

South Staffs Plan Review.

Promotion of land for Residential Development.

Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability (SHELAA) Call for Sites

Proposal for land to rear of Sneyd Lane Essington to be included in the safeguarding of sites for future development. (SHEELA)

**Land Promotion by Landowners' Consortium:
Messrs Jones, Appleby and Dorsett.**



Figure 1. Promoted Land: consortium land holdings.

Submitted as response to the Local Plan review:
Preferred options consultation 1st November to Monday 13th December 2021.

The site is being promoted as part of the local plan review:
Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery.

Introduction

The current landowners wish jointly to promote their land to the rear of Sneyd Lane, Essington for residential development. This promotion is being submitted to be registered as part of the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Scheme, (SHEELA) and to be considered in the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review.

The site is some 18.48 hectares / 46.2 acres in extent.

The primary planning justification of this application is made under the “Duty of Co-operation” with the adjacent Black Country Local Authorities. However local housing needs would also be met and could be focussed on affordable first homes and downsizing for older people as identified in the Spatial Housing Strategy & Infrastructure Delivery October 2019 Spatial Distribution of planned housing growth to Tier 3 and 4 villages regarding the affordability ratio which is worse than both the West Midlands and District averages.

The site is located North East of Wolverhampton, South East of Essington, being North West of the Bloxwich urban area.

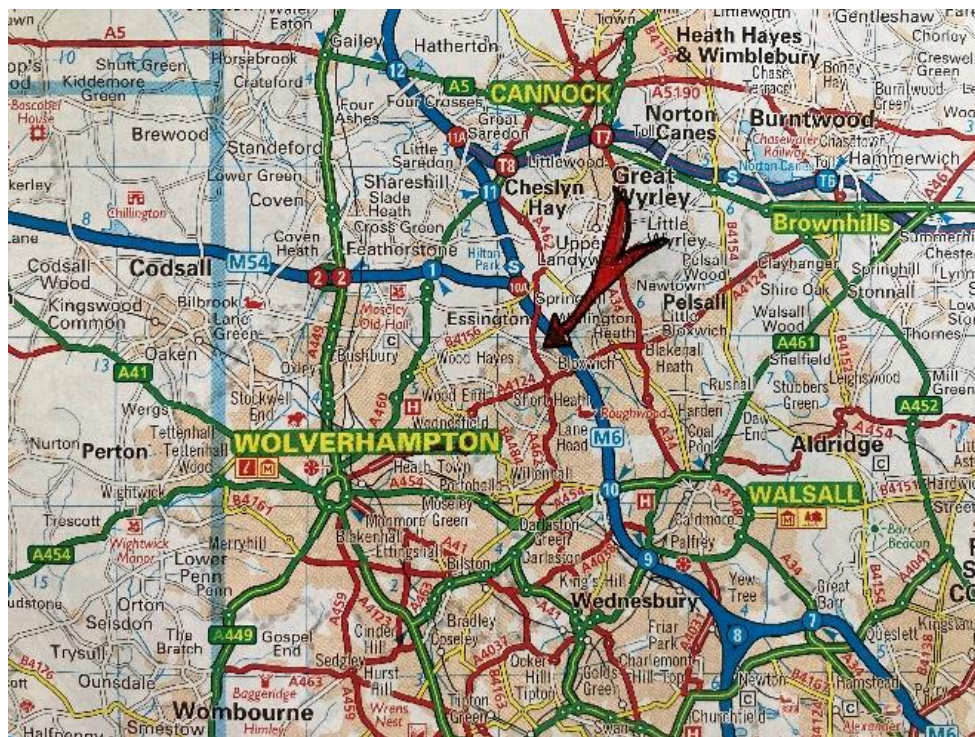


Figure 2. Location of site: North West Walsall.

The benefits of the proposal.

