

## STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

### INSPECTOR'S PRELIMINARY VIEWS ON MATTERS AND ISSUES FOR THE EXAMINATION INCLUDING SOME INITIAL QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

#### Introduction

1. The purpose of this note is to:
  - set out my views on potential matters and issues for the examination and;
  - seek clarification from the Council on a number of points relating to those matters and issues.

#### SMDC response

The Council's response to each question or issue raised is highlighted in red underneath the relevant paragraph of the Inspector's letter.

2. These views and questions arise from my initial reading of the Local Plan (LP) and some of the key supporting documents including the Summary of Representations (Table 3.1 within Evidence Document (ED5.3).
3. The answers will help me to draw up 'Matters and Issues' for the examination hearings. I may have further questions during the preparation period which are not covered in this note. My questions and comments are without prejudice to consideration of the soundness of the Plan's policies during the remainder of the Examination, including at the hearings. **Some of the answers to the points that I raise may be contained within the evidence base. If that is the case please could my attention be drawn to where I can find the information?**
4. Not all matters raised go to soundness but may assist with the clarity of the LP. Where a point could potentially be addressed by a Main Modification (MM) or Additional Modification (AM) to the LP I will make this clear by including **MM** or **AM** in the text.
5. All references to paragraphs and policies relate to the 'Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Submission Version February 2018' (ED1.1).

#### Preliminary Points

6. The Submission Version of the LP was subject to consultation between February and April 2018. This is the version of the LP which is the starting point for the examination. The proposed changes made after the consultation that are included in the Schedule of Additional Modifications (ED1.2) will also be considered during the examination. However, it appears that most of the changes do not go to 'soundness' and would therefore form the basis of AMs suggested by the Council during the examination. If any of the changes made do go to 'soundness' they would be included in the Schedule of MMs (see below). I will advise you in due course if I think that this is the case.

7. The AMs would be distinct from any further changes to the submitted LP which arise during the examination and are required to make the LP 'sound' which will comprise MMs. Assuming that any are necessary a Schedule of MMs should be produced during the examination which should be a living document to be updated and included on the website. After the hearing sessions it will be necessary to consult on any MMs and consider any implications for the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). To ensure that the number of MMs does not become unwieldy all proposed changes to a particular policy and consequential changes to its explanation should be encompassed within a single MM.
8. Hearing sessions forming part of the examination are likely to take place over a period of around 2 weeks. The weeks commencing 8 and 15 October appear to be the most suitable for the hearings. I understand that accommodation is available for most of that period. Six weeks' notice is required for the hearings i.e. by 27 August 2018. However, in view of the Bank Holiday formal notice should be given no later than Friday 24 August 2018.
9. I would envisage that strategic matters such as the duty to cooperate, statutory compliance, housing and economic development needs and the overall strategy would be dealt with during the first week. The first week would also accommodate discussions on the components of housing supply and whether these would be sufficient to meet the housing requirement over both the plan period and the next 5 years. Then site allocations, infrastructure and implementation and monitoring would be dealt with in the second week. A review session would then take place a few days later.
10. I set out an indicative programme for the hearings in **Appendix 1** based on the potential Matters and Issues and representations. Feedback on this programme would be welcome, particularly whether too much or too little time has been allocated to various sessions, having regard to the level and nature of representations.

#### SMDC response

The suggested programme generally appears to be feasible. Depending on the extent to which potential allocations and sites not in the Local Plan (omission sites) are to be discussed, there is potential for some of the allocations hearing sessions to require more than half a day.

11. The Government published a new National Planning Policy Framework (Framework/NPPF) on 24 July 2018. However, para 214 advises that policies in the previous NPPF will apply for the purpose of examining Local Plans submitted on or before 24 January 2019. In this respect the implications of the new Framework for this examination are limited. Therefore, for the avoidance of doubt I have based the paragraph references within this note on the 2012 Framework on the basis that it these policies that are relevant.

## **Matter 1 – Legal Compliance, Procedural Requirements and the Duty to Cooperate (DTC)**

12. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:

- The extent and type of consultation and community engagement;
- The SA and HRA;
- The timeframe of the LP and its relationship to the evidence base;
- The DTC and in particular addressing housing needs in the Housing Market Area (HMA) and dealing with infrastructure constraints, particularly transport.

13. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update of 2017 indicated that Staffordshire Moorlands must consider the housing issues of adjoining authorities, particularly Stoke-on-Trent (para 8.3). However, it is noted from the Duty to Cooperate Statement (ED9.2) and the LP itself that it is not the intention of Staffordshire Moorlands to meet housing needs from elsewhere. It is suggested that Green Belt and National Park constraints prevent that. However, about 50% of the District (excluding the PDNP) lies outside the Green Belt. What is the up to date position in terms of unmet needs of the wider HMA?

### SMDC response

The Statement of Common Ground between the Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Stafford Borough Council sets out the position in terms of housing provision (Appendix 1, ED9.2). The Staffordshire Moorlands SHMA (ED27.1) concluded that the District was not a self contained Housing Market Area (HMA) and that there were considerable overlaps with the HMAs within the Stoke on Trent Strategic HMA.

Stafford Borough Council can confirm that there is no requirement for any unmet needs to be accommodated by Staffordshire Moorland District Council or any other neighbouring local authority area as part of the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011 – 2031, which fully meets Objectively Assessed Needs, concluded in paragraph 45 of the attached Inspector's Report dated 11 June 2014. The adopted Stafford Local Plan sets out an annualised figure of 500 new homes per year. This is greater than the draft Local Housing Need figure for Stafford Borough released by the Government as part of the September 2017 consultation on the proposed standard methodology for assessing housing need - 424 new homes per year.

As set out within the agreed Statement of Common Ground Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent are preparing a Joint Local Plan. Shared evidence provides an objectively assessed need figure of 27,800 homes and 199 hectares of Employment Land over the period 2013 to 2033. The councils published for public consultation the Joint Local Plan Preferred Options consultation document in February 2018. This identified that in Newcastle-under-Lyme there was a shortfall of 2,099 dwellings against the OAN set out in the 2017 SHMA. Responses to this consultation are still being analysed and further work is being undertaken on updating the evidence base in terms of understanding the implications for the revised NPPF; annual monitoring; updating the councils Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment as well as further site assessments with regard to sites within Newcastle-under-Lyme's open countryside and green belt sites across the HMA.

The Local Housing Need figure for Stoke-on-Trent, released by the Government as part of the September 2017 consultation on the proposed standard methodology for assessing housing need, was 487 new homes per year. The corresponding figure for Newcastle-under-Lyme is 361 homes per year.

At the time of submission of the Local Plan, the Statement of Common Ground had not been approved by Stafford Borough Council. However, on 16th July 2018, the document was approved and signed by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning for Stafford Borough Council. A copy of the Statement of Common Ground complete with the additional signature can be provided if required.

14. Paragraph 1.22 refers to areas where Neighbourhood Plans are currently being prepared. What stage have the Neighbourhood Plans reached? Are they delivering, as a minimum, the housing and employment requirements set out in Policy SS4?

#### SMDC response

The Council has designated eight Neighbourhood Areas constituting the parishes listed in Plan paragraphs 1.22 and 1.23. Leekfrith Parish Council has completed the Regulation 14 (pre-submission) consultation stage for its Plan (ED32.9). Pre-submission consultations for at least three other neighbourhood plans (Biddulph, Brown Edge and Checkley) are anticipated during 2018. The remaining Neighbourhood Plans are at the stage of community engagement and policy preparation. The only site allocation known to be proposed through a Neighbourhood Plan is via the emerging Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan. Policy 1 of ED32.9 allocates Upper Hulme Mill for mixed use development including potentially 40 dwellings. This proposes a significantly higher quantum of development than the minimum requirement for Leekfrith parish set out in SS4 (4 – 8 dwellings and zero employment land requirement). Upper Hulme Mill is within the Peak District National Park however delivery of dwellings here will be included in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan supply.

15. I note that Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) have or are to be prepared (Design Guide, Developer Contributions, Open Space/Sport/Recreation). It would be helpful to make reference to these within Chapter 1 (**AM**).

#### SMDC response

The Council would be happy to include reference to proposed SPDs in Chapter 1 (**AM**).

16. The Council in the Policy Topic Paper (ED13.5) indicate that regard has been had to the Court of Justice of the European Union – People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (Case C-323/17) and that the HRA is legally compliant. Has legal advice been taken to inform this view?

#### SMDC response

In light of the recent judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Council's view that the HRA is legally compliant has been informed by the opinion of the Council's Corporate Services Manager (Legal and Elections) / Deputy Monitoring Officer.

## Matter 2 – Strategy and Strategic Policies

17. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:

- The spatial distribution of development, including the changes for Cheadle and the Rural Areas compared to the Core Strategy (CS);
- The settlement hierarchy in Policy SS2, including the position of settlements in the hierarchy;
- The terms of Policies SS1 and SS1a;
- Green Belt –whether exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated for the alteration of Green Belt boundaries (Green Belt alterations will also be discussed in relation to specific allocations during Week 2);
- The approach to settlement boundaries, development adjoining boundaries and infill development in villages and rural areas (Policies SS2, SS8, SS9 and H1).

18. There is no need to reiterate policies set out in the Framework<sup>1</sup>. Policy SS1a does this and could potentially be deleted (**MM**). Other policies do likewise (see below). In attempting to repeat national policy there is a danger that some inconsistencies will creep in and lead to small but critical differences between national and local policy and difficulties in interpretation and relative weighting. Moreover, national policy has changed with the revised Framework.

### SMDC response

Policy SS1a was included in the Core Strategy as a main modification. The Inspector's report regarding the Core Strategy states "In order to be found sound the CS must also provide for the grant of planning permission in circumstances where there are no relevant policies, or where relevant policies are out-of-date. The Council has accepted that a new policy, together with appropriate supporting text, should be incorporated in the CS as Policy SS1a." However, the Council will modify the Local Plan by removing the policy if appropriate (MM).

19. The Framework indicates that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the LP. The LP seeks the alteration of Green Belt boundaries (paras 7.48, 9.53, 9.81, 9.120 and 9.123 refer) but there is insufficient justification by reference to exceptional circumstances. Whilst it may well be evidenced in supporting documents such as the Green Belt Review such justification should be included in the LP, should it have been demonstrated (**MM**). In this respect I would suggest higher level strategic justification for exceptional circumstances is provided in Chapter 7 with more detailed justification provided alongside specific Green Belt releases in Chapter 9. Reference should be made to the factors referred to in paragraphs 83 - 85 of the NPPF.

### SMDC response

The Council will set out additional text to set out the higher level exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release in Chapter 7 and detailed circumstances for specific Green Belt releases in Chapter 9. Justification for the release of Green Belt is set out in the Allocations Topic Papers for Biddulph, Cheadle and Rural Areas (ED3.2, 3.3 & 3.4)

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<sup>1</sup> NPPG (Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 12-010-20140306)

and informed by the Green Belt Review (ED22.4, 22.6 & 22.7)

20. The settlement hierarchy within Policy SS2 includes Rural Area Smaller Villages.

Some of these lie within the Green Belt. Is there a need to distinguish between the level and type of development that would be allowed in those smaller villages in the Green Belt compared to those beyond the Green Belt? **(MM)** Moreover the term 'unacceptable' would be preferable to 'inappropriate' in this section of Policy SS2 as the latter is normally used in referring to solely Green Belt development **(AM)**.

SMDC response

Policy SS8 (Smaller Villages Area Strategy) states that limited new housing can be supported in accordance with Policy H1. In turn, Policy H1 (para. 6) states that when development is located in the Green Belt, national policy will apply. It is acknowledged that this is not reflected in Policy SS2. The Council will propose a modification (MM) to clarify the approach to development in the Smaller Villages both within and outside of the Green Belt as per Policy SS8 and H1.

In relation to the Other Rural Areas, Policy SS2 states that this "comprises of the open countryside and green belt where further development is generally inappropriate". It is acknowledged that "inappropriate" would better relate to green belt development only and not proposals in the open countryside where a different approach would apply. A modification will be proposed to make this distinction (MM).

