codsall/ Bilbrook and Penkridge and even less growth than Wombourne in Tier 2. This position is simply not justified in the evidence base, as the updated 2021 Rural Services and Facilities Audit reconfirms its status as a Tier 1 Village, with Appendix 5 scoring it identically to the other two Tier 1 settlements on 7 of 8 criteria, with it only being marked down slightly on the provision of retail facilities, with the overall conclusion for the Tier 1 Villages being:

*"These settlements typically have food stores, a wider range of services and facilities than other villages, a range of education establishments, access to a train station and good access to employment and wider facilities outside the village via public transport. Codsall/Bilbrook and Penkridge in particular have better retail access, with large village centres within the respective settlements."*

5.5 This lack of proposed growth must also be considered against a backdrop of comparatively limited historic growth in Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay. The table above illustrates this, with the settlements having capacity for just 442 dwellings in existing commitments/ allocations/ safeguarded land, equating to 4.4% of the total currently suggested housing requirement, which is lower than Penkridge (592 / 5.9%), Codsall/ Bilbrook (1,007 / 10%) and Wombourne (569 / 5.9%).

5.6 To be clear, we are not suggesting that any of these other settlements necessarily have an overprovision or that any of their allocations should be removed; however we are simply using this as a relative tool to demonstrate under provision in Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley, and that this should be a focus for further allocations to meet the uplifted requirements advocated in the previous section.

5.7 Accordingly, Miller urge the Council to consider further or enlarged allocations within Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley, with specific reference to Development Options 2 and 3 at the Holly Lane site, which are considered wholly available, suitable and deliverable for development.

#### Safeguarded Land

5.8 Miller also raise concerns around the absence of safeguarded land in the current plan. The NPPF is clear in paragraphs 137 and 140 that Green Belts should have a degree of permanence and should endure beyond the plan period. Paragraph 143 suggests that this can be achieved by identifying areas of safeguarded land to be released from the Green Belt to meet longer term needs, but not to be allocated until a further update/ review of the plan which requires this. This ensures that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered further at the end of the plan period.

- 5.9 We entirely endorse the **Council's acceptance** exceptional circumstances exist to release land from the Green Belt in South Staffordshire and it follows that safeguarded land should also be identified in line with the NPPF.
- 5.10 Indeed, South Staffordshire have taken this approach in their previous 2 Local Plans with the 1996 Local Plan safeguarding land which was ultimately identified in the 2012 Core Strategy (policy GB2) and 2018 Site Allocations (policy SAD2), with further safeguarded land identified in policy SAD3; which is proposed for release in the current review.
- 5.11 Therefore it would seem prudent and entirely logical to continue with this strategy, and if anything to increase the quantum of safeguarded land to a more meaningful level (the NPPF suggests a **full plan period's worth**, i.e. 15 years) such that boundaries can endure for longer and further Green Belt release is not required in the next Local Plan Review.
- 5.12 Based on our assessments in the previous section, 15 **years' worth** of safeguarded land could equate to between 3,645 (based on the standard method) to over 10,000 if a high proportion of unmet need is accounted for.
- 5.13 We also note in the previous section that safeguarded land can also be used to provide flexibility to the current plan period supply, by allowing its early release or any early Local Plan review if housing delivery slips below a certain level (i.e. performance against the housing delivery test or five year supply calculation to be captured in the monitoring framework).
- 5.14 By way of example, West Lancashire have an adopted policy covering this issue from Local Plan (October 2013) at policies GN2 – Safeguarded Land and RS6 – A '**Plan B**' for Housing Delivery. We would urge that South Staffordshire consider similar mechanisms here.
- 5.15 It is our view that if it is not allocated for development that the wider Holly Lane site (Development Option 3) be considered for safeguarding to provide a later phase to the current allocation (Option 1) and wider northern parcel site (Option 2).



6. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES (CHAPTER 6)

6.1 Chapter 6 of the Preferred Options consultation document discusses proposed Development Management Policies.

6.2 Paragraph 6.4 of the Plan confirms that at this stage, the preferred approaches do not reflect the final policy wording that will be included in the Local Plan Review that will be submitted to the Secretary of State. Instead, they are intended to highlight key requirements, aims and measures that the final submitted policies will deliver, focusing on the most important parts of the future policies.

6.3 **From page 67 onwards, the consultation paper outlines policies and their proposed 'direction of travel'**, with the following question posed:

Question 11: Do you agree with the proposed policy approaches as set out in Chapter 6?

