

## 9. Planning

**9.25** Stafford Borough Council will not be identifying safeguarded land through the new Plan as there is sufficient scope of land to serve the development needs of Stafford Borough beyond the planned period. Stafford Borough Council has identified 3 major locations that are listed as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt defined with a boundary. The NPPF allows for limited infill development or redevelopment of existing major developed sites within the Green Belt.

### **Tourism**

**9.26** Consistent with Spatial Principle SP6, a key aspect of the Plan is to give appropriate support to achieving a prosperous rural economy, including tourism, through Policy E5 and Policy E6. Tourism in Stafford Borough has helped create and maintain employment locally and generate substantial revenue for the local economy. The tourism sector in Stafford Borough is intimately linked with the quality of the natural and built environment, and many visitors come to enjoy the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Shugborough Park estate, Trentham Estate and Gardens, the Monkey Forest, Stafford Castle, the Staffordshire County Showground, the Ancient High House and Stone canal town with its regular festivals.

#### **Policy E6 Tourism**

**Opportunities for tourism and new visitor accommodation will be promoted and enhanced in appropriate locations where it can be demonstrated through a business case that the use can be sustained in the long-term, throughout Stafford Borough by:**

- a. Promoting and enhancing the Borough's landscape and historic character by conserving and enhancing this unique environment, including Stafford and Stone town centres as well as the Borough's villages;**
- b. Consistent with Policy E7 (Canal Facilities and New Marinas), encouraging water-based recreation and continuing the regeneration and restoration of the extensive canal system across Stafford Borough to maximise water based transport, walking and cycling without undermining water quality, flood risk areas, nature conservation and biodiversity;**
- c. Promoting and enhancing visitor and recreational attractions;**
- d. Promoting new and existing walking and cycling routes, including towpaths and linkages to national networks through the Borough's countryside;**
- e. Supporting tourism opportunities in rural areas to sustain the local economy, in accordance with Policy E2, providing they are sensitively designed and are not detrimental to the natural environment or local amenity, in particular where appropriate through sensitive management and measures to protect the Special Area of Conservation (SAC);**
- f. Supporting opportunities that reduce the carbon footprint of the development and promotes sustainable tourism.**

**9.27** To support the development of tourism and provide facilities that will benefit the local economy and community, provision will be made for new tourist facilities in areas that can accommodate additions, without adversely affecting the environment. Stafford Borough Council will continue to work with other tourism organisations to best provide tourism in the Borough including the Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership. Examples of tourism activities within Stafford Borough include Staffordshire County Libraries and Archives, the Museum and Shire Hall Gallery, Shugborough Park estate, Trentham Estate and Gardens, the Monkey Forest, the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Stafford Castle, St Chads church, the Staffordshire County Showground, the Ancient High House, as well as local market events.

**9.28** The towns and villages of the Borough act as the principal focus for visitors and accommodation, particularly the larger towns of Stafford and Stone. In the smaller villages and hamlets, tourism development will be used to strengthen the local economy and reduce the impact of the declining agricultural sector. However, this must be compatible with its rural location, as poorly controlled tourist development in rural areas can damage the character of the environment that attracts tourists initially.

### **Policy E7 Canal Facilities and New Marinas**

**Proposals for new development alongside canals at settlements within the settlement hierarchy will be supported where they take the opportunity to provide economic uses by creating an active canal frontage and have regard to the canal's use and accessibility, including safety measures.**

**Away from settlements in the settlement hierarchy, marinas and moorings with limited service facilities will be accepted provided:**

- a. Canal related proposals constitute uses that are essential to be located in proximity to the canal;**
- b. The countryside is protected, in terms of its openness, rural character and attractiveness;**
- c. The development respects the character of the canal conservation area and the setting of heritage assets along its route;**
- d. The proposal is appropriate in scale to its locality;**
- e. The development proposal has minimum or sensitively located lighting, to reduce light pollution and interference with nocturnal wildlife species;**
- f. Facilities, including car parking, have adequate landscaping and screening, to minimise visual impact;**
- g. Where located in the Green Belt, the proposal is consistent with Green Belt policies; and**
- h. There are no permanent moorings for residential purposes.**