21. The explanation to Policy SS9 indicates that those smaller villages excluded from the Green Belt have retained their settlement boundaries. However, this does not appear to be reflected in the Policies Maps for the relevant villages e.g. Bagnall, Caverswall and Cookshill, Kingsley Holt and Stanley, where the indication is that the 1998 Local Plan Village Boundary is to be removed. What is the intention of the LP in this respect?

SMDC response

The intent of the text at paragraph 7.61 of the Local Plan Submission Version was to confirm that villages in the Green Belt would not be "washed over" unless they already were on the 1998 Proposals Maps (ED 32.8). This point will be clarified with a modification (AM).

22. Part 4 of Policy H1 sets out that within the Development Boundaries of the Towns and Larger Villages, residential development will be permitted. It then sets out that 'limited infill' residential development of an appropriate scale and character for the Spatial Strategy will be supported where it will adjoin the boundary of a Larger Village and be well related to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses. 'Limited infill' does not appear to be defined anywhere in the plan and it is unclear why the proposed approach only applies to the Larger Villages when the Towns also have defined Development Boundaries. Part 4 should also be qualified in relation to the Green Belt. Modifications should be proposed to address these matters **(MM)**.

## SMDC response

The Local Plan does not provide an explicit definition of infill in terms of the number of dwellings that would be acceptable. Instead, the approach taken is as follows:

- Policy SS2 establishes the role and function of the settlements in the hierarchy and provides an indication of the scale of development that is likely to be appropriate for the Larger Villages, Smaller Villages and Other Rural Areas in broad terms. Policies SS8, SS9 and SS10 elaborate further on the role of these settlements.
- Policy H1 (4b & 4c) then specifies that development should be of an appropriate scale and character for the Spatial Strategy (Policy SS2) and then sets the criteria that will be applied on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the location and design of development are appropriate.

The Policy Topic Paper (ED 13.5, pages 20-22) provides further commentary on this approach in relation to consultation feedback and the Sustainability Appraisal. Essentially, Policy, SS2, SS8, SS9 and SS10 establish the broad scale of development that is suitable for settlements and Policy H1 sets the criteria to manage proposals accordingly. This approach would allow the Council to carefully consider the merits of infill proposals at the application stage when further details regarding the development are known.

The approach to limited infill also applies to Smaller Villages where the second bullet point to 4b applies. Different criteria are set for the Larger Villages and Smaller Villages to reflect the fact that only the Larger Villages have a proposed boundary. It is not proposed to apply the approach to the Towns all of which benefit from allocations and greater opportunities for infill within established boundaries.

Part 6 to Policy H1 is intended to qualify Part 4 and the remainder of Policy H1 in relation to Green Belt.

23. Large brownfield sites at Froghall and Blackshaw Moor are referred to in Policy SS10. I am assuming that potential employment and residential development at Froghall has not been included within housing land supply (Policy SS4) because of delivery issues. Is Blackshaw Moor taken into account as a commitment as it has planning permission?

## SMDC response

Policy SS10 identifies the Anzio Camp, Blackshaw Moor and Bolton's Copperworks, Froghall as opportunities for regeneration suitable for a range of uses. This reflects Policy SS6c of the adopted Core Strategy (ED3 2.7) and the Council's desire to enable the redevelopment of these brownfield sites.

The extant planning consent at Blackshaw Moor includes extra care housing and has not been counted as a commitment in terms of housing land supply.

24. With regard to the Bolton Copperworks site at Froghall, although Policy SS10 and the explanation makes reference to the site, potential uses, the SPD and a Masterplan, and the 'regeneration opportunity' is shown on the Policies Maps, there is no separate

policy for the site in Chapter 9. As a major regeneration opportunity does it not warrant a separate policy, particularly in comparison with some smaller sites which have the benefit of a separate policy (MM)?

SMDC response

The Council will prepare additional policies for both sites as modifications for Chapter 9 (MM).

25. Para 1.2 states that *'strategic policies are those which are essential to delivering the overall planning and development strategy for the District, such as those that set out the number of homes that should be built'*. Para 7.19 also notes that Policy SS2 is a strategic policy that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with. It may be helpful for NPs if the LP was more precise about which policies were considered to be strategic in this context (AM).

SMDC response

Paragraph 7.2 of the Local Plan Submission Version states *"Any Neighbourhood Plan prepared for areas within the Staffordshire Moorlands will be required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies within this section, as well as other appropriate policies where these are considered to be essential to the overall delivery of the Local Plan."* Accordingly, it is intended that all policies in Chapter 7 should be deemed strategic policies for neighbourhood planning purposes.

### **Matter 3 - Housing and Employment Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) and Requirements**

26. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:

- Whether the evidence base supports the housing requirement of 320 dwellings per annum (dpa) or 6080 dwellings for the LP period within an OAN range of 235 to 330 dpa taking into account demographic and economic factors, market signals and affordable housing need;
- The need for 27 ha of employment land;
- The relationship between housing and employment land provision.

27. There is a lack of clarity in respect of the overall housing target. Para 7.20 sets out that the SHMA Update concluded that the housing need of the District was within the range of 235 to 330 additional homes per year up to 2031. Para 8.2 of the SHMA states: *'Taking into account the scenarios tested and the core constraints on development delivery as shown by current evidence, it is NLP's recommendation that the housing OAN range for Staffordshire Moorlands is between 235 and 330 dpa. It provides a realistic level of housing provision which will address economic growth requirements, affordable housing need, worsening market signals and the demographic challenges that are present'*.

28. In comparison the identified need differs from the 250-440 dpa range in the January 2016 SHMA update. Para 1.4 of the Plan states the Core Strategy identified a target of 300 dwellings per year for 2006-26. This was the annual average over that period. Policy SS2 of the Core Strategy had a stepped/backloaded development rate of 220dpa for 2016-16, 360dpa for 2016-21 and 400dpa for 2021-26 – 6,000

dwellings in total for 2006-26. The Government's proposed new formula for assessing housing need is 193 for the District over the period 2016 to 2026.

### SMDC response

The objectively assessed need for housing has evolved during the preparation of the Local Plan to reflect the conclusions of the 2014 SHMA and subsequent updates that were undertaken to reflect new data, including the 2014-based household projections. Paragraphs 2.8 to 2.18 of the Policy Topic Paper (ED 13.5) provides a commentary on the input and conclusions of the 2014 SHMA and 2017 SHMA Update. For the avoidance of doubt, it is the conclusions regarding the objectively assessed need from the 2017 update (ED 27.5) that have informed the development requirements of the Local Plan Submission Version. This identified an objectively assessed need for 235 to 330 dwellings per year over the period 2014 to 2031.

The Council is aware of the draft local housing need for the District as published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of 193 homes per year. However, it is understood that this figure is likely to change in response to new household projections and further potential amendments to the formula which are to be considered by Government. Furthermore, the figure currently produced by the standard formula does not take account of economic growth unlike the SHMA. Provision is made for the new approach for determining local housing needs in the new National Planning Policy Framework. However, paragraph 214 of the new Framework confirms that the Local Plan will be examined under the policies of the previous Framework.

29. The LP explains that the top of the range relates to the level of housing required to support potential employment growth, whilst the bottom reflects household projections. The latter would lead to a decline in the number of jobs in the District due to a decline in the working age population. Para 7.22 goes on to state that in order to address the OAN the plan proposes 6,080 dwellings for the period 2012 – 2031 (an annual average of 320 dwellings per year over the 19 year period). It goes on to explain that although the Local Plan period is 2016 to 2031, *'the calculation of housing requirements backdates to 2012 in order to take account of the shortfall of housing provision that has occurred in recent years'*.

30. It therefore appears the Council are somehow combining the arising identified need with an allowance for under-delivery from the Core Strategy. The precise mechanics of what the Council are proposing here is unclear but it is peculiar for the requirement to relate to years that are outside of the plan period as it is normal practice to align the housing requirement with the Plan period. Any 'backlog' in provision before the LP period would be captured by the analysis of OAN and unmet housing needs in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This is in contrast to shortfalls which occur after the base date of the LP which form part of the housing requirement and are included in the housing supply figures (see Matter 4 below). What are the reasons for this departure from normal practice? What would be the implications for the OAN and LP if the housing requirement and Plan period were aligned so that both related to the period 2016-2031? Ideally the arising housing need during the plan period and any allowance for previous under-delivery from the Core Strategy should be distinguishable and clearly set out.

## SMDC response

The SHMA and updates have taken account of the backlog of housing land supply in the context of market signals. The 2017 SHMA Update concluded that having regard to a range of market signals, including the rate of delivery, an upward adjustment would be necessary to address the affordability ratio in particular. Consequently, a 10% uplift to the demographic-led projections was applied. This was consistent with the previous SHMA Update of 2016. This approach is set out in Chapter 4 of ED27.5.

However, in recognition of the significant under delivery of housing in recent years, the Local Plan Submission Version factors in the backlog of housing provision from 2012 to 2016 as well as that which has occurred within the plan period. 2012 was applied as this was the base date for the 2014 SHMA. This calculation applied the proposed 320 annual requirement alongside completions during the period 2012 – 2016. This base date was carried forward in order to ensure that a consistent timeframe and approach to the shortfall was applied during the evolution of the Local Plan. This was considered to be particularly important to guide the selection of sites on a consistent basis.

The table below identifies the implications of excluding any further consideration of the backlog prior to 2016 beyond that identified in the SHMA. In order to reflect new monitoring data for the year 2017/18, completions and commitments reflects the position as of 31 March 2018 as opposed to 31 March 2017 as set out in the Local Plan Submission Version. The planned provision remains the same as the Local Plan Submission Version with the exception that one year less of windfall has been applied to accord with the updated monitoring baseline.

Area	%	Gross requirement <sup>2</sup>	Completions <sup>3</sup>	Commitments <sup>4</sup>	2018 net requirement	Planned provision <sup>5</sup>	Difference <sup>6</sup>
Leek	30%	1410	84	639	687	955	268
Biddulph	20%	940	73	49	818	880	62
Cheadle	25%	1175	17	197	961	1156	195
Rural	25%	1175	96	525	554	881	327
Total	100%	4700	270	1410	3020	3872	852

31. The earlier under-delivery is discussed at paras 4.23 to 4.30 of the 2017 SHMA update but it remains unclear as to what allowance the Council are making for this in the plan. The SHMA notes the delivery for 2011/12 to 2015/2016 was only 622 dwellings (71 + 96 + 78 + 278 + 99 = 622). Given the target in the Core Strategy was 220 dwellings per annum for the 2006 to 2016 period, it calculates the under-delivery for the five year period was 478 dwellings. It also calculates an under-delivery figure of 798 dwellings assessed against the Core Strategy overall average

<sup>2</sup> Figures include 100 dwelling allowance over plan period in National Park

<sup>3</sup> Completions during 2016/17 and 2017/18

<sup>4</sup> Commitments as of 31 March 2018

<sup>5</sup> Allocations as per Local Plan Submission Version with one year less windfall.

<sup>6</sup> Planned provision minus net requirement

target of 300dpa - 1,500 for the five year period. However, the calculation in the SHMA is incorrect. Instead of 798 dwellings, it should refer to an under-delivery of 878 dwellings.

#### SMDC response

As indicated, the 2017 SHMA includes a typographical error. However, the authors of the SHMA have confirmed that this error does not materially effect the conclusions in relation to the subsequent uplift applied or conclusions on the objectively assessed need for housing.

32. A further concern is the housing need identified in the SHMA and the employment land provision calculations appear to be linked. Para 7.26 explains that the SHMA and the 2014 Employment Land Study (updated in 2017) *'have been co-ordinated and based on common data and scenarios in order to better understand the relationship between housing and employment and to support an appropriate balance of development. The 2017 report identified a need for 13 to 27 hectares of employment land across the District to 2031. In order to provide a balanced level of employment and housing, the employment land requirement of 27 hectares is proposed. As with the housing requirement, this level of development is towards the top of the range of identified needs and will help to support the growth of around 800 FTE jobs'*.