- The site's geographical location is adjacent to the existing housing that runs along Sneyd Lane on the edge of the Black Country urban area.
- The site can be developed immediately following allocation as all of the three landowners will work together to make the land available.
- The site can use existing infrastructure, as well as providing betterment.
- The site is well served by facilities in New Invention, Bloxwich, Walsall and Willenhall and will not therefore place a burden on the Essington facilities.
- The site has no identified environmental constraints that would prevent it from coming forward for development.
- The site is financially viable.
- The site benefits from established boundaries.
- The proposal provides a solution, in part, to South Staffordshire's Duty of Cooperation to the adjacent conurbation as it is well placed to support cross boundary growth to meet the needs of Birmingham and the Black Country.
- The land being promoted is a smaller part of the SL62 and S20H assessment areas. (July 2019.) S20H is some 69.5Ha. in extent. The promoted land is 18.5 Ha, being approximately 25% of the parcel.
- The Landscape Harm Plan shows that the proposed site is rated at the lowest harm rating of any other proposed site bordering the Midlands conurbation therefore having the least impact.
- There is scope within SL62 to provide a protectable "green lung" around Essington by protecting parts of the Green Belt land to the west of the site to ensure that the conurbation does not merge with Essington or other urban areas.
- The visual impact of the site could be assessed to be low, as it would be behind the houses of Sneyd Lane to the west. The motorway forms a block to the view from the north and east as it rises onto an embankment. The Cemetery provides a significant green space on the northern boundary.
- The site has the capacity to accommodate a sensitively designed development such as that at Appleby Gardens. The scheme could focus on provision for the elderly thus releasing housing stock for younger families.
- This proposal should be included for development in this review period. It complements the Linthouse Lane development and provides land closer to Bloxwich and Walsall MBC

- The land proposed is currently in 3 sections. The current land owners are happy to work together to produce a single site. The number of units is based on a housing density of 21 units per hectare, the same as Linthouse Lane. The Local Plan suggests that up to 35 units per Hectare could be used.
 - The Jones land at 26 Sneyd Lane with its own access onto Sneyd Lane. 2.64 Hectares/6.55 acres. Up to 55 units.
 - The Appleby land. 3.4 hectares/8.52 acres. Could have access off Sneyd lane. Up to 71 units.
 - The Dorsett land. There are two parcels. Parcel 1 is 7.25/18.12 acres hectare. Parcel 2 is 5.22 hectares/12.75 acres. Contributing 151 and 109 units respectively. Could have access off Vernon Way and Red Lane.
 - This could give a combined contribution of 386 units.
- With respect to provision of infrastructure, to join all the land holdings together, there is the opportunity to put in a road running from the existing junction on Bursnips Road to Vernon Way, that would relieve the pressure of vehicles using Sneyd Lane.
- The proposal involves only a minor modification to the Green Belt.
- Vehicle access to the whole site at its eastern end could be made to north Bloxwich via Vernon Way. Pedestrian access to the Sneyd Local Nature Reserve and lakes would also be facilitated.