6.4 We comment on the relevant policies below.

Housing Policies

*HC1 – Housing Mix*

6.5 It is noted that all developments should provide a mixture of property sizes, types and tenures. The following is then suggested:

- For major residential developments, in terms of market housing 75% of properties are to have 3 bedrooms or less, with specific breakdown to be determined with reference to the latest Housing Market Assessment (HMA).
- For major residential developments, in terms of affordable housing a specific breakdown will be determined with reference to the latest HMA and other affordable housing needs evidence.
- Refusal of proposals that fail to make an efficient use of land by providing a disproportionate amount of large, 4+ bedroom homes.

6.6 Miller do not support this policy as currently proposed. Housing mix is best determined on a site by site basis, taking account of site-specific characteristics and local demand in the area. The requirement for 75% of properties to be 3 bedroom or less is more prescriptive in nature and does allow for a flexible approach.

6.7 Whilst it is understood that the crux of this policy is to maximise densities and the efficient use of land, there will be instances where sites are looking to provide an executive housing offer which requires larger properties. The policy effectively precludes such developments, by stating proposals will be refused that have a disproportionate amount of 4+ bedroom homes. There needs to be a balance.

- 6.8 The most suitable and appropriate manner to assess housing mix requirements is by determination of the market at the time of submission of a planning application, rather than at the point of adoption of the local plan. Overly prescriptive housing mix standards can often lead to deliverability and viability issues.
- 6.9 A flexible approach needs to be taken regarding housing mix, which recognises that needs and demand will vary from area to area and site to site. A flexible approach will also help to ensure that housing schemes are viable and appropriate for the local market.
- 6.10 We therefore advocate a more flexible housing mix policy and consider the reference to the 75% threshold for 3 bedrooms or less needs to be removed. The reference to disproportionate amount of large homes also needs to be removed.

*HC2 – Housing Density*

- 6.11 It is outlined how the aim is to achieve a minimum net density of 35 dwellings per net developable hectare on developments within or adjoining Tier 1 settlements. Miller are supportive of this aim, which is in line with paragraph 125 of the NPPF which seeks to optimise the use of land.

*HC3 – Affordable Housing*

- 6.12 It is stated that proposals for major residential development will be expected to provide 30% affordable housing, broken down using the ratio of 50% social rent, 25% shared ownership and 25% first homes.
- 6.13 **We reiterate the HBF’s comments that the 2021 Viability Assessment** indicates that retirement housing schemes are likely to support only 20% affordable housing provision. It is therefore important that the Council consider a differentiated policy approach because of this.
- 6.14 Miller do not have any further comments to make at this stage, albeit reserve the right to do so as the evidence base progresses (including further viability reports).

*HC4 – Homes for Older People*

- 6.15 It is suggested there will be a requirement to make a clear contribution to meeting the needs of **the district’s ageing population, through the provision of either:**
- General needs properties for older people, such as bungalows, other ground floor accommodation with appropriate age restrictions on occupation; or
  - Specialist housing e.g. sheltered, extra care homes.
- 6.16 30% of all market and affordable homes will also meet Building Regulations Standard Part M4(2).

- 6.17 We have already provided some initial commentary on the needs for elderly housing in section 3 of this report in respect of the proposed Holly Lane allocation (site 536a) and reserve the right to make further comment on this as the evidence base evolves.
- 6.18 In respect to the suggested M4(2) element of the policy, at 30% provision, it is important to note that these are optional technical standards that need to be justified. Indeed, the PPG<sup>6</sup> outlines the range of factors which local planning authorities need to take into account when considering whether to apply such standards:
- the likely future need for housing for older and disabled people (including wheelchair user dwellings).
  - size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed to meet specifically evidenced needs (for example retirement homes, sheltered homes or care homes).
  - the accessibility and adaptability of existing housing stock.
  - how needs vary across different housing tenures.
  - the overall impact on viability.
- 6.19 Whilst we note the October 2021 Viability Assessment (prepared by Dixon Searle Partnership) has factored in 30% provision into site viability costings, we have not assessed the methodology or conclusions in detail. Furthermore, the evidence base has not yet been provided to demonstrate a clear and demonstrable need for the introduction of such optional technical standards, therefore we reserve the right to comment on the matter in further detail at a later date.

#### *HC5 – Specialist Housing Schemes*

- 6.20 It is outlined how there will strong support for proposals for specialist housing of all tenures, in the form of age-restricted accommodation, retirement homes, sheltered and/or extra-care housing, nursing/residential homes or other forms of supported living, subject to sustainability and design criteria.
- 6.21 As noted in section 3, Miller have been asked to accommodate an element of specialist elderly accommodation into the proposed allocation at Hilly Lane, Landywood (Site 536a) and will work alongside the Council and specialist providers to deliver this, should the need be confirmed through the evolving evidence base.