33. However, the 27ha employment land requirement is not *'towards the top'*, it is at the top of the identified range. Does this therefore suggest, in the interest of balanced housing/employment provision, that the top of the SHMA housing range should also be used in the plan? (i.e. 330 dwellings per annum)

#### SMDC response

It is acknowledged that the whilst the top of the range of employment has been chosen as the Local Plan requirement, a housing requirement 10 homes per year short of the top of the range was selected. The rationale for this is set out in the Policy Topic Paper (ED. 13.5). Whilst the respective requirements for housing and employment are therefore not directly comparable, they are considered to closely align with one another and reflect the Council's positive aspiration to support housing and jobs growth in the District.

34. It is also unclear why page 50 of the 2017 Employment Land Study Update refers to the identified 13ha – 27ha range as being over the 2014-2031 period but Table 7.4 on page 53 of the plan identifies the 27ha requirement as being over the 2012 to 2031 period. In this regard, paragraph 7.35 simply states that *'a start date of 2012 has been used for commitments to synchronise with that of housing requirements above.'*

#### SMDC response

As stated at paragraph 7.35 of the Local Plan Submission Version, the employment land requirements take account of completions since 2012 in order to provide a consistent basis to determine net requirements for both housing and employment.

35. The second paragraph of Policy SS3 is inappropriately worded. It states, 'The Council will review the annual development rate...'. This implies the annual target will be regularly adjusted and not necessarily through a review of the plan. It should perhaps say the Council will 'monitor' the situation and manage the housing supply to ensure the 'delivery' of the annual rate, as suggested at the end of para 7.29 and in Policy SS4 (MM).

#### SMDC response

The intent of the text was to set out that the rate of development would be monitored rather than regularly adjusted. The Council will modify the policy as suggested (MM).

### **Matter 4 –Housing Land Supply**

36. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:

- The components of housing supply to meet the housing requirement;
- Flexibility and/or a slippage allowance;
- The method of addressing shortfall – Sedgefield or Liverpool method;
- 5% or 20% buffer;
- The windfall allowance;
- The contribution from the Peak District National Park (PDNP);
- Potential provision in the settlements compared to housing requirements (Policy SS4);
- The housing trajectory;
- The need for a Housing Implementation Strategy (HIS);
- The base date for housing supply calculations.

37. The housing trajectory in Appendix 7 indicates that delivery fell as low as 78 dwellings in 2013/14 and is expected to rise as high as 669 dwellings in 2022/23. The latter is over twice the annual requirement of 320 dpa. The realism of this level of delivery will be explored at the hearings.

38. It is also unclear why the Council have moved away from the staged/phased housing target used in the Core Strategy which effectively back-loaded the housing requirement towards the end of the plan period. By taking the annual average for the whole plan period approach in the Local Plan, is the Council quickly going to face 5 year housing land supply/housing delivery issues that could undermine the plan led approach?

#### SMDC response

The Council is keen to significantly boost the supply of housing in line with paragraph 47 of the Framework. As highlighted, the Core Strategy adopted a phased approach to the housing target with lower levels of development (220 dwellings per year) in the first half of the plan period to 2016 and higher levels post-2016; 360 dwellings per year 2016 to 2021 and 400 dwellings per year between 2021 and 2026. This was based on the expected recovery of the housing market following the recession to 2016 with the rate of development then increasing up to 2021 to a level which can then be sustained to 2026. Nationally, the housing market has recovered since the recession and completions data for Staffordshire Moorlands demonstrates an upward trend in general since 2013/14 (Appendix 6, ED13.5).

The five year housing land supply schedule for the Local Plan Submission Version (ED19.1a) and updated position to reflect monitoring data as of 31 March 2018 (ED19.1b) demonstrate a 5.9 year and 5.6 year supply respectively. As stated in response to paragraph 42 of the Inspector's letter, the Council's Accelerated Housing Delivery Programme will put in place a framework to help ensure that the five year supply is maintained during the plan period.

It is acknowledged that a phased housing requirement could further assist the Council in sustaining a five year housing land supply in the early years of the Local Plan. However, such an approach would also result in a much more challenging requirement later in the plan period. Furthermore, the Council is conscious that for the first ten years of the Core Strategy timeframe, the annual requirement was below the average required across the plan period as a whole. As such, the Council wishes to avoid following a pattern of continually planning for below average development rates which would result in the full requirements not being realised.

39. Policy SS4 in setting out the need to provide additional dwellings should refer to 'at least 3859 additional dwellings'. The policy would then be consistent with Policy SS3. The policy refers to land being 'identified' although as elements of the provision are windfalls all provision is not technically identified. The 2<sup>nd</sup> para of the policy refers to a windfall allowance for small sites although a large windfall site allowance is also included for Leek and Biddulph. Para 7.29 (2<sup>nd</sup> sentence) refers to how the housing requirement will be met but does not mention windfalls. The wording of Policy SS4 and the explanation should be amended accordingly (**MM**).

#### SMDC response

The Council will prepare a modification to Policy SS4 to refer to the provision of at least 3859 additional dwellings (MM). A further modification to Policy SS4 and paragraph 7.29 to explain the background to windfall allowances and the role that they will play in meeting the housing requirement (MM) will also be drafted. This modification will also address the fact that windfall sites are by definition not identified.

A large windfall site allowance is identified in Leek and Biddulph. This reflects evidence from the SHLAA in terms of potential opportunities for development within the settlement boundaries.

40. In terms of Leek there is a shortfall in potential provision (980) against the net housing requirement (1015). Whilst elsewhere there is a potential modest surplus (Biddulph and Rural) it would seem preferable to ensure that the net housing requirement for each area is met as a bare minimum. Indeed additional provision or a slippage allowance (as with the CS) against the net housing requirement would be preferable to build some flexibility into supply against the requirement. In what ways does the approach to monitoring and housing supply make this unnecessary (para 7.34 refers)? If considered necessary in what way could additional flexibility be built into housing supply?

#### SMDC response

Whilst the Core Strategy included a 10% allowance for slippage, its policies are more restrictive in terms of support for the development of windfall sites and sites outside of

established development boundaries. The Local Plan seeks to provide more flexibility to policy to enable additional windfall to come forward and support supply.

Core Strategy Policy H1 applied indicative maximum sizes for windfall sites of 9 dwellings within the boundaries of the towns and larger villages and 5 dwellings in the smaller villages. Only exceptionally were larger windfall schemes supported. This upper limit is proposed to be removed and the new Policy H1 encourages the delivery of appropriate windfall. In addition, Policy SS4 also commits the Council to monitor housing land supply and review the Local Plan if necessary to bring forward additional allocations. Combined, it is considered that the Local Plan provides sufficient flexibility to ensure the supply of housing land.

Furthermore, the Council is concerned that adding a slippage allowance into the housing requirements also has the consequence of increasing pressure for releasing Green Belt land which should only be proposed in exceptional circumstances.

Notwithstanding the above, if considered necessary, the Council could propose a modification to Policy SS4 to include an appropriate slippage allowance to the net housing requirement for the remainder of the plan period.

41. Policy SS4 also deals with neighbourhood plans and the net housing requirement. Should this also be expressed as a minimum? **(MM)** For Biddulph there is inconsistency between the net housing requirement (885), the potential provision (890) and the neighbourhood plan requirement (905). Should the first and third figures be consistent or is the difference accounted for by the inclusion of Biddulph Moor in the neighbourhood plan area?

#### SMDC response

The Neighbourhood Plans section of Policy SS4 states that "These requirements are a minimum..." However, in order to make this requirement more explicit, the Council could modify the relevant header in Table 7.9 to refer directly to the net minimum housing requirement.

In relation to the neighbourhood area requirement for Biddulph Parish (905), this is greater than the requirement for Biddulph expressed in Table 7.6 (885) as it relates to the Parish as a whole rather than just the town. The Parish includes the Larger Village of Biddulph Moor. Tables A11.4 and A11.5 in Appendix 11 of the Local Plan Submission Version set out the windfall assumptions that have informed the neighbourhood area requirement. This includes assumptions for Biddulph Moor which forms part of the Rural Areas.

42. Paragraph 47 of the Framework expects LPAs to illustrate the expected rate of housing delivery through a housing trajectory for the plan period and set out a Housing Implementation Strategy (HIS) so that a five year supply can be maintained through the LP period. A trajectory is included in Appendix 7. How is a HIS to be set out? **(MM)**

#### SMDC response

The Council will prepare a Housing Implementation Strategy (HIS) document which sets out how the five year housing land supply will be maintained in accordance with the trajectory. This process has already begun through the Council's Accelerated Housing Delivery Programme. A report approved by the Council's Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018 (ED33.6) identified a number of measures to be taken by the Council in order to ensure the timely delivery of housing land. These include the preparation of masterplans for key sites and working with land owners, developers, Homes England and Registered Provider to identify constraints and realise opportunities.

43. In relation to the base date for housing supply figures the information appears to be available to use 31 March 2018 to inform the hearing discussions (see ED19.1 and 19.2). This base date and the relevant figures could then be incorporated into Tables 7.2 and 7.3 and included in the adopted version of the LP. There would also be implications for the figures within Policy SS4 and the trajectory at Appendix 7 (**MM**).

#### SMDC response

The Council will prepare modifications to update the figures in Policy SS4, Appendix 7 and associated supporting text to bring them in line with the latest monitoring data as of 31 March 2018 (MM).

44. The LP should also clearly express the key assumptions and parameters which will be relied upon to calculate the 5 year housing land supply upon adoption of the LP. Therefore, para 7.24 should refer to the method of addressing the shortfall since the start of the LP period (be it Sedgefield or Liverpool) but also the buffer to be applied (5% or 20%). (**MM**) The Housing Supply Assessment (ED19.1) explains the Council's position (Liverpool and 20%). These matters will be discussed at the relevant hearing session.

#### SMDC response

The Council will propose a modification (MM) to paragraph 7.24 to set out the approach to the five year housing land supply in terms addressing the shortfall and application of a buffer (MM).

45. The Framework refers to local planning authorities setting out an approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances. Is there a case for seeking higher density development on sites that are well-connected to boost supply?

#### SMDC response

Policy H1 of the Local Plan Submission Version includes the following requirement:

*"All housing development should be at the most appropriate density compatible with the site and its location, and with the character of the surrounding area. It is assumed that higher densities will be appropriate in locations which are accessible by public transport."*

It is intended that this will enable the Council to review proposals on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure that the appropriate densities are secured.

The adopted Core Strategy provided the following indicative densities as a guide:

*"40 dwellings per hectare or more in or on the edge of town centres , 30 – 40 dwellings per hectare in other urban areas and villages and 20 – 30 dwellings per hectare in remoter rural areas"*

However, the Local Plan Submission Version proposes to delete the indicative densities to enable greater discretion and capacity to consider local character. The adopted Design Guide SPD (ED 16.1) also provides some guidance in respect of densities without setting prescriptive requirements.

In addition, the anticipated capacities of the proposed housing allocations as set out in Policy H2 are informed by consideration of suitable densities having regards to local character and sustainability. The SHLAA (ED 26.1 – 26.3) sets out anticipated densities for sites having regard to the indicative densities as set out in the Core Strategy.

## **Matter 5 – Specific Housing Needs and Generic Housing Policies**

46. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:

- The effectiveness of Policy H1 in meeting the need for a mix dwellings;
- The justification for applying the Nationally Described Space Standard and the Optional Building Regulation requirement for accessibility, if that is what is intended;
- The need for and policies relating to Self-Build/Custom Build Housing;
- The justification for affordable housing targets and the tenure split in Policy H3, taking into account considerations such as viability;
- Whether provision should be made for a proportion of market housing on rural exception sites;
- Whether there is a need to make allocation(s) for gypsies and travellers pitches (residential) taking into account the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and other evidence;
- The terms of Policy H4 (Gypsy and Traveller Sites and Sites for Travelling Showpeople).