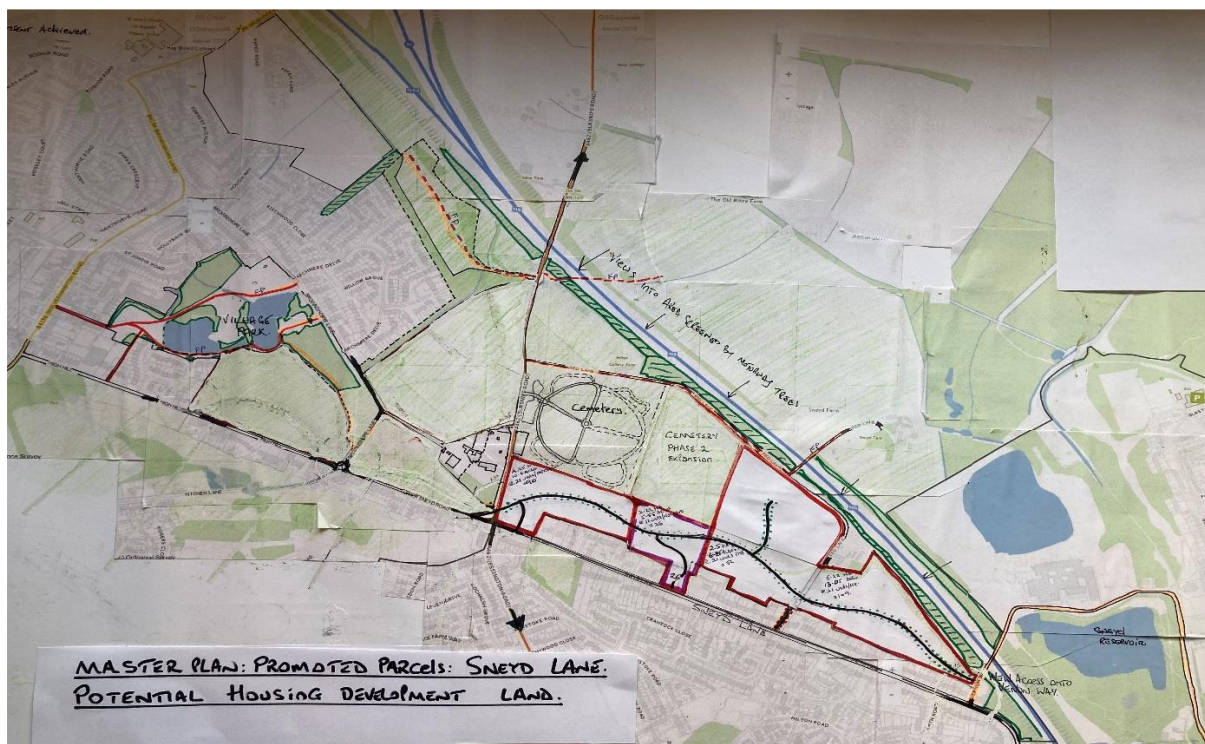


Figure 3 Masterplan showing access road through the proposed area.

The Planning Context.

The current adopted development plan comprises:

- South Staffordshire Core Strategy: This was adopted in December 2012.
- South Staffordshire Site allocations DPD (SAD): This was adopted in September 2018.
- South Staffordshire Local Plan 2018: Inset Plan 31 indicating the Green Belt boundary and the policies relating to development.

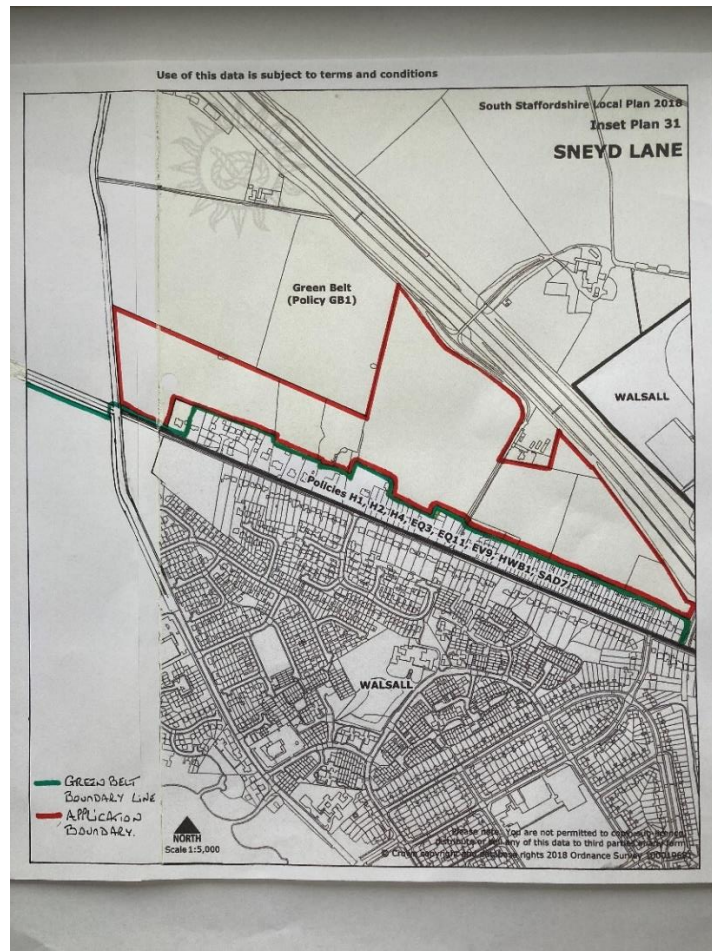


Figure 4. Inset Plan 31 and the land being promoted.

Core Policy One says growth will be located at the most sustainable locations in accordance with the settlement hierarchy. The principal aim of the strategy is to meet local needs whilst recognising the constraints that impact upon the district and support the retention of existing facilities and services in villages in a sustainable way and where possible improve them.

The hierarchy consists of four levels of settlement with Essington falling within the second level as a Local Service Village. Main service villages will take 90%

of the growth and local service villages 10%. In addition, Core Policy 1 would allow limited development where it meets local needs, whilst recognising the constraints that impact upon the district.

The Spatial Strategy has identified broad locations to accommodate housing growth up to 2028. The settlement Hierarchy has provided a clear direction for the subsequent Site Allocations DPD.

Policy GB:2 Land safeguarded to meet longer term needs- Shows 3 areas of land at Essington safeguarded from the 1996 South Staffordshire Local Plan, all of which are now developed or have planning permission.