#### *HC7 – Self & Custom Build Housing*

- 6.22 Under this policy, it is stated there will be support for self-build and custom housebuilding. Sites for major residential development should have regard to any need identified on the self-build and custom housebuilding register, with provision to be agreed on a site-by-site basis.

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<sup>6</sup> Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 56-007-20150327



6.23 Miller are supportive of the flexible approach to this policy. Indeed, paragraph 6.10 of the Consultation Report states that given the **limited level of unmet demand identified in the Council’s** Self and Build Custom Build Register to date, a flexible policy approach has been adopted.

6.24 It is therefore important to consider such matters on a site by site basis (which this policy is advocating), rather than a top down approach which states developments must provide them.

#### Design and space standards

##### *HC9 – Design requirements*

6.25 We do not have any particular comments to make on this policy at this stage, which we note reflects the sentiments of the 2021 NPPF and its renewed emphasis on design. The only point we note is that the reference to a requirement for all developments to incorporate tree lined street should be refined to reflect the NPPF. That is, it should reflect footnote 50 of the NPPF, which states streets should be tree-lined:

*‘unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate’.*

##### *HC11 – Space about dwellings and internal space standards*

6.26 It is stated the policy will retain the external space about dwelling standards set out in Appendix 6 of the adopted Core Strategy.

6.27 Miller are not supportive of this suggested approach, which does not allow for flexibility in design on a site by site context. The application of prescriptive standards, as per Appendix 6 of the Core Strategy, does not allow for pragmatism in terms of creative design solutions which lead to schemes which are acceptable in terms of privacy, lighting etc, but may fall short in achieving such prescriptive standards.

6.28 Indeed, there has been an evident move in recent years from blanket, prescriptive standards towards innovative, design-led solutions (as seen in the Manual for Streets guidance). A greater emphasis has also been placed on design in the 2021 NPPF. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF notes how authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.

6.29 Notably, the National Design Code outlines how in more urban areas there may be a need for more lighting and shorter privacy distances might be acceptable, while in suburban areas lighting might be more minimal and privacy distance might be greater<sup>7</sup>. This therefore emphasises a more localised, nuanced site by site approach to design and residential standards, as opposed to a standardised, district-wide approach currently suggested. Such flexibility, as advocated in the

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<sup>7</sup> Page 28, Part 1 the Coding Process National Model Design Code (June 2021)

National Design Code, also allows for a suitable degree of variety and in turn the delivery of beautiful places.

- 6.30 We are therefore not supportive of the current approach to maintain prescriptive, top-down **standards and at a minimum would suggest 'where possible' and 'where feasible' should be added** into the policy.
- 6.31 The policy also notes how as replacement to the existing internal space standards set out in the **adopted Core Strategy; all properties will now be required to meet the government's Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS)**. The PPG is clear that these are optional, not mandatory, standards. The PPG<sup>8</sup> is also clear that where a need for internal space standards is identified, local planning authorities should provide justification for requiring internal space policies. This evidence needs to clearly take account of need, viability and timing.
- 6.32 We echo the sentiment of the HBF, who highlight that there is a direct link between unit size, cost per SQM and affordability. The policy approach needs to recognise that customers have different budgets and aspirations. An inflexible policy approach to NDSS for all new dwellings will impact on affordability and affect customer choice. An inflexible approach which imposes NDSS on all housing removes the most affordable homes and denies lower income households being able to afford homeownership.
- 6.33 At this stage, the Council have not prepared the evidence base necessary to support the introduction of these standards. **The HBF highlight how the Council's Viability Assessment** only tests five average house type sizes, rather than testing the 16 NDSS compliant house typologies. There is no evidence to demonstrate that testing only a limited number of average sized dwellings would meet all the technical requirements of the NDSS. This is not a robust approach to assessing the impact of NDSS on viability. This error should be corrected in the next round of Stage 2 viability testing.
- 6.34 To conclude, the introduction of national space standards can at times lead to viability issues, making it necessary to provide a strong evidence base to introduce such standards (as confirmed by the PPG). As this evidence base has not been provided at this stage, we reserve the right to comment on this matter at a later date.

#### *HC12 – Parking Standards*

- 6.35 It is proposed the existing parking standards, as set out in the adopted Core Strategy, will be carried forward. We do not have any particular comments to make on this matter.
- 6.36 It is then stated that electric charging standards will be introduced, with houses required to provide one 7kW (or better) charge point per dwelling. We note that changes in the Building

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<sup>8</sup> Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 56-020-20150327

Regulations from June 2022 are set to introduce 100% electric charging point provision. There will therefore be no need for a Local Plan policy relating to electric charging points because this will already be covered and secured through the separate Building Regulations process. The policy reference to electric charging points should therefore be removed.