47. Policy H1 does not include any provisions for Starter Homes despite the box under the policy suggesting that the policy has been amended to 'promote the supply of starter homes.' It is noted that Policies SS1 and SS6 also refer to starter homes but not the other Area Strategy policies. Is there a distinction between Biddulph and the other areas of the district in terms of the need for starter homes?

### **SMDC response**

There is no distinction between Biddulph and the other areas of the district in terms of starter homes. The Council agrees that amendments are appropriate to improve consistency. The Council will prepare an appropriate modification (AM).

48. Policy H1 refers to housing proposals of 10 dwellings or more providing a mix of housing in terms of size, type and tenure. However, Policy H3 only requires affordable housing on developments of 15 dwellings or more. Both are different to the threshold in the PPG (11)<sup>7</sup> (see below for further commentary on Policy H3).

**SMDC response**

In relation to the 15 dwelling threshold see paras 51 & 52 below. Other thresholds in Policy H1 Part 2) and Part 3b) have been unchallenged however it is suggested that these should also be consistent with any change made in line with Policy H3 so that the thresholds are the same. The Council will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

49. Paras 1.30 and 8.51 refer to Self-Build Housing and the low level of interest. The Policy Topic Paper (ED13.5) refers to the number of registrations. Is this level of interest sufficient to trigger a requirement under Policy H1?

**SMDC response**

The reference to Self-Build in Policy H1 is not a requirement but will be looked at on a site by site basis, with reference to the register at the time of the application. No modification is proposed.

50. It is unclear from para 8.50 and part 3d) of Policy H1 whether the Council are formally adopting the optional national technical standards in relation to space and accessibility. The wording is rather vague by using phrases such as 'aim to provide' and 'seeking to achieve'. If the Council are proposing to adopt the standards, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in relation to demonstrating need and viability is relevant<sup>8</sup>. In contrast, the end of paragraph 8.13 recognises the obligation to demonstrate a clear need before adopting the optional tighter water efficiency standards and in the absence of such evidence Policy SD3 simply states the Council will 'support' any proposed measures which go beyond the minimum requirements. If the intention is to apply the optional standards then the necessary evidence should be provided and Policy H1 made explicit in this regard (**MM**).

**SMDC response**

The Council considers the expectation that development 'adheres' to optional housing standards is over-onerous. Evidence for space and accessibility technical standards can be found in the topic paper and the requirements were included in the viability assessment. Developers proposing to exceed these standards will be supported. The Council proposes modifications to para 8.50 and Pol H1 3d) to provide clarification.

51. Policy H3 has a 15 dwelling (0.5ha) threshold for the towns and 5 dwelling (0.16ha) threshold for 'elsewhere'. The target in both cases is 33% affordable housing provision. The 'elsewhere' threshold does not appear to accord with the PPG on Planning Obligations which sets out that obligations should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less and which have a maximum combined floorspace of

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<sup>7</sup> Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 23b-031-20161116

<sup>8</sup> Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 56-006-20150327 and Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 56-020-20150327

no more than 1,000 square meters (gross internal area)<sup>9</sup>. The PPG notes that in 'designated rural areas' LPAs may choose to apply a lower threshold of 5 units or less. However, the LP does not confirm that the District is 'an area designated by order of the Secretary of State as a rural area'. What is the position?

#### SMDC response

The Policy and Strategy Topic Paper ED13.5 explains how the 15 dwelling threshold in Policy H3 part 1a was unchallenged and carried through from the Core Strategy. As the SHMA findings suggest a 100% affordable housing target and to maximise the level of affordable housing the Council agrees that this figure should be amended to a 11 dwelling threshold to accord with the PPG on Planning Obligations.

The Council confirms that the District is not 'an area designated by order of the Secretary of State as a rural area' however the reasons for adopting a lower threshold of 5 'elsewhere' are covered in the Policy and Strategy Topic Paper. There are a number of schemes between 5 and 10 dwellings in the rural area that could have achieved affordable housing had the lower threshold been applied.

Notwithstanding the above, if considered necessary, the Council could propose a modification which proposes a blanket 11 dwelling threshold across the District for all affordable housing schemes (MM).

52. Given para 8.56 of the plan states the SHMA findings would suggest a 100% affordable housing target, why has the Council not adopted the minimum 11 dwelling threshold that the PPG enables? In terms of the 33% the Viability Study (ED24.1) suggests a range of 10% to 33% affordable housing depending on location. Is there not a case for a finer grain requirement? If the level set was that supported by viability evidence then the wording of Policy H3 could be more prescriptive and provide more certainty. As it stands the wording of Part 1) a) (2<sup>nd</sup> sentence) and Part 1) b) in allowing negotiation in each case is likely to undermine the provision of affordable housing.

#### SMDC response

See above paragraph 51 regarding the 11 dwelling threshold.

Although the Viability Study (ED24.1) considers a range of affordable housing from 10% to 33% in various Zones and allocated sites, the ability to achieve these percentages on sites vary. The Council notes the suggestion regarding a 'finer grain requirement' but considers that the level of detail would be difficult to include in the Policy.

The Council agrees that the current wording allowing 'negotiation' in each case could undermine the provision of affordable housing and proposes to prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

53. In addition should the provision of a commuted sum exceptionally apply to both parts 1) a) and 1) b) of Policy H3?

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<sup>9</sup> Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 23b-031-20161116

SMDC response

If a 11 dwelling threshold were to be included across all sites the Council considers that the provision of a commuted sum could exceptionally apply to all sites and an appropriate modification could be prepared (MM).

54. Part 2a) of the Policy enables rural exception sites in or on the edge of villages for small schemes of 100% affordable housing. 'Small schemes' is not defined. Given the level of district wide affordable housing need, why is 100% affordable housing required by the policy when para 54 of the NPPF sets out that LPAs should consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs. Moreover, the policy is contradicted by the definition of Rural Exception Sites in the Glossary which states that 'Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion'.

SMDC response

The Council agrees that Policy H3 could be modified to reflect para 54 of the NPPF and the definition of Rural Exception Sites in the Glossary; and to change the wording of 'small' schemes to schemes that are of an 'appropriate scale for the Spatial Strategy'.

The Council will prepare appropriate modifications (MM).

55. The numbering within the policy should be amended as Parts 2) a) and b) are distinct provisions from 2). They should be numbered 3) and 4).

SMDC response

The Council agrees that the numbering should be amended as suggested and will prepare a modification (MM).

56. I would recommend that the following wording is included within Policy H3:  
'Affordable housing should be designed as an integral part of developments and be 'tenure blind' in relation to other properties within the site.'

SMDC response

The Council agrees to the suggested wording and will prepare a modification (MM).

57. Consideration should be given to the modification of Policy H3 to deal with the above points (MM).

SMDC response

See above response/modification.

58. In relation to gypsies and travellers, para 8.63 explains a 2015 joint-Authority Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) identified a requirement for

6 residential pitches over the period 2014-19 with an additional 2 residential pitches up to 2034. Although the Policy Topic Paper (ED13.5) refers to residual needs, the LP says nothing about the existing supply or whether there are unmet needs that ought to be addressed through an allocation – the policy simply provides development management criteria. This should be rectified by at the very least the inclusion of the requirement within Policy H4 and an explanation of what provision has been made to meet the need within preamble to the policy (**MM**).

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees to modify (MM) para. 8.63 to explain current residual requirement for permanent traveller pitches and to explain the measures the Council carried out in order to address this requirement, as set out in the topic paper.

59. The preferred options version of the LP proposed an allocation at Blythe Bridge for 8 pitches (TR002) but that has not been carried forward due to the site owners indicating that the site was not available. It is understood that no further allocations have been put forward.

60. In terms of the wording of the criteria within Policy H4, reference to the use of soft landscaping rather than hard landscaping (para 26 of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites) would be helpful (**MM**). The final section would benefit from rewording so that it reads 'Development of gypsy and traveller or travelling showpeople accommodation in the Green Belt will not be allowed unless there are very special circumstances.'

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees with suggestions in relation to Policy H4 and will prepare modifications (MM) to explain current residual requirement for permanent traveller pitches, to reference soft landscaping as per national policy and amend the final section regarding green belt.

### **Matter 6 – Employment Land Supply and Policies (including town centres and tourism)**

61. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:

- The effectiveness of Policies E1, E3 and E4 and their consistency with national policy;
- The terms of Policies TCR1, TCR2 and TCR3 particularly in relation to non-shopping uses and the threshold for impact assessment;
- The allocation of a site for a discount foodstore in Biddulph.

62. Policy SS4 refers to the employment land requirement of 27 ha and suggests a split of 50% B1a/B1b and 50% B1c/B2/B8. However, elsewhere the LP suggests a flexible approach to occupants should be taken e.g. para 8.35. Is reference within Policy SS4 to the split of uses too prescriptive?

### SMDC response

Policy SS4 sets out the overall strategy for the provision of new employment land in the District in relation to need whereas Policy E2 relates to specific sites, and allows for the exact splits of employment uses to be determined on a case by case basis. Refer also to Policy E1 first bullet which is relevant.

63. The box below Policy SS4 indicates that the supporting text to the policy has been updated to include reference to the employment allocation in Blythe Bridge being additional to the District's requirement. This text does not appear to have been incorporated (**AM**). Moreover, should the site be referred to in Policy SS4 even though it is meeting a regional need?

### SMDC response

The last sentence of para. 7.34 of the Local Plan states "The employment allocation in Blythe Bridge Policy DSR1 is in addition to the need identified in the Employment Land Study". The Council will modify the text to elaborate that it is additional to the Local Plan requirement which is the intent of the existing text.

In relation to the inclusion of Blythe Vale in Policy SS4, the Council does not consider this necessary as there is a reference to the additional employment allocation at para 7.34. Furthermore, as Policy SS4 does not cover site allocations it is not considered appropriate to reference this in the policy.

64. Policy E1 refers to a number of other policies. Is the reference to Policy SS10 on its own correct in that this only relates to one element of the District (Policies SS5-SS9 and SS11 deal with the others)? As an alternative the policy could simply refer to the 'Area Strategy Policies'.

### SMDC response

The Council agree to modify (AM) Policy E1 to clarify that all area strategy policies would apply.

65. Is all of the last sentence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point of Policy E1 necessary? If the development is small scale it would fall under the 200 m<sup>2</sup>.

### SMDC response

Council agrees to modify the policy (AM) by removing reference to small scale developments from last sentence of 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet as suggested.

66. With regard to the 4<sup>th</sup> bullet point is the term 'exceptional circumstances' too onerous? It is effectively applying a green belt test for employment development in all of the countryside. Moreover, it appears to be more restrictive than Section 2 of Policy SS10.

67. In referring to sui generis business development (5<sup>th</sup> bullet) what type of uses does the policy envisage? Moreover this element of the policy is more permissive than the part relating to B1b & c, B2 and B8 uses.

68. In relation to the 7<sup>th</sup> bullet the requirement for a sustainable location is more restrictive than Policy H1 and the conversion of rural buildings for residential use.

69. Consideration should be given to the modification of Policy E1 to deal with the above points **(MM)**.

#### SMDC response

The supporting text explains how the Council supports employment development, but that this encompasses a wider definition than purely B-class uses (see also Policy E3). Commercial sui generis uses can also provide employment opportunities alongside B uses - however schemes involving sui generis uses would also be assessed against wider policies (including Policy E1). To make this clearer the 4th bullet which refers to locational requirements for B uses, will be modified to also refer to sui generis uses (with consequent deletion of 5th bullet point).

Council also agrees to modify 4th bullet by removing reference to "in exceptional circumstances" (MM).

The Council will modify (MM) this policy to bring it in line with the requirements of Policy H1.

70. The 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence of Policy E2 does not relate to the allocations and is dealt with elsewhere (Policies E1 and TCR3). It should be deleted **(AM)**.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees to delete this sentence (AM) as reference is not required.

71. The second part of Policy E3 refers to the 'Redevelopment of such areas...' and presumably links back to the reference to 'Employment areas, premises and allocations...'. Consequently, the initial reference to 'redevelopment' and the further references in parts A, C and D do not make sense in relation to greenfield allocations as they are undeveloped. It would therefore be more logical for the policy to relate to development that leads to the loss of employment land/provision rather than 'redevelopment' **(AM)**.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees that amending references of 'redevelopment', to 'development involving loss of employment land', would provide clarity given that the policy covers the protection of [undeveloped] employment allocations (AM).