**Proposals for new canal facilities and associated infrastructure will be supported where:**

- 1. Public access is improved and integrated with the canal frontage;**
- 2. The development does not have an adverse effect on water quality;**
- 3. Canalside development, particularly new build, is of high quality, which contributes and enhances the function and appearance of canals and their frontages, wherever possible, providing regeneration and re-use of redundant canals and related buildings, taking into account Conservation Area and Listed Building designations;**
- 4. It does not create conflicts between different users of the canal, such as pedestrians and recreation users on / by the water;**
- 5. The traffic generated by the proposal does not adversely affect the safety of the existing road network and adequate car parking facilities can be provided within the site for the likely needs arising from the proposal;**
- 6. Adequate provision for short-stay moorings and related facilities are incorporated, where appropriate;**
- 7. The wildlife value of the locality is conserved and, where possible, enhanced including wildlife corridors;**
- 8. The proposal does not have any detrimental effects on area designations identified in the development plan; and**
- 9. The proposal does not conflict with landscape or nature conservation policies.**

**9.29** A network of waterways links towns and villages taking cyclists, walkers and boaters through countryside. The market town of Stone has the Trent and Mersey canal at its heart, bringing visitors from far and wide to this busy market town. In Great Haywood there is a 200 boat marina, on the edge of Cannock Chase, and there is a new marina near Aston-by-Stone. The Shropshire Union canal passes through the west of the Borough, attracting significant interest at Gnosall and Norbury Junction, whilst the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal brings

## 9 Planning

tourists into the Borough from the south. The extensive canal network has significant potential for restoration and expansion. The Newport Branch Canal formerly linked the Shropshire Union Canal at Norbury Junction to Newport and to the Shrewsbury Canal; its restoration is being progressed by the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust. The Stafford Riverway Link Community Interest Company has been established to promote the restoration of the historic canal and river link from the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal to Stafford town centre.

### Town and Local Centres

**9.30** The role of the Borough's market towns and service villages will be protected and enhanced by working with partners (including Staffordshire County Council and Makelt Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent). The aim is to support appropriate new retail, commercial and service development in order to maintain the vitality and viability of town and village centres, provide services as locally as possible and minimise the need to shop by car. Policy E8 sets out the key responsibilities of the Local Plan as required by the National Planning Policy Framework by defining the retail hierarchy of centres, promoting a prosperous rural economy and appropriate uses in the town centres. The boundaries of the town centres (and their primary retail areas) are defined on the Inset Maps. The boundaries of the Stafford and Stone primary and secondary frontages, Eccleshall Local Centre and the village and neighbourhood shops will be defined in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

#### Policy E8 Town, Local and Other Centres

**Support will be given to maintaining and enhancing the functions, vitality and viability of the following hierarchy of town, local and other centres:**

- **Stafford Town Centre is the primary comparison and convenience shopping destination serving Stafford Borough as a whole, with a vibrant night time economy including arts and cultural activities, attracting significant numbers of trips from adjoining parts of the Borough as well as developing a key role as a tourist destination within Staffordshire.**
- **Stone Town Centre acts as a key service centre and market town. It is a visitor destination with a vibrant culinary evening economy.**
- **Eccleshall Local Centre acts as a key service centre providing key services and facilities to the local community and an extensive rural hinterland, and includes specialist shops.**
- **Village and Neighbourhood Shops - outside the hierarchy of Town and Local Centres, these serve their immediate locality. These are identified at Barlaston, Gnosall, Great and Little Haywood, Hixon, Tittensor, Weston, Woodseaves, Yarnfield, Stafford Neighbourhood Centres at Baswich, Holmcroft, Parkside, Rising Brook, Wildwood and Weston Road, and Stone Local Centre at Walton. Such facilities will also be supported at Strategic Development Locations to meet local needs.**

**The use of town centres should be increased through measures which:**

- a. maintain and improve the quality and diversity of retail provision;**
- b. maintain and promote a diversity of uses, including the provision of entertainment and cultural activities;**
- c. retain and increase the amount of attractive residential provision in town centres, through new build and conversion;**

**Development proposals at Stafford providing greater than 1,000 square metres gross floorspace and at Stone providing greater than 500 square metres gross floorspace for town centre uses in an edge or out-of-centre location should be the subject of an impact assessment. For local centres the threshold should be 300 square metres gross floorspace.**

**If planning permission is granted for retail development in an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location, the range sold at the development may be restricted either through planning conditions or legal agreement. No new development for retail warehouses and superstores is required in these locations at Stafford.**

**New developments and extensions to existing village and neighbourhood shops will be assessed against the following:**