- 6.37 Notwithstanding this, should the Council continue with a Local Plan policy relating to charging points, it will be important to ensure that electric car charging standards follow and comply with emerging Building Regulation requirements.
- 6.38 Viability considerations are also relevant here. We echo the concerns of the HBF, who note that the **Council’s Viability Assessment includes a cost of only £500 per** electric vehicle charging point (EVCP). This cost is below **the Government’s cost estimate and excludes any costs for upgrading** local networks. The Department for Transport - Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential & Non-Residential Buildings consultation estimated a cost of £974 per EVCP plus an automatic levy for upgrading networks capped at £3,600. This error should be corrected in the next round of Stage 2 viability testing.

Promoting successful and sustainable communities

*HC17 – Open Space*

- 6.39 We reserve the right to comment on open space standards at a later date, as more detailed evidence is produced.

The Natural and Built Environment

*NB2 – Biodiversity*

- 6.40 It is stated that all new development will contribute a measurable net biodiversity gain, with a threshold of 10% for major developments. It is also stated that Applicants will be expected to **submit a Biodiversity Baseline Assessment with the calculation to be based on Defra’s biodiversity metric.**
- 6.41 Given the recent passing of the 2021 Environmental Bill (which is still subject to transitional requirements), we do not have any particular comments on this matter, other than to note that this policy should be drafted in line with the requirements of the Environmental Bill in respect of net gain.

*NB3 – Cannock Chase SAC*

- 6.42 **It is noted that the principal legislative framework surrounding SAC’s remains unaltered. The principle of requiring mitigation to address the likely adverse effects of residential development remains valid. It is then stated that:**



*"Reference to suitability of Sites of Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs) as a possible mitigation measure is still to be resolved, the recent SAC Planning Evidence Base update suggested that this be the subject of a separate scoping study."*

- 6.43 We reserve the right to comment on this matter further at a later date, and highlight that SANGs must be thoroughly considered at an early stage- especially in respect of viability.

Climate Change and sustainable development

*NB6 – Energy and water efficiency, energy and heat hierarchies and renewable energy in new development*

- 6.44 It is stated that all major residential development must:
- achieve a 31% carbon reduction improvement upon the requirements within Building Regulations Approved Document Part L 2013, or conform with any national targets which subsequently exceed this standard
  - exceed the carbon emission targets set by current UK Building Regulations through fabric and energy efficiency measures alone, whilst achieving the additional 31% CO2 improvement target through further fabric and energy efficiency and/or the use of decentralised, low and zero carbon energy technologies
  - submit an energy statement identifying the predicted energy consumption and associated CO2 emissions of the development and demonstrating how the energy hierarchy has been applied to make the fullest practicable reduction in regulated carbon emissions arising from the development
  - deliver the optional water efficiency standards for new developments set out in the Planning Practice Guidance
- 6.45 The PPG notes how local planning authorities can set energy performance standards for new housing or the adaptation of buildings to provide dwellings, that are higher than the building regulations, but only up to the equivalent of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 6.46 However, we consider this policy approach to be unnecessary and repetitious of the 2021 Part L Interim Uplift. The Government intends to set standards for energy efficiency through the Building Regulations process. We agree with the HBF that the key to success is standardisation and avoidance of **individual Council's specifying their own policy approach to energy efficiency**, which undermines economies of scale for suppliers and developers. Variations in regulations also provides developers with less certainty in terms of what is required of them. 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 the 2021 Part L Interim Uplift and proposals for the 2025 Future Homes Standard.

- 6.47 We note that the Viability Assessment does take account of the 31% carbon reduction over current Building Regulation requirements, albeit have not explored the assumptions or findings in great detail – therefore reserve the right to comment on viability matters at a later date.
- 6.48 In respect of water efficiency standards, again there are optional and not mandatory requirements. The PPG notes how all new homes already have to meet the mandatory national standard set out in the Building Regulations (of 125 litres/person/day). Where there is a clear local need, local planning authorities can set out Local Plan policies requiring new dwellings to meet the tighter Building Regulations optional requirement of 110 litres/person/day.
- 6.49 As later set out in the PPG<sup>9</sup>, it will be for a local planning authority to establish a clear need based on:
- existing sources of evidence.
  - consultations with the local water and sewerage company, the Environment Agency and catchment partnerships.
  - consideration of the impact on viability and housing supply of such a requirement.
- 6.50 A case for clear need to introduce these optional water efficiency standards has yet to be provided. Indeed, we note that The Water Cycle Study (2020) identifies the Severn Trent Water and South Staffordshire Water supply regions as areas of only moderate water stress. We therefore object to this policy until this information has been provided, as there must be a clear and robust evidence base to support this.