72. Policy E3 and the supporting text (para 8.40) also refer to seeking funding to support off-site employment provision where redevelopment of employment land with employment floorspace would not be viable. It is questionable whether such

contributions would meet the legal and policy tests (necessary and reasonable) if employment provision is not viable. Such contributions may be more appropriate in relation to Part C) of the policy when another form of development is considered to outweigh the loss of (viable) employment land.

**SMDC response**

The funding for off-site provision requirement is a remnant of the adopted Core Strategy Policy E2. Council agrees to amend policy to move this text from Part D) to Part C), as suggested (MM).

73. Paragraph 8.38 and the box 'Consistency with Core Strategy' under Policy E3 refer to the Glossary defining 'employment land' and 'employment uses'. There is a definition of 'employment land' in the Glossary but not 'employment uses'. Should there be a separate definition or should the latter also refer to 'employment land' (**AM**)?

**SMDC response**

The Council agrees to amend glossary and para. 8.38 such that it refers to both 'employment land' and 'employment uses' (AM).

74. Part 2A) of Policy E4 does not appear to sit comfortably with parts 1A) to 1C), particularly 1B). 1B) enables development in or close to settlements with services, facilities and public transport but 2A) requires development to support the rural area where needs are not met by existing facilities. Moreover the requirement to demonstrate 'exceptional circumstances' for tourism development in a rural location is a high bar and is not consistent with Part 2A) of the policy.

**SMDC response**

The Council agrees to remove reference to "in exceptional circumstances" in last sentence of Part 1) of policy, as suggested (MM).

The policy deliberately sets out differing considerations for tourism/cultural facilities within tourism areas, and beyond these. However it is agreed that the policy wording could be made clearer to distinguish this. Therefore an amendment is proposed such that Part 2) commences at the sentence pertaining to development in other locations (MM)

The reference to 'where needs are not met by existing facilities' is derived from NPPF para. 28.

75. Para 8.44 also states that development outside development boundaries will be limited to the conversion of existing buildings and in exceptional circumstances new buildings. This approach does not form part of the policy and the last bullet point in the 'Consistency with Core Strategy' text box states 'the policy removes the limitation that new tourism schemes be through building conversions only'.

### SMDC response

The Council agrees to amend this paragraph to remove inaccurate reference to rural building conversions. Also the reference to caravans and camping sites relates to an earlier version of the Plan and needs to be updated (AM).

76. Modifications to Policy E4 should be considered so that the various parts are consistent with each other (**MM**).

77. The Retail Capacity Update of November 2017 (ED25.3) did not show any convenience goods capacity in any of the towns. However, the intention of the LP is to allocate land for a new foodstore in Biddulph (Policy SS6 and para 8.70 refer). Is this justified on qualitative grounds? In terms of retail capacity is the 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence of para 8.70 still relevant given the contents of ED25.3?

### SMDC response

Whilst the findings of the Retail Capacity Update (2017) demonstrate that there continues to be insufficient quantitative capacity, due principally to reduced forecast expenditure growth over the plan period, convenience retail provision within Biddulph continues to be limited, with supermarket provision remaining unchanged since the publication of the 2013 Retail Study. The issue is particularly acute in respect of main-food shopping provision, with only a single larger-format store – Sainsbury's at Wharf Road – serving the local population residing in Zone 9 ('Biddulph'), as defined by the 2013 Retail Study. Survey data which underpins the findings of the 2013 and 2017 analyses, and which is considered to remain robust, demonstrates that 45% of main-food shopping expenditure is being lost from Biddulph, with 43% directed to stores and facilities beyond the District itself. This compares with a retention rate of almost 96% of main-food shopping expenditure which is generated by Leek residents (Zone 7) and retained within the town centre. In order to remedy this position and reduce unsustainable travel patterns, it is deemed necessary to expand the choice and size of the convenience retail offer within Biddulph, such that local residents' needs are more effectively met and within an accessible and sustainable location.

78. In addition the LP does not appear to be specific about where the allocation will be other than within the Wharf Road Strategic Development Area (Policy DSB1). Is this the most sequentially preferable location? Would the Biddulph Mills Site not provide a better location (edge of centre) assuming that it is otherwise suitable and deliverable? I could not see any analysis of potential sites within the Retail Studies. In any event the allocation should be made explicit and included on the Policies Map (**MM**).

### SMDC response

The reason why the Council has not specifically identified where the retail allocation will be on the Wharf Road Strategic Development site is that it is considered that it would be more appropriate to fully investigate this as part of the master planning process. The master planning process is best placed to consider the complex set of issues that development of this site presents and identify layout options to accommodate all elements of the scheme including the food retail store. Government policy including the

sequential test will form part of the process. The Council will shortly be appointing consultants to undertake the masterplan (which is expected to take 6 months to complete). The master planner's brief covers site layouts, planning compliance, development capacity, infrastructure requirements, costs, viability, land assembly and delivery mechanism.

Evidence Document 32.1, the Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP), allocates land at Wharf Road ('bypass site' Policy DS2, pages 23-26) for retail development. This allocation has not been implemented due to changes in market conditions. Paragraph 5.30 of the supporting text to this policy confirms the sequential assessment made at that time. There have been no material changes in circumstances since this assessment was made. The Inspector's report from the AAP relating to this site states that "the site is located within 300 metres of the consolidated town centre and although the bypass road forms a physical separation, in my opinion, the site will be conveniently accessible to the town centre by the provision of footpath links that are required by Policy PR1. Therefore, with reference to Table 2, Annex A of PPS6, I consider that the site should be regarded as being edge-of-centre".

The mills area (proposed for residential allocation in the Submission Version Local Plan) is split across 2 sites (separated by a road) and located in a high density area with terraced properties immediately adjacent. It is anticipated that there would be issues for a food store operator to locate on this site, namely compromise on size and shape of store and parking provision as well as servicing of the store i.e. with the site having no direct access to the bypass delivery trucks would have to negotiate narrow streets. Impact on residential amenity would be another potential difficulty.

The mills area has been widely supported for residential development by the general public in consultation responses and is also supported by the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan Group who are currently advancing their plan. (ED13.2 pages 64, 66-67, 70 and 72).

79. In Policy TCR1 the reference to 'vitality and viability' within Part 1 of the policy appears superfluous as town centre uses within town centres would contribute **(AM)**.

SMDC response

The Council agrees that the reference to 'vitality and viability' within Part 1 of the policy appears superfluous. The Council will prepare an appropriate modification to reflect this (AM).

80. In terms of Part 7 'primary shopping areas' are defined in the Glossary but not delineated within the Maps at Appendices 1-3 of the LP so this section should perhaps just refer to 'town centres'. In addition the definitions of 'Primary Shopping Area' and 'Primary and Secondary Frontages' in the Glossary have not been updated to reflect that 'secondary frontages' are not now part of Policy TCR2 **(AM)**.

SMDC response

The Council agrees with the removal of the term 'primary shopping areas' in Policy TCR1. The Council also agrees that the glossary requires updating and will prepare appropriate modifications to reflect this (AM).

81. Policy TCR2 refers to preventing a concentration of non-shopping uses but does not define what would constitute a concentration. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of specific criteria within the policy (as set out in para 8.72) (**MM**).

**SMDC response**

The Council has considered including specific criteria to define what constitutes a concentration within Policy TCR2. However, the Council has decided not to take this approach due to continual change in the retail industry and the way people are using town centres. In many cases the number of A1 units are reducing due to online retailers taking an increasing market share and town centres are being used as destinations for dining out and other leisure purposes, for example. The Council considers that allowing for flexibility would be more appropriate as being too rigid will not be reasonable in all circumstances. As stated, the criteria is explained in the supporting text (para. 8.72) as a guide to be used on a case-by-case basis.

82. The requirement for a sequential assessment should only apply to town centre uses proposed outside town centres so Policy TCR3 is consistent with national policy (para 24 of the Framework refers) (**MM**).

**SMDC response**

The Council agree that an amendment to the policy is required to ensure it is consistent with national policy. The Council will prepare an appropriate modification (**MM**).

83. The town centre boundaries on the Policies Maps for Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph are drawn fairly tightly. For example town centre uses on the west side of Edward Street (?) are excluded from Leek Town Centre. In Biddulph the Home Bargains site is excluded. In Cheadle the Morrisons and B & M Stores are excluded. Has any analysis been undertaken to support the town centre boundaries? If so where can this be found?

**SMDC response**

Yes. Initial analysis was undertaken in the Council's Retail Study (Evidence Document 25.1 pages 125, 198-200 and 211-213). The approach to Town Centre Boundaries is explained in the Site Allocations Topic Papers - Leek (Evidence Document 13.1 pages 50-51 and 64); Biddulph (Evidence Document 13.2 pages 41-42, 53 and 60); and Cheadle (Evidence Document 13.3 pages 40-41 and 50).

**Matter 7 – Development Management Policies**

84. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:

- Whether development management policies (Policies SD1, SD2, SD3, SD4, SD5, DC1, DC2, DC3, DC4, C1, NE1 and NE2) are positively prepared and consistent with national policy;
- The delivery of Open Space and other GI (Policies C2 and C3).

85. Paragraph 8.5 indicates that Policy SD1 supports the use of previously-developed land. However, there is no specific provision within the policy (or indeed Policy SS1) albeit that Parts 2. and 3. are relevant.

SMDC response

Policy SD1 does refer to support for brownfield development in the circumstances described in Parts 2) and 3). Policy SS1 also expects new development to make effective use of land, and best use of brownfield land.

86. Paragraph 8.17 refers to poor air quality. Are there any Air Quality Management Areas within the District? (para 124 of the Framework refers).

SMDC response

There are currently no designated AQMAs in the District. However the Council is currently considering scope for future designations.

87. Policy SD5 in dealing with surface water seeks sustainable drainage systems. Is the policy robust enough as discharge to the public sewer should be seen very much as a last resort?

SMDC response

Policy SD5 was drafted following consultation with utilities companies, the Environment Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority Officer, none of whom objected to the submission version of the policy.

88. The explanation to Policy DC1 refers to Design and Access Statements (DAS) (para 8.75) but does not define what constitutes 'suitable planning applications'. Section 9 of the Development Management Procedure Order sets out when DAS are required and could be usefully referenced here (**AM**).

SMDC response

The Council agree that there should be clarification regarding what constitutes 'suitable planning applications' in the context of the need for Design and Access Statements and will prepare an appropriate modification (AM).

89. Paragraph 8.78 appears very detailed as part of the explanation to a generic design policy. Is it necessary? (**AM**).

SMDC response

The text in paragraph 8.78 was included upon request from Sport England at Preferred Options Stage. Please refer to Evidence Document 5.2 - Appendix 1 (pages 928/929 reference LPPO938) so no modification is proposed.

90. With regard to the policy itself, in Part 5 'visual impact' would be a more neutral term than 'overbearing development' (**AM**).

SMDC response

The Council agree that the term 'visual impact' would be more neutral and will prepare an appropriate modification (AM).

91. The clarity of Policy DC3 would be improved with the following change:  
Part 1 – 'significant adverse impact on the character....'

SMDC response

The Council agree that the clarity of Policy DC3 would be improved with the suggested change to the wording in Part 1 and will prepare an appropriate modification (AM).

92. Are the important views into and out of settlements referred to in Part 1 clearly identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Study?

SMDC response

Yes. For example if you refer to Evidence Document 22.1a and look at the Alton setting map, there are 2 significant views clearly marked on the map. This is the case for all settlements where significant views exist.

93. In terms of Part 3 'conserve or enhance' would be more positive than 'maintains'.

SMDC response

The Council agree that 'conserve or enhance' would be more positive than 'maintains' and will prepare an appropriate modification (AM).