Local Plan Issues and Options October 2018. The settlement hierarchy has been reassessed and Essington is recognised as one of the more sustainable locations identified as a tier 2 settlement, this would allow for a sustainable pattern of development including growth at Essington.

The land subject to this application has already been subject to previous promotion submissions namely 163, 164, and Part of 165. An additional promotion has recently been submitted for the land at 26 Sneyd Lane.

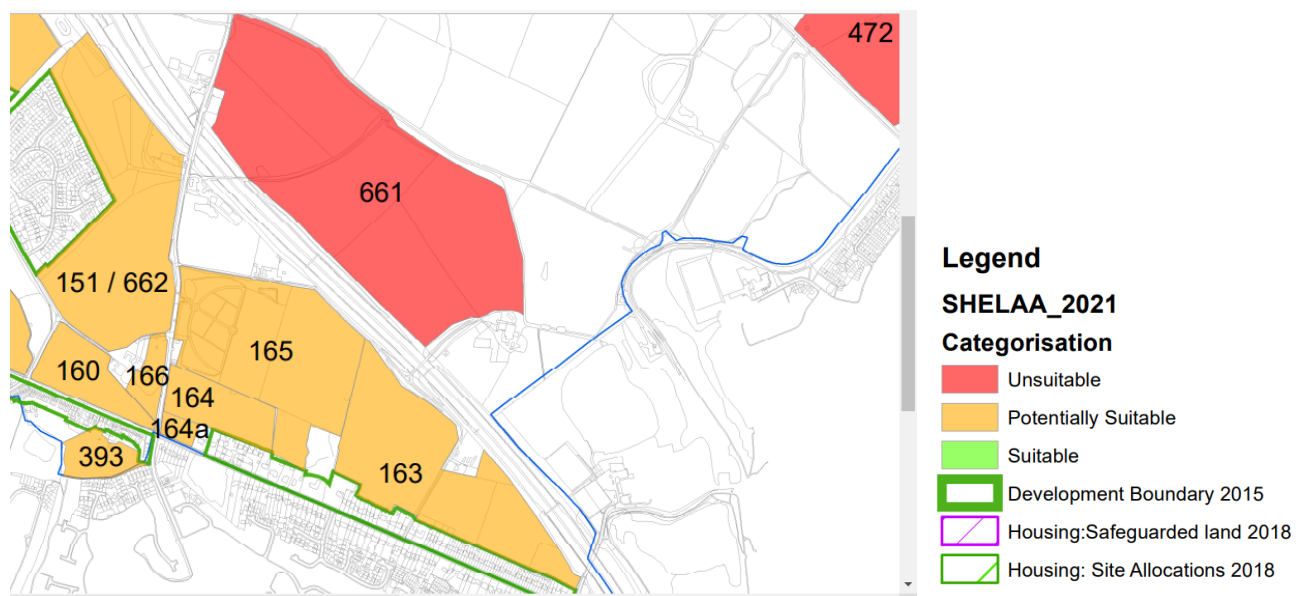


Figure 5. Plan showing previously promoted land parcels.

Preferred Option-Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Option G.

This looks at “focusing growth on strategic sites that will deliver new or improved infrastructure, and in areas near to the source of unmet housing needs in the Black Country.”



Figure 6. Spatial Strategy: Option G plan. (October 2019)

Recognising the existing and emerging shortfalls, the fourteen GBHMA local authorities jointly prepared the GBHMA Strategic Growth Study in 2018. This drew together existing evidence on housing supply and need across the entire housing market area, estimating that at that time the unmet needs of the GBHMA sat at around 28,000 dwellings up to 2031, rising to nearly 61,000 dwellings by 2036.

This option identifies the need to provide a housing target of 8845 dwellings between 2018 and 2037. This requires for some 4000 dwellings to be provided to meet the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area unmet housing need. The Option G plan shows that some 13.5% of the housing needs should be met along the boundary with Essington/Great Wyrley.

South Staffordshire Green Belt Study (Land Use Consultants) July 2019.

The land to the East of Essington has seen a number of promoted sites and these have been collected together under the SL62 assessment area in the study. (150,151,153,160,163,164,165,166,393,662,) This has been reclassified into a sub parcel named S20H.

The S20H area forms a triangle East of Essington which is adjacent to the Walsall/Bloxwich urban area. Close to Ashmore Park and New Invention.