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<sup>9</sup> Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 56-015-20150327

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 These representations welcome and support the decision of the Council to allocate part of **Miller's** landholding at Holly Lane Landywood for housing development in the emerging Local Plan (Site 536a / Development Option 1 – 3.95 Ha), demonstrating that it is a sustainable location for development, within in one of the district's top tier settlements. Indeed it offers excellent access to existing schools, shops and surrounding urban areas via Landywood Train Station. The Holly Lane site also benefits from an excellent location in relation to bus services, particularly the X51 service which provides direct access in to Birmingham City Centre.
- 7.2 However for the reasons set out, we also consider there to be justification to extend the allocation further to accommodate the parcel to the west (Development Option 2 – 5.9 Ha) as this increase in scale can offer additional benefits in terms of open space, increased specialist elderly accommodation and drop off parking for the school; with negligible additional impacts, given that the characteristics and technical issues on the two parcels are identical, with the exception of heritage, which we have demonstrated can be addressed.
- 7.3 Furthermore, we reiterate our previous position that the full 23 Ha site south of Holly Lane (Development Option 3) is available, suitable and deliverable and would form a logical and sensitive extension to Great Wyrley.
- 7.4 The submitted plans clearly illustrate how the site can provide a land parcel to the neighbouring primary school to allow for potential infrastructure improvements, including a large drop off area for the school and potential sports pitch for wider community use.
- 7.5 Generous areas of open space can also be provided across the site in convenient locations, to not only benefit the new residents but the existing community too. This will help to mitigate any impacts on the Cannock Chase Conservation Area and help to relieve existing pressures.
- 7.6 Great Wyrley is a highly sustainable settlement, with its Tier 1 status fully justified, and the fact it is conjoined with another Tier 1 settlement in Cheslyn Hay, makes it an obvious location for additional growth, beyond the modest level it is ascribed in the current plan (which is significantly lower than the other Tier 1 settlements, and Wombourne in Tier 2).
- 7.7 Our previous **critique of the Council's Green Belt and Landscape evidence has also highlighted** various methodological flaws and inconsistencies, which have contributed overly negative assessment of the land around Cheslyn Hay/ Great Wyrley.
- 7.8 In respect of housing need it is our view that the baseline OAN figure should be increased, above and beyond the standard housing calculation figure which should very much be viewed as a minimum starting point. Furthermore, the additional 4,000 dwellings proposed is lacking in justification and does not go far enough to meet the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area, given the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities. We also note that the



proposed supply identified within the plan should surpass the housing target to provide a choice of sites, and flexibility to account for any under delivery over the plan period.

- 7.9 In overall terms, these representations have identified several factors that inform the case for a higher housing land requirement e.g. economic growth and infrastructure improvement strategies; an insufficient land buffer on the proposed requirement; and an insufficient level of unmet need from the wider GBHMA. On the matter of unmet need, it is clear that there is yet to be agreement on the full extent of the shortfall, albeit there is a residual shortfall of at least 30,000 to be met by between 6 and 10 GBHMA authorities (including South Staffordshire), which would require South Staffordshire to take a further 3,000 – 5,000 homes, above the 4,000 already agreed, which would increase their total required supply by 30 – 50%.
- 7.10 We therefore respectfully request that the Council consider the full Holly Lane site for allocation in the next stage Local Plan, or at the very least extending site 536a to take in the land to the west, as a first phase, with the wider site safeguarded, to assist meeting the district and wider **region's needs.**

APPENDIX 1 – PARAMETERS PLAN OF ALLOCATION 536A (DEVELOPMENT OPTION 1)

APPENDIX 2 – PEGASUS HERITAGE NOTE: LANDYWOOD FARMHOUSE



APPENDIX 3 – PARAMETERS PLAN OF NORTHERN PARCELS (DEVELOPMENT OPTION 2)

APPENDIX 4 – CRITIQUE OF GREEN BELT EVIDENCE (EXTRACT FROM 2019 REPS)

APPENDIX 5 – VISION DOCUMENT



APPENDIX 6 - PARAMETERS PLAN OF FULL SITE (DEVELOPMENT OPTION 3)

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

**Manchester**

Queens House, Queen Street,  
Manchester, M2 5HT  
T 0161 3933399  
E Manchester@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
Offices throughout the UK.

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