94. Part 4 is more relevant to flood risk and Policy SD5 rather than landscape and settlement setting.

SMDC response

The Council agrees that this text on natural flood management measures is more appropriate in Policy SD5 and will prepare appropriate modifications to reflect this (MM).

95. Does Part 6 need to refer to the landscape in the PDNP or just its setting given the scope of the LP?

SMDC response

The Council agree that Part 6 of the policy only needs to refer to the setting of landscape in the Peak District National Park as the Local Plan does not cover land within the Peak District National Park - they have their own Core Strategy with landscape policies for land within that area. The Council will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

96. Para 78 of the NPPF specifies that local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts. Therefore, should the wording of Policy DC4 refer to national Green Belt policy being applied, in a similar manner to Policy SS10 part 6 and Policy H1 part 6 rather than referring to 'very special circumstances'? **(AM)**

#### SMDC response

The Council agree that the wording of Policy DC4 should refer to national Green Belt policy rather than 'very special circumstances' for clarity. The Council will prepare an appropriate modification (AM).

97. Paragraph 8.99 explains that a proposal involving the loss of community facilities 'will be judged on its own merits'. This phrase runs counter to the NPPF and the requirements of Policy C1. Part 3 a) is fairly weak as there may be an alternative facility of the same type but would it be of similar quality and meet the needs of the community? In some settlements more than one facility of the same type may be desirable e.g. shops or public houses. Part 3 b) could refer to the option of a shared use/space or multiple use e.g. public house and shop, or the building being offered to the local community at a reasonable price. Would Parts 6, 7 and 8 be best dealt with under Policies DC1, T1 and T2 respectively?

#### SMDC response

The Council considers that:

- the wording 'will be judged on its own merits' could be deleted from paragraph 8.98;
- Part 3 a) could be strengthened;
- Parts 6, 7 and 8 could be dealt with under policies DC1, T1 and T2 respectively.

The Council will prepare appropriate modifications to reflect these points (MM).

98. Policy C2 only appears to require provision of open space etc 'where there is a proven deficiency'. However, new development should make open space provision to meet its own needs. Is 'qualifying' development defined in the LP? Is it clear how much open space and what type will be required in new developments? I note the contents of ED23.2 but how easy will it be to interpret the paper's recommendations, particularly until such time an SPD is adopted? Would it be worth transcribing the quantity standards (Table 4.3.1) into the LP? **(MM)**

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees that Policy C2 should be amended to remove references to 'where there is a proven deficiency' and 'qualifying development'. It is also considered that the quantity standards could be included in Policy C2 (with the proviso that they may be superseded at some point) as this would improve transparency. The Council will prepare appropriate modifications to reflect this (MM).

99. Part 1 of the policy is similar to para 74 of the Framework albeit not entirely consistent with it. Notably the consideration in the final bullet point of para 74 of the

NPPF appears to be absent from Part 1 of the policy, namely 'the development is for alternative sports and recreation provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss'. Should Part 1 and para 74 be entirely consistent or would it be simpler just to cross reference with national policy? **(MM)**

**SMDC response**

The Council agrees that Part 1 should be consistent with para 74 of the 2012 Framework and will prepare an appropriate modification to reflect this (MM).

100. The first paragraph of Policy C3 refers to developing an integrated network of green infrastructure and para 8.109 refers to a Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy supporting the policy. Later in the LP (the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence of para 8.114 related to Policy NE1 on Biodiversity in the Natural Environment section) reference is only made at that point to the preparation of a 'Strategic GI Network' for the plan area which identifies a series of strategic corridors designed to link existing (and proposed) green spaces with green corridors running through towns, villages and rural areas. It would perhaps be logical to include this detail earlier, in the GI section. **(AM)**

**SMDC response**

Paragraph 6 of Policy NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources refers to the Staffordshire Moorlands Biodiversity Map and its use to help guide biodiversity enhancement measures that may be required in a development proposal. The intention of paragraph 8.114 in the preamble to the Policy is to identify that the Biodiversity Map and accompanying details are published as part of the Council's GI Strategy (ED22.10). In order to make this clearer, the Council will prepare an appropriate modification to paragraph 8.114 (AM).

101. Para 8.115 refers to nature conservation sites being shown on the Policies Map. It is assumed that this is a reference to the 1998 Local Plan Proposals Maps which will be updated when the LP is adopted? That said I could not identify any Nature Conservation Sites on the District Wide Proposals Map.

**SMDC response**

The Council confirms that the adopted Local Plan will identify the nature conservation sites listed, in the new policies maps.

102. I question whether the final sentence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet point of Policy NE2 is necessary as there should not be many circumstances where new or replacement tree planting could not be secured on site. **(MM)**

**SMDC response**

The Council considers that there may be some cases where it is not feasible to deliver replacement planting on-site, therefore the policy should provide for off-site planting arrangements.

103. In dealing with transport should Policy T1 make reference to the potential link roads in Leek and Cheadle and the need for the routes to be protected? (**MM**)

**SMDC response**

It is not considered necessary to amend either Policy T1 or Policy T2 to reflect this as the Cheadle link road is already referenced in the overarching Spatial Strategy policy for Cheadle (SS7), and site-specific policy DSC3; similarly the Cornhill East link road is already referenced in Leek Spatial Strategy Policy SS5. Site-specific Policy DSL4 already references the Churnet Valley Masterplan which indicates a possible link road route and will be modified to reference the link road explicitly.

Policy T1 is intended to set out generic transport policy. Bespoke transport policy and measures are identified in the relation locationally specific policies.

104. There is an element of repetition in paragraphs 8.125 and 8.134 (**AM**).

**SMDC response**

The Council agrees there is repetition between these two paragraphs. It is therefore proposed to make minor amendment to para 8.125, and delete para 8.134 (**AM**).

**Matter 8 –Housing, Employment and Mixed Use Allocations**

105. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing sessions are:

- The strategies for the different settlements (SS5-SS10);
- The site selection process, principally the SHLAA;
- The suitability of the allocations having regard to infrastructure and other constraints and the need for a range of sites;
- Whether any significant adverse impacts would arise for the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, taking into account potential mitigation;
- The development criteria;
- The delivery of the allocations over the plan period.

106. The intention is to have separate hearing sessions to cover Leek, Biddulph, Cheadle and the Villages.

107. In terms of the policies overall they refer to generic infrastructure and development requirements e.g. the provision of landscaping, flood risk assessment, infrastructure contributions, affordable housing etc. However, many of these requirements are covered by other policies of the LP. In some policies the generic requirements differ. To ensure consistency and clarity it would be preferable for requirements within the policies to be limited to those which are bespoke (para 9.1 refers). If necessary an introductory para to the chapter could make reference to the main generic policies that would apply (**MM**).

### SMDC response

The Council agree that generic requirements are covered by other plan policies and will prepare appropriate modifications (MM).

108. The housing site references used in the Maps in Appendices 1-4 could helpfully be included in the respective allocation policies and not just included in Policy H2. i.e. from reading Policy DSC2 – Cecily Brook Strategic Development Area, it is not clear that it includes three sites, (CH002a, CH002b and CH024 – the latter being some distance to the north of the other two).

### SMDC response

The Council agrees that the housing references included in Policy H2 could also be included in the site policies in Chapter 9 for clarity and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

### Leek

109. Policy DSL1 –\_bespoke requirements could include:

- Landscaping to form a new settlement edge;
- Site Investigation (para 9.5 refers);
- Access via Tittesworth Avenue;
- Phasing of school extension.

### SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site Policy DSL1, and other amendments in response to inspector's report, and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

110. Policy DSL2 – bespoke requirements could include:

- Highway/junction improvements;
- Phasing of school site;
- Retaining/integrating landscape features, including those on site of Kniveden Hall.
- Master Planning given multiple ownerships.

111. The wording of the final para is convoluted.

### SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site Policy DSL2, and other amendments in response to inspector's report, and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM). The final paragraph will also be modified for clarity.

112. Policy DSL3 - bespoke requirements could include:

- Phasing/master planning of residential and employment development;
- South-east corner to remain undeveloped (para 9.21);
- Retention of tennis courts;
- Off-site pedestrian and cycle links.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSL3, and other amendments in response to inspector's report, and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

113. The first part of the policy should refer to the number of hectares intended for residential development (5.25 ha) and approximately 180 dwellings rather than a precise number.

#### SMDC response

The policy will be modified as suggested (AM).

114. Policy DSL4 – bespoke requirements could include:

- Phasing/master planning of residential and employment development;
- Safeguarding/provision of link road;
- Access off A520;
- Mitigation/compensation for loss of Birchall Meadow.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site Policy DSL4, and other amendments in response to inspector's report, and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

115. To be consistent with other allocations the policy should refer to the amount of employment land (0.83 ha according to Policy E2).

#### SMDC response

The policy will be modified as suggested (AM).

#### Biddulph

116. The explanation to Policy DSB1 should describe the exceptional circumstances that justify the removal of land to the west of Biddulph Valley Way (BVW) from the Green Belt. Bespoke requirements could include:

- Phasing/master planning of residential, employment and retail development;
- Landscaping to form a new settlement edge;
- Site investigation;
- Heritage asset protection;
- Treatment to culvert;
- GI;
- Pedestrian and cycle links to BVW.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSB1 and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM). The Council also agrees that the explanation to Policy DSB1 should clarify the exceptional circumstances that justify removal of land

from the Green Belt and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

117. Policy DSB2 – see comments above re possible retail development. There do not appear to be any bespoke requirements. Para 9.51 is confusing and contradictory. Para 9.52 includes unnecessary detail e.g. size of garages.

**SMDC response**

Please refer to the response to paragraph 78 above in relation to retail development on the mills sites. The Council considers it appropriate to retain an amended version of the mills policy and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

118. Policy DSB3 - The explanation to Policy DSB3 should describe the exceptional circumstances that justify the removal of land from the Green Belt. Bespoke requirements could include:

- Phasing/master planning of residential and employment development;
- Access via traffic light controlled junction (Victoria Business Park);
- Site investigation;
- Safeguarding of public right of way.

**SMDC response**

The Council agrees that the explanation to Policy DSB3 should elaborate on the exceptional circumstances that justify removal of land from the Green Belt and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM). The Council also agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSB3 and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

119. Para 9.59 includes unnecessary detail e.g. size of garages. The 1<sup>st</sup> sentence of para 9.60 is confusing.

**SMDC response**

The Council agrees that unnecessary detail is included in paragraph 9.59 and will prepare an appropriate modification (AM). The Council also agrees that the first sentence of paragraph 9.60 appears confusing and will prepare an appropriate modification (AM).

**Cheadle**

120. Policy DSC1 - bespoke requirements could include:

- Phasing of school site;
- Site investigation;
- Mitigation to Cecilly Brook;
- Setting of heritage asset;
- Provision of 2 access points;
- Safeguarding of public rights of way.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSC1 and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

121. The reference to use of land outside the site for open space in para 9.73 needs explanation. Open space requirements would normally be provided within a development site. Does the site owner have control of additional land? Should this land be included within the allocation but retained solely for open space/surface water mitigation?

#### SMDC response

The Council previously included additional land along the edge of DSC1 within the allocation but as this land falls within Flood Zones 2 & 3 it would not meet the sequential test required by national policy and have triggered a Level 2 SFRA. The Environment Agency advice was to pull the site boundary back but include in the supporting text that the additional land immediately outside the allocated site could be used as additional open space / surface water mitigation. The allocated site and the additional land are in the same ownership.

The supporting text could be amended to explain this further or if considered necessary, land could be included within the allocation with restricted use for open space/surface water mitigation only (MM).

122. In terms of the policy itself the first part of the 5<sup>th</sup> bullet point is not clear – ‘Consideration of the growth that may impact...’

#### SMDC response

The Council proposes that an amendment should be made to the text to refer to ‘An assessment of the impact on the’ to improve clarity and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

123. Policy DSC2 - bespoke requirements could include:

- Master planning;
- Mitigation to Cecilly Brook;
- Creation of landscaped edge to settlement.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSC 2 and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

124. The reference to use of land outside the site for open space in para 9.79 needs explanation. Open space requirements would normally be provided within a development site. Does the site owner have control of additional land? Should this land be included within the allocation but retained solely for open space/surface water mitigation?