Figure 7. Parcel area with promoted sites making up SL62

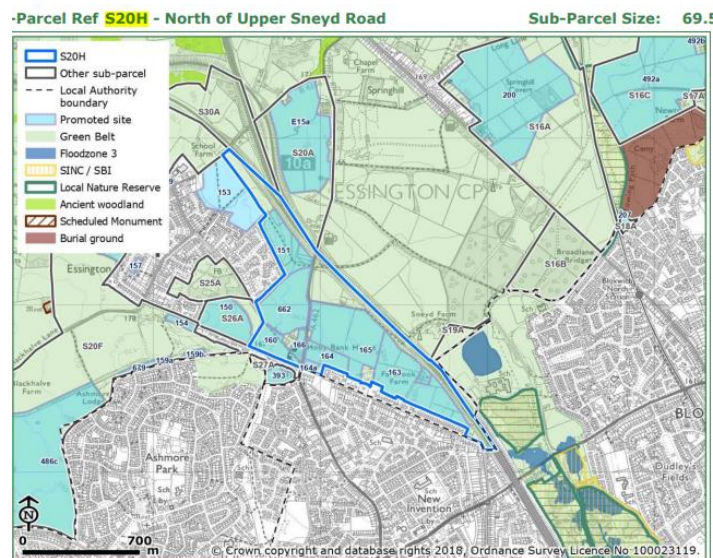


Figure 8. Sub-Parcel Reference area S20H. (Sub Parcel size 69.5 hectares) South Staffordshire Green Belt Study – Stage 1 and 2 Report page 397. July 2019.

Physical and environmental constraints.

The promoted area under consideration has an agricultural land quality of Grade 3. It is primarily used for grazing horses and sheep. There is a small area of woodland that has been assessed as having no commercial value.

The proposed land is free from constraints. The Land Use Consultants Review of SL62 Landscape Assessment Area with Absolute Constraints and other Designations shows there are no ancient woodland, local nature reserve, SINC/SBI, Flood Zone 3, absolute constraints, country Park or historic landscape areas affecting the site.