#### SMDC response

The Council previously included additional land along the edge of CH024 (part of DSC 2) within the allocation but as this land falls within Flood Zones 2 & 3 it would not meet the sequential test required by national policy and have triggered a Level 2 SFRA. The Environment Agency advice was to pull the site boundary back but include in the supporting text that the additional land immediately outside the allocated site could be used as additional open space / surface water mitigation. The allocated site and the additional land are in the same ownership.

The supporting text could be amended to explain this further or if considered necessary, land could be included within the allocation with restricted use for open space/surface water mitigation only (MM).

125. In terms of the policy itself the first part of the 1<sup>st</sup> bullet point is not clear – 'A masterplan that considers the growth...'

#### SMDC response

The Council proposes that an amendment should be made to the text to refer to 'An assessment of the impact on the' to improve clarity and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

126. Policy DSC3 - The explanation to Policy DSC3 should expand on the exceptional circumstances that justify the removal of land from the Green Belt (para 9.82). Bespoke requirements could include:

- Master planning and phasing;
- Safeguarding/provision of link road;
- Setting of heritage asset;
- Safeguarding of public rights of way.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees that the explanation to Policy DSC 3 should expand on the exceptional circumstances that justify removal of land from the Green Belt and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSC 3 and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

127. The reference to use of land outside the site for open space in para 9.84 needs explanation. Open space requirements would normally be provided within a development site. Does the site owner have control of additional land? Should this land be included within the allocation but retained solely for open space/surface water mitigation?

#### SMDC response

The Council previously included additional land along the edge of DSC 3 within the allocation but as this land falls within Flood Zones 2 & 3 it would not meet the sequential test required by national policy and have triggered a Level 2 SFRA. The Environment

Agency advice was to pull the site boundary back but include in the supporting text that the additional land immediately outside the allocated site could be used as additional open space / surface water mitigation. The allocated site and the additional land are in the same ownership.

The supporting text could be amended to explain this further or if considered necessary, land could be included within the allocation with restricted use for open space/surface water mitigation only (MM).

128. The disused Cheadle to Cresswell railway line to the north-west of the allocation appears to perform as GI but is not safeguarded as such on the policies map. Are there any proposals to restore the line as a pedestrian/cycle route?

SMDC response

Small stretches of the railway line are recognised rights of way. The Council's GI Strategy identifies part of the railway line south from Cheadle as a 'key green travel route' however it is not identified as part of the Strategic GI Network. Policy T2 Part 2) states that existing disused railway routes in the District will be protected (although proposals for recreational routes, cycleways, bridleways etc will generally be acceptable) and part 4) ensures that all legally recognised public rights of way affected by development would be protected (or diverted).

129. Policy DSC4 – bespoke requirements could include:

- Site investigation;
- Site access.

SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSC4 and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

130. With regard to site access would use of New Haden Road be appropriate as it has the characteristics of a country lane?

SMDC response

Staffordshire County Council Highways Officer states that the existing New Haden Road is an acceptable access point to the site (if access to the site is sought off New Haden Road); however the road will likely require improvements if this is the case (the nature of which is subject to subsequent planning application details).

The Rural Areas

131. Policy DSR1 – the explanation to the policy explains that the housing element would assist in meeting OAN without requiring additional Green Belt land. However, the scale of housing could be seen as distorting the spatial strategy. Indeed potential provision in the rural areas exceeds the requirement by about 100 dwellings (Policy SS4). Is the scale of residential development intended more for enabling purposes? Moreover the policy does not quantify how much employment land should be

delivered (unlike other mixed use allocations) so could be vulnerable to more housing development if there are housing supply/delivery issues in the future. This could further skew the LP's spatial strategy. It would also be helpful if the policy made it clear that the allocation is to serve a regional need.

#### SMDC response

The Policy Topic Paper (ED 13.5) details the rationale behind the spatial distribution of housing between the four sub areas and within the Rural Areas. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (ED 6.5) considered reasonable alternatives for the development approach in the Rural Areas.

The Spatial Strategy focuses development in the three market towns of Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle and the larger villages but allows for limited development of other settlements to meet local needs. The Local Plan allocates a strategic site at Blythe Bridge whilst also allowing for some housing development throughout the Rural Areas. Housing development within the Rural Areas is determined through the site allocations and the policy support for infill (in defined circumstances). Policy SS4 details potential provision in the Rural Areas, 881 dwellings comprising 461 dwellings on 6 allocations and 420 small sites allowance.

The site is allocated as a Regional Investment Site (B1/B2 Use) in the Core Strategy. Prior to the Core Strategy, the site was identified in the Staffordshire Structure Plan and the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan as a 'Premium Employment Site' and has the benefit of an adopted Development Brief. The former Regional Spatial Strategy Review continued to recognise the site as a major strategic employment site for North Staffordshire proposing its inclusion as a 'Regional Investment Site'. A number of planning permissions for employment use have been granted on the site since the 1997. Part of the site to the north of the A50/south east of the A521 at Blythe Bridge (5.53ha) was recently granted full planning permission for 118 dwellings.

Blythe Bridge is defined as a larger village in the Settlement Hierarchy. It is seen as suitable to accommodate the mixed allocation due to its size and location. It has a range of services and facilities and is in a sustainable location. The site lies adjacent to the A50 which connects to the A500 to/from Crewe and to the Crewe/Stoke/Derby rail line - a corridor with a number of high value engineering and manufacturing businesses. It has good accessibility to the primary road network and motorway network and is close to an existing railway station enabling the use of existing transport infrastructure.

The Local Plan allocates the site for mixed use and has a more flexible approach to employment use than the Core Strategy with the restrictions on B1/B2 use no longer applying, in order to facilitate the delivery of the employment development. The Local Plan does not specify the amount of employment land or employment type but does specify the approximate number and location of houses. It is considered the site may have a role to play in supporting the Constellation Partnership development initiative. Blythe Vale is identified by the Constellation Partnership as an investment opportunity. The mixed use allocation of site has been considered as part of the Duty to Cooperate and is included in the Statement of Common Ground with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Stafford Borough Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme (ED9 Duty to Cooperate Statements). Policy SS4 details the net housing requirement and the potential provision within the sub areas. For the Rural Areas there is a modest over provision of 88 dwellings. This allows for some flexibility in the housing supply for the Rural Areas. Whilst the housing is not intended directly as enabling development for the employment, it is considered that it will assist in bringing the employment forward. For example, the access for recently approved housing scheme has been designed to support for employment use.

The Council will make an appropriate modification which clarifies that the employment allocation is to serve the wider sub region and will be considered separately from the employment land requirement of the District. (MM)

132. In terms of the policy itself bespoke requirements could include:

- Master planning and phasing of employment and residential;
- Landscape mitigation on the site edges;
- Sustainable transport routes;
- GI strategy.

SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSR1 and will prepare an appropriate modification. The phasing of development will be considered in the masterplan (MM).

133. Para 9.98 refers to rail links. Is there an intention to promote a new station or will there be reliance on the existing station at Blythe Bridge?

SMDC response

There are no plans to build a new station at Blythe Bridge.

134. Policy DSR2 - Should the policy refer to the whole 8 ha to allow mitigation to be secured? Is access via the existing industrial estate feasible given the siting of existing industrial buildings and associated development at the head of the estate road? Bespoke requirements could include:

- Ecological mitigation;
- Setting of heritage asset.

SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSR2, and other amendments in response to inspector's report, and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

Staffordshire County Council Highways Officer advises that the access to this site would be an extension to the existing Brooklands Way road; any buildings on the line of the road would require removal (which would be a matter for the developer). In any event existing junctions in Leekbrook may require improvement. Highways did not object to this allocation being accessed through Brooklands Way - nor to planning application SMD/2014/0678 for industrial development on the same site). SMD/2014/0678 was approved subject to a S106 agreement which has yet to be signed. Ecological mitigation is to be resolved.

135. Policy DSR3 – Should the policy refer to the whole 1.67 ha to allow mitigation to be secured? Given the topography of the site and its landscape characteristics would it be feasible and viable to develop the site for employment use? If appropriate for development bespoke requirements could include:

- Specific landscape mitigation;
- Access via Dockseys.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSR3, and other amendments in response to inspector's report, and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

The Local Plan and Site Allocations Viability Study (ED 24.1) concluded that standalone industrial development is generally unviable across the District based on commercial viability testing. However it is known that the owner is supportive of delivering this allocation for their own purposes. The site owner did not object to any aspect of the policy.

The Landscape, Local Green Space and Heritage Impact Study (ED 22.5) states that the surrounding vegetation and development which encloses the site reduces visual prominence, so overall the site is of medium landscape sensitivity. The study concludes the site is acceptable in landscape terms but recommends that future development be limited to the lower ground only and building heights limited in the west. These recommendations have been reflected in the Policy.

136. Policy DSR4 - The explanation to Policy DSR4 should expand on the exceptional circumstances that justify the removal of land from the Green Belt (paras 9.120 and 9.123). Bespoke requirements could include:
- Landscape mitigation to site boundaries and top of site (WE003);
  - Access points;
  - Noise mitigation.

#### SMDC response

The Council agrees that the explanation to Policy DSR4 should expand the circumstances that justify removal of land from the Green Belt and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM). The Council also agrees to provide bespoke requirements only in site policy DSR4 and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

### **Matter 9 – Infrastructure and Delivery**

137. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:
- The effectiveness of Policy SS12;
  - Whether necessary infrastructure will be delivered in a timely fashion e.g. road improvements, schools, health services.
138. Paragraph 7.75 refers to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). What is the timetable for the introduction of CIL in Staffordshire Moorlands?

#### SMDC response

A report regarding the viability of CIL is shortly to be completed. The Council is in the processes of appointing consultants to support the preparation of a Developer Contributions SPD. Subject to the consideration of the viability of CIL, the commission may take forward CIL in parallel with the SPD.

139. Policy SS12 refers to the use of planning obligations to secure infrastructure and the application of standard formulae. What are the implications of the pooling limitations on developer contributions?

140. In framing these questions I am aware of the Government's consultation on reforming developer contributions.

#### SMDC response

As stated above, the Council is in the process of considering the viability of CIL. If a levy were to be introduced in the District, this would provide an alternative means of securing funding infrastructure. In addition, the Government's consultation regarding reform of developer contributions also proposes to remove pooling restrictions where CIL has been adopted.

The potential reforms to developer contributions also proposes to remove pooling restrictions where significant development is planned on several large strategic sites. The precise definition of when this would apply is to be determined but the example given where this may be applicable is "*where a plan is reliant on ten sites or fewer to deliver 50% or more of their homes*". This may apply in Staffordshire Moorlands as the Local Plan Submission Version identifies 56% of the net housing requirement to be provided on six strategic sites; land at the Mount, land adjacent to Newton House, Wharf Road, Cheadle North, Mobberley and Blythe Vale.

Notwithstanding the above, the Local Plan and Site Viability Study's assumptions in respect of developer contributions have been informed by discussions with Staffordshire County Council, including in relation to education provision where contributions can be sought from a number of developments. Where necessary, precise descriptions of the infrastructure improvements could be applied to avoid contravening restrictions.

#### **Matter 10 – Monitoring and Implementation**

141. Issues that are likely to be discussed at the hearing session are:

- Monitoring Indicators;
- LP Review Mechanisms

142. Paragraph 10.4 refers to the need for reviews of policies or the strategy overall. The LP should make it clearer when a partial or full review of the LP would be required. The need for review or partial review would be best linked to particular key indicators contained within the table on pages 201 to 212 such as those related to the delivery of housing. Reference could also be made to the need for review because of a significant change in circumstances related to national policy or the evidence base (**MM**).

### SMDC response

The Council agree that there should be clarification regarding when a partial or full review of the LP is required and will prepare an appropriate modification (MM).

143. There are two separate tables dealing with implementation and monitoring. These should be combined with the emphasis on the Monitoring Indicators and Targets.

### SMDC response

The Council agrees with the suggested amendment and will combine the two tables dealing with implementation and monitoring. Policy S1a will be deleted from the table. The table will reference which indicators will be considered regarding a Local Plan review (MM).

### Other Minor Comments

144. I noted a number of typos when reading the LP and have also suggested some minor changes to assist with clarity. These do not go to soundness but to be helpful I have set these out in **Appendix 2**.

### Future Programme

145. I would envisage the following indicative timetable for the examination of the LP up to the hearing stage.

- 14 August - Council response to Inspector's Preliminary Views;
- 24 August - Inspector prepares Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs);
- 24 August – 6 weeks' notice given for hearings;
- 24 September – deadline for submission of statements for hearings;
- 1 October onwards – final agendas prepared for hearings (agendas prepared about 1 week before the relevant hearing);
- 9-23 October – hearing sessions.

146. I would welcome the Council's views on this indicative timetable.

### Response

147. I would like a response by the Council to the above comments and questions by **14 August 2018** or earlier if possible. I am not inviting comments from other parties at this stage. I want to clarify the Council's position first. This will help me to refine Matters and Issues for the hearings and set agendas and questions. All parties with relevant representations will have the opportunity to respond in advance of the hearings should they wish.

148. As referred to earlier if the Council consider that the point or question could be dealt with by a **MM** or **AM** then please confirm. As the examination develops Schedules of MMs and AMs should be produced. The former should be in place in draft form in advance of the hearings, preferably published at the same time as any statements when it will become an examination document and inform discussion at the hearings. It will be refined during and after the hearings. This is on the assumption that the

Council wish me to recommend any MMs that are necessary to resolve issues of legal compliance or 'unsoundness'.

**SMDC response**

**I can confirm that the Council would like the Inspector to recommend any necessary main modifications to the Local Plan to address legal or soundness issues.**

149. If you require clarification of any of the above points please contact me via the Programme Officer.

*Mark Dakeyne*

INSPECTOR

24 July 2018

***Attached – Appendices 1 and 2***

## **Appendix 1 – Possible Hearing Programme**

### **Tuesday 9 October**

9.30 – Introduction to the Hearings, Legal Compliance, Procedural Requirements and the Duty to Cooperate

13.30 - Strategy and Strategic Policies

### **Wednesday 10 October**

09.30 - Housing and Employment OAN and Requirements

13.30 - Housing Land Supply

### **Thursday 11 October**

09.30 – Specific Housing Needs and Generic Housing Policies

13.30 - Employment Policies (including town centres and tourism)

### **Friday 12 October**

09.30 - Development Management Policies

### **Tuesday 16 October**

09.30 – Allocations (Leek)

13.30 – Allocations (Biddulph)

### **Wednesday 17 October**

09.30 – Allocations (Cheadle)

13.30 – Allocations (Villages)

### **Thursday 18 October (hearing venue not available)**

Inspector Site Visits

### **Friday 19 October**

09.30 – Infrastructure and Delivery

12.30 – Monitoring and Implementation

### **Tuesday 23 October**

11.30 – Review Session

## Appendix 2 – Minor Queries and Typos

### SMDC response

All typographical errors will be addressed by the Council (AM). The Council's response to minor queries are set out below.

#### 1. Introduction and background

Box after para 1.3 and elsewhere within the LP e.g. Chapter 9 – Do all the allocations fit the description of 'Strategic Development Sites'? Some are relatively small. As I understand it no further allocations are proposed through a separate DPD so would it be more appropriate to refer to them as 'Strategic and Other Sites'?

### SMDC response

Paragraph 9.1 of the Local Plan Submission Version states that Chapter 9 (Strategic Development Site Policies) provides additional policies for sites that are of strategic importance to the Local Plan and/or require bespoke policy to shape development. For instance, land at Horsecroft farm, Leek only provides for approximately 15 dwellings but will also provide additional school capacity. Land off Ash Bank Road, Werrington provides approximately 75 dwellings but necessitates particular policy requirements in relation to noise and landscaping.

In recognition of the above, the Council will propose a modification (AM) to the box after paragraph 1.3 as suggested.

Para 1.6 – the Examination commences once the LP is submitted to the Secretary of State/Planning Inspectorate. The hearings form only part of the overall examination. The examination commenced in July 2018 (see also box under para 2.7).

### SMDC response

The Council will propose modifications to update the contextual information throughout the Local Plan so that it reads as an adopted document. This will include references to the timescales and process and superfluous details such as the "How to respond" chapter (AM).

Para 1.8 – There is no reference to the SA within the list of evidence documents.

### SMDC response

The role of the SA and EQiA is referenced separately at paragraph 1.47 and 1.47 of the Local Plan. However, reference to be added as suggested (AM).

Paras 1.12 to 1.14 – It would be useful to refer to the Policies Map here and the fact that it will change to when the LP is adopted. Is a copy of the existing Policies Map available

### SMDC response

Reference to be added as suggested. The existing Policies Maps are provided in the library (ED32.8).

Para 1.18 – This is the first time that the NPPF is mentioned and so its full title should be included here with the abbreviation in brackets (not at para 1.25 or para 1.44).

Para 1.41 – How does land at Blythe Vale relate to the HS2 hub-station at Crewe?

#### SMDC response

Blythe Vale is identified by the Constellation Partnership as an investment opportunity. The site lies adjacent to the A50 which connects to the A500 to/from Crewe and to the Crewe/Stoke/Derby rail line - a corridor with a number of high value engineering and manufacturing businesses. The partnership is seeking to support growth in Cheshire and north Staffordshire boosted by the potential HS2 hub station at Crewe.

Para 1.48/line 3 – delete 'is'.

#### 4. The Challenges

Para 4.1 – in the box 'Improving the housing market' there is reference to the need to rebalance the housing stock. This does not appear to be consistent with what is said at para 3.6.

#### SMDC response

Modification to be proposed to "Improving the housing market" box under para. 4.1 to bring text into line with evidence (AM).

#### 7. Spatial Strategy and Strategic Policies

Policy SS2 - refers to a 'Development Boundary' being defined for the Towns and Larger Villages. Appendix 4 identifies the Larger Villages but refers to a 'Village Boundary'. There should be consistency in the terminology.

#### SMDC response

Modification to be proposed to Appendix 4 to ensure consistent terminology (AM).

Policy SS2 – 'Other Rural Areas' – missing 'of' at end of 3<sup>rd</sup> line.

Para 7.30/line 9 – 'term' not 'terms'

Para 7.31 – the clarity would be improved if the para started with 'Policy SS4 sets out how...etc'

#### SMDC response

Modification to be proposed to improve clarity (AM).

Para 7.45 – line 4 – 'locations', line 9 – no space between sentences.

Para 7.64 - should refer to SS9 rather than SS10.

Policy SS10 – Section 3/4<sup>th</sup> bullet – no space between 'with' and 'Policy'

Consistency with Core Strategy – 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bullets relating to 'essential needs' lack clarity and contain repetition.

### SMDC response

The "Consistency with Core Strategy" boxes were included in the Local Plan Preferred Options and Local Plan Submission Version to inform consultees about changes to policies and to inform consultation responses. It is proposed to delete all such boxes from the adopted version of the Local Plan (AM).

Policy SS11 – repetition within the policy – 'Development should/shall be in accordance with the Masterplan'.

### SMDC response

Modification to be proposed to delete final sentence of policy which provides a superfluous reference to the masterplan (AM).

Policy SS12 – 'formulae' not 'formulate'

Key Diagram – the small village of Swinscoe is not included.

### SMDC response

Modification to be proposed to Key Diagram to identify Swinscoe (MM).

## 8. Development Management Policies

Chapter 8 of the LP includes a wide range of policies dealing with sustainability issues, employment, housing, town centres and generic development management policies. In my view the LP would be easier to navigate and be clearer if separate chapters were used for different groups of policies.

### SMDC response

The contents page of the Local Plan Submission Version provides page numbers for the eight topic based sub-chapters of Chapter 8 to assist navigation. A full list of policies and respective page numbers is also provided.

Para 8.6/line 4 – 'likelihood' misspelt. Is 'likelihood of' needed in the sentence?

Para 8.7 - should refer to Part 5 of Policy SD1 rather than Part 4.

Para 8.10 – is the Minerals Local Plan available as part of the evidence base?

### SMDC response

The Staffordshire Minerals Plan (2015-2030) is available online and can be submitted for consideration during the examination if required -

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/planning/policy/thedevelopmentplan/mineralslocalplan/mineralsLocalPlan.aspx>

Para 8.12/line 14 – duplication of 'schemes'

Policy SD4 – 2<sup>nd</sup> para, penultimate line – 'of' not 'for'

Para 8.21/line 3 – 'about' not 'to'

Para 8.22 – as this is the first place that ‘Environment Agency’ appears the abbreviation of EA used elsewhere should be inserted after the full name e.g. (EA). The same applies to Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) used later in the para.

Para 8.24 – abbreviation WFD used for the first time – use full title with (WFD) in brackets afterwards.

Para 8.24/line 5 – ‘The Council...’

Para 8.25 – starting the para with ‘Policy SD5 is designed...’ would be clearer.

Para 8.26 – repetition here – point already covered in para 8.25.

Policy SD5/4<sup>th</sup> para – ‘Lead Local Flood Authority’

Para 8.28/6<sup>th</sup> sentence – ‘Note that’ is superfluous.

Para 8.28/last line – ‘than in Policy E1’

Paras 8.35 & 8.36 – ‘Note that’ (x3) superfluous.

Para 8.36/line 2 – space between ‘element’ and ‘covering’

Policy E2 – ‘The following sites as identified on the Policies Map are allocated...’

Para 8.42 – starting the para with ‘Policy E4 positively supports....’ would be clearer.

Para 8.43 – 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence – amend to read ‘At present a very low proportion of visitors to the Moorlands stay overnight in serviced accommodation and supply is particularly low in the three towns.’?

**SMDC response**

**Modification to be proposed as suggested (AM).**

Para 8.46 - starting the para with ‘Policy H1 seeks to ensure....’ would be clearer.

**SMDC response**

**Modification to be proposed to improve clarity (AM).**

There is repetition in paras 8.46 and 8.47 – ‘an appropriate range and type of housing’ ...‘an appropriate range and mix of housing’.

Policy H1 – Part 3) c) – the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence would be clearer if it read: ‘Higher densities will generally be appropriate in locations which are more accessible by public transport.’

Policy H1 – Part 4) c) – ‘...or have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.’

**SMDC response**

**Modifications to be proposed to improve clarity of Policy H1 as suggested (AM).**

Consistency with Core Strategy (page 111) – the Section titled R2 does not appear to be relevant.

SMDC response

Reference to Core Strategy Policy R2 is included as this is now incorporated into Local Plan Policy H1. However, as stated above, "Consistency with Core Strategy" boxes are proposed to be removed from the adopted Local Plan.

Para 8.54 - should refer to 'the sites below' rather than 'the above sites'.

Para 8.62/line 1 - delete 'Guidance'

Para 8.83/line 3 - insert 'and' after 'Registered Battlefields'

Para 8.90 - abbreviations HER and GPA need to be explained as this appears to be the first time they are used.

8.93 - starting the para with 'Policy DC3 provides protection....' would be clearer.

SMDC response

Modification to be proposed to improve clarity (AM).

Policy C2 - Part 3 e) - 'not inappropriate in the Green Belt'

SMDC response

Modification to be proposed to improve clarity and consistency with terminology in national policy (AM).

Para 8.106 - 'lie within' rather than 'intersperse'?

Para 9.8 - abbreviations SBI and BAS need to be explained as this appears to be the first time they are used.

Para 9.43 - abbreviation HEGS needs to be explained as this appears to be the first time it is used.

Para 9.35 - include '(BVW)' after Biddulph Valley Way.

Para 9.58 - abbreviations HLC and BBHECZ need to be explained as this appears to be the first time they are used.

SMDC response

Modifications to be proposed to explain abbreviations when first used (AM).

Para 10.1 - too many bullet points relative to the text.