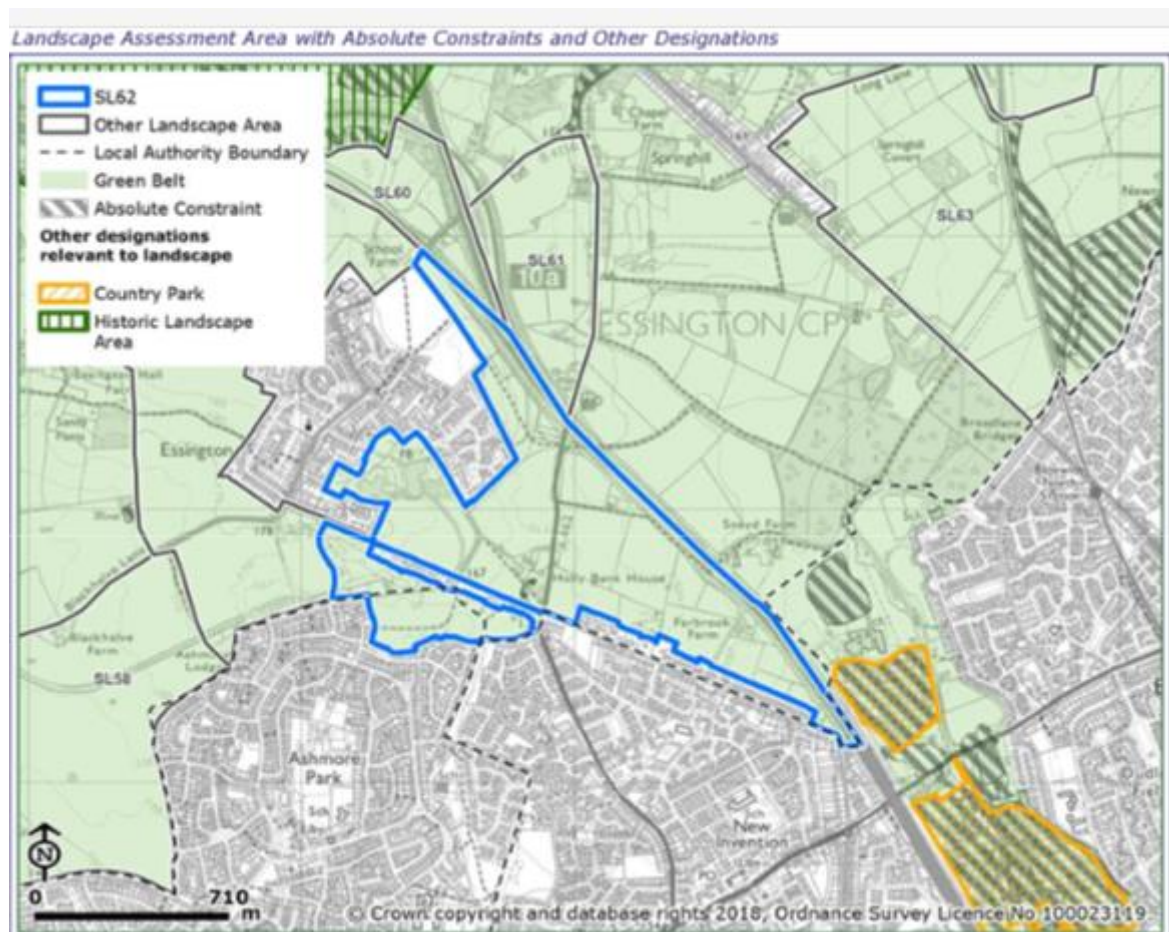


Figure 9. Landscape Assessment Area with Absolute Constraints and other Designations.

Green Belt Harm.

The study identifies the level of harm to the Green Belt that may arise from any development.

From the Land Use Consultants Report, Figure2: Green Belt Ratings - North of Black Country shows that S20H has the lowest harm level of any other area along the Wednesfield/Bloxwich boundary. It is rated at moderate to high whilst the others are either high or very high.

Figure 2: Green Belt Ratings – North of Black Country

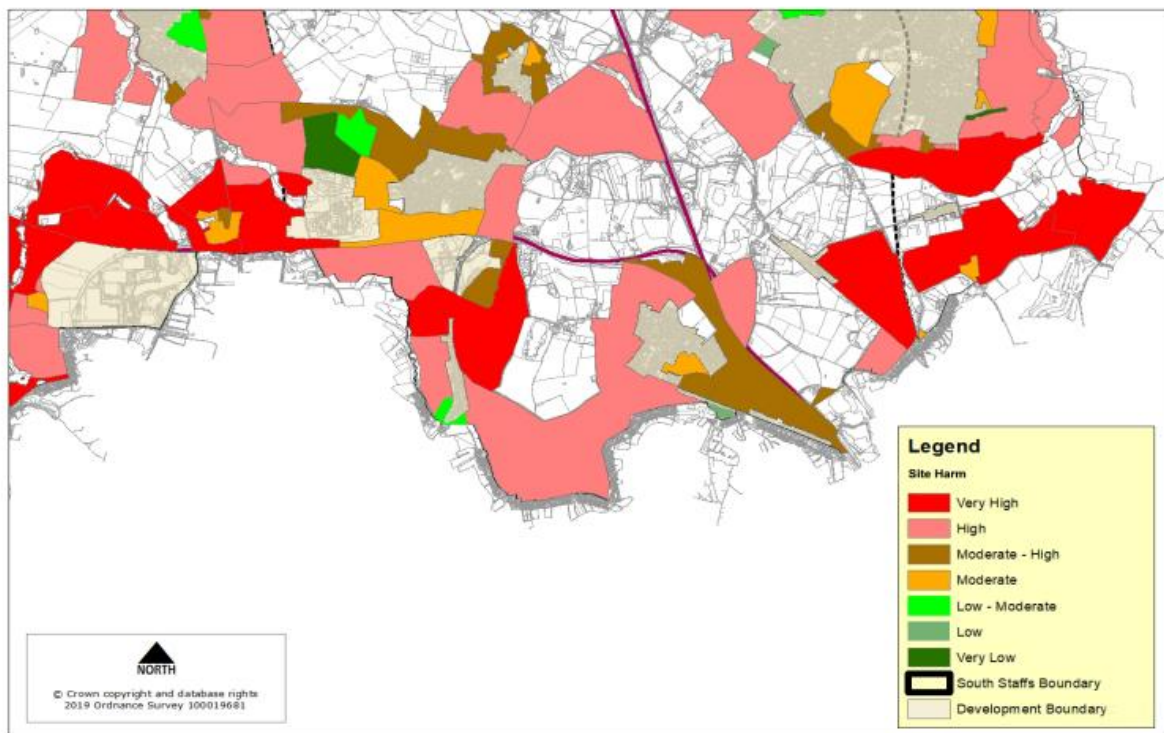


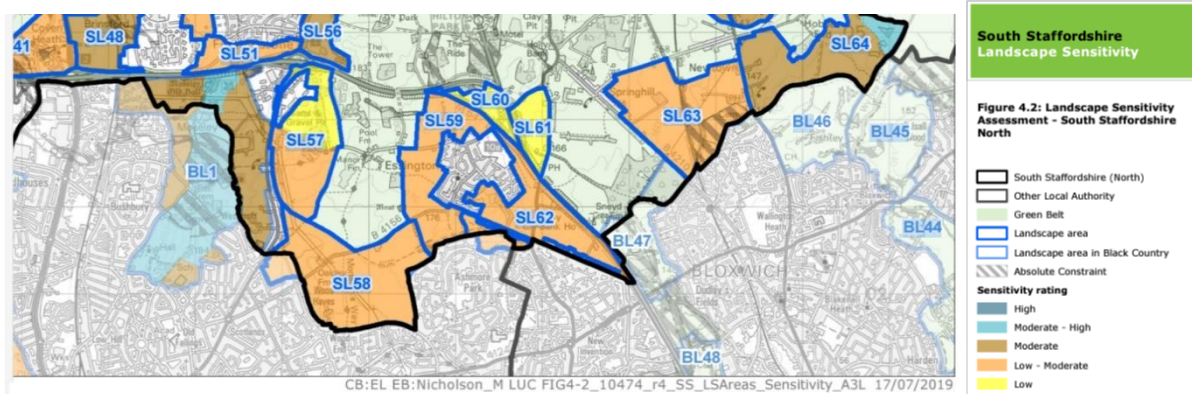
Figure 10. Green Belt ratings-north of Black Country.

The current proposals in the local plan have identified land to the north of Linthouse Lane as an area of future development. This has a rating of High. Another area considered and currently discounted is land along Stafford Road at Newtown, which is rated Very High.

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

The Land Use Consultants Report – Figure 4.2: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment-South Staffordshire North - assesses the area to have a low-moderate sensitivity. Landscape sensitivity is “the relative extent to which the character and quality of an area (including its visual attributes) is likely to change as a result of introducing a particular type of development.”

Figure 11. Green Belt ratings.



The landscape character type: coalfields farmlands.

The site is gently sloping southwards with no streams or rivers. The land does not fall within a flood plain and does not suffer from flooding.

Relationship of the promoted site to other planning elements.

From the aerial photograph below we have identified the proposed development zone of Linthouse Lane/Hilton Cross.

The nearest point of development at Linthouse Lane has been measured at 550 metres. This line has been plotted onto the map to illustrate the relative position of the proposed promoted land.

The photograph illustrates the amount of open landscape that will still exist with the cemetery making a significant contribution.



Figure 12. Relative position of site to Essington and Linthouse land development.

In terms of mitigation to reduce harm to the Green Belt, the M6 motorway corridor provides both a physical barrier to further growth, as well as a visual barrier. The southern end rises onto an embankment, and the tree planting along the road forms a green screen from views from the north.

Creative landscaping within the development will help to mitigate the built-up environment. A green screen of woodland planting adjacent to the motorway could contain a footpath/cycleway to increase the access to the countryside.

The Settlement - Local Facilities.

The site lies to the east of the facilities that Essington provides. The proximity of the facilities in New Invention and Bloxwich currently relieves pressure on the facilities and services in Essington.

The site is well placed geographically to meet local and cross boundary needs as it is located close to the edge of the conurbation with close functional and physical links to Wolverhampton, Bloxwich and Walsall.

There are a number of shops in close proximity. A new Aldi has opened on Essington Road. There are a number of shops at the New Invention Precinct which would benefit from the development.

The site is served by primary schools and doctors' surgeries in Essington and New Invention and Ashmore Park.

Essington also has a Community Centre, Hall, Pharmacy, and a Church (St. John's).

Most facilities are within a 1km walking distance, with all routes utilising the existing footpath network. It is considered that the majority of key facilities and amenities the residents require are accessible from the site.

Landscape photographs showing promoted land parcels.



Appleby field looking south from Hobnock Road.



Jones field looking towards the north.



Dorsett field looking west from Red Lane.



Dorsett field looking southwards towards Vernon Way.

Essington Cemetery.



View looking southwards from Bursnips Road.



Views looking westward from Red Lane.



The Cemetery forms the Open Landscape that will prevent the development spreading towards Cheslyn Hay urban area and help to mitigate the impact on the Green Belt.



View looking northwards from Vernon Way showing the M6 on the embankment.



The site on the southern end could make use of Vernon Way to access Lichfield Road avoiding the need to use Sneyd Lane.





In close proximity to the promoted site is the Rough Wood Chase Local Nature Reserve. This would give access, via Vernon Way, to an extensive area of countryside for the residents.





Illustrations of a tree lined road reflecting the original Sneyd Lane streetscape and using trees to absorb future Co2.



Illustrations of potential residential property types giving a range of homes for the new residents.



Alternative vernacular housing types also showing storm water attenuation ponds to control water leaving the development.



This final section is an extract (pages 397 to 400) of the

South Staffordshire Spatial Housing Strategy October 2019

Stage 2 Green Belt Assessment for South Staffordshire Harm.

We have added in italics comments of mitigation.

List of sites within the sub-Parcel: 151,160,163,163,163a,165,166,662.

List of sites being promoted: 164, part of 165, 163,163a. plus the new promotion at 26 Sneyd lane

Assessment of Parcel Contribution to Green Belt Purposes (as derived from Stage 1 Study)

Assessment of Harm from Release of Land within Sub-Parcel S20H. (Original Parcel being SL62. 100.59 Hectares)

This sub-parcel is some 69.37 Hectares in extent. The promoted land is 18.5 hectares, being approx. 25% of S20H

The promoted site represents a smaller area than either SL62 or S20H.

P1: Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

Land is adjacent or close to the large built-up area, contains no or very limited urban development and has strong openness. It retains a relatively strong relationship with the wider countryside.

Green Belt Purpose Assessment Rating: Strong.

In mitigation, the promoted land is away from Essington and is south of Bursnips Road. The retention of the open countryside between the village and Bursnips Road will ensure the village keeps its identity being surrounded by fields. The Cemetery will ensure that the Green Belt is not eroded further as it will prevent any further development northwards.

P2: Preventing the merging of neighbouring towns

Land lies between Wolverhampton (West Midlands conurbation) and Cheslyn Hay (Cannock built up area). The M6 and M54 motorways contribute to perceived separation, however the extent of intervening inset development acts to reduce the perceived open countryside gap.

Green Belt Purpose Assessment Rating: Moderate.

The promoted site is already adjacent to the existing houses that run along Sneyd Lane. The development will only extend that urban edge. As described in this application the open countryside is guaranteed to be maintained due to the Essington Cemetery and the confinement created by the M6 motorway. Open countryside will be ensured on the Bloxwich side of the M6 corridor because of the Roughwood Chase Nature Reserve and Sneyd Reservoir.

P3: Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Land contains the characteristics of open countryside (i.e. an absence of built or otherwise urbanising uses in Green Belt terms) and does not have a stronger relationship with the urban area than with the wider countryside.

Green Belt Purpose Assessment Rating: Strong.

This southern section of S20H sub parcel is adjacent to the Black Country boundary and therefore has a stronger relationship with the New Invention urban area. This is in contrast to the northern section of S20 H which contributes more to the open countryside around the village of Essington.

P4: Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Land does not contribute to the setting or special character of a historic town.

Green Belt Purpose Assessment Rating: Weak/No Contribution.

Agreed.

P5: Assist urban regeneration, by encouraging recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

Green Belt Purpose Assessment Rating: Strong

Whilst the land is in agricultural use, it is of a lower quality and is only used for the grazing of horses. The “Brownfield First Policy” initiative promoted by the National Government and promoted by Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands; are making a substantial effort to regenerate former industrial and housing areas to make way for new housing. In March 2018 the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) was given £100 million as part of the Housing Deal. In June 2021 a further £84 million was promised to expand the brownfield regeneration programme. The region has submitted a £3.2 billion West Midland investment plan to Government which includes a request for further funding. However, the housing need forecasts show that there will be the need to release Green Belt Land to fulfil the housing needs during and beyond this plan period. The provision of up to 386 units as proposed in this application will help to fulfil that cross-boundary requirement under the duty of cooperation.

Release of any land within the Sub Parcel S20Hs1

Overall Green Belt Assessment Rating: Moderate – High

This rating is the lowest of any sites promoted along the northern boundary to the Black Country conurbation. The release of this area of the Green Belt would have the least impact of any alternative parcel.

The sub-parcel makes a strong contribution to the prevention of sprawl of the West Midlands conurbation and to preventing encroachment on the countryside, and a moderate contribution to maintaining the separation between the neighbouring towns of Wolverhampton and Great Wyrley / Cheslyn Hay.

It is strongly contained by the motorway so its release would not weaken the Green Belt boundary or the integrity of the wider Green Belt. *We agree with this comment.*