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CABINET
8 NOVEMBER 2018
LOCAL PLAN REVIEW ISSUES AND SCOPE CONSULTATION FEEDBACK AND NEXT STEPS

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide feedback on the Cannock Chase Local Plan Review Issues and Scope consultation and to set out next steps and to update members with changes to the national planning system and on the ongoing work in relation to the shortfall of homes across the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area for information and context.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the feedback on the Cannock Chase Local Plan Review Issues and Scope consultation and the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and the summary of the different consultation methods utilised as set out in the report at **Appendix A** and notes the next steps for taking forward the next stage of Local Plan preparation, including potential resource implications for the evidence base.
- 2.2 That Cabinet notes the key changes arising from the new National Planning Policy Framework as set out in the report and implications for the plan process moving forward, including resourcing matters.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 This report provides feedback on the recent consultation on the first iteration of the new Local Plan for Cannock Chase District which was produced following the decision to cease work on Local Plan Part 2 (Council, February 2018) and proceed with a review of the Local Plan as a whole given the amount of change in the planning system. This initial consultation relates to

an Issues and Scoping paper, and views were sought on the issues which the new Local Plan should address. Accompanying this, responses were also sought on the scoping report for the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which has to be produced (as a legal requirement) to help shape the plan as it evolves.

- 3.2 The Issues and Scope consultation document was deliberately high level and broad to ensure that a wide range of matters could be considered before detail of the new plan is formulated. It also enabled those people who responded to the previous Local Plan (Part 2) consultation to see how their responses had been utilised as the new process begins.
- 3.3 Consultation took place for an eight week period beginning on Monday 2nd July 2018. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) only requires a six week consultation period however it was felt appropriate to extend this to eight weeks given that this was over the summer holiday period. Furthermore, legally the Council is only required to consult with three statutory consultees (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency) regarding the SA scoping report however it was felt it would be prudent to publicly consult on this at the same time.
- 3.4 During the consultation period, the government launched the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which makes a number of significant changes to the planning system and hence has changed the context within which the Local Plan will need to be produced. The Local Plan consultation was able to pre-empt much of this change based on drafts previously produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), as set out in the Cabinet report dated 14th June 2018, however a short update is provided in this report.
- 3.5 Furthermore, as Members are already aware, under the Duty to Co-operate the fourteen local authorities in the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA) are working together to address a significant housing shortfall and work is ongoing in relation to this.
- 3.6 Members will also recall that the Statement of Community Involvement was also consulted on at the same time as the Local Plan. This will be reported to Cabinet in December 2018.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The Local Plan will help to deliver the Council's corporate objectives of Promoting Prosperity and Community Wellbeing.
- 4.2 In terms of **Promoting Prosperity**, the Local Plan will help deliver the strategic objectives by helping to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity. It will ensure that sufficient land is allocated for a range of employment and housing uses, linking these to opportunities for developing skills and encouraging a balanced portfolio of employment opportunities. It will

also include policies to ensure town centres are able to adapt to changing demands to ensure they are vibrant and diverse centres.

- 4.3 In terms of **Community Wellbeing**, the Local Plan will help ensure that people can lead healthy and active lifestyles within attractive, safe and healthy environments. It will consider a wide range of issues including, for example, open space, sport and recreation, walking, cycling and sustainable transport, improved air quality, and supporting opportunities for ensuring that facilities for healthy living are available to all.

5 Report Detail

Legal issues and context

- 5.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) remains the basis of the forward planning system and was modified by the Localism Act 2011. This includes the need to comply with the Duty to Co-operate, and Councils need to work together constructively, actively and an ongoing basis in fulfilment of this Duty when preparing their plans.
- 5.2 Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets out that, at the outset of Local Plan preparation, a Local Planning Authority must consult on the subject of a Local Plan and seek representations on what the Plan should therefore contain in relation to that subject. The Issues and Scope documents were prepared in fulfilment of this regulation.
- 5.3 Section 19(5) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires that a Sustainability Appraisal is undertaken to inform the development of the plan. This will also incorporate an Equalities Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment. The first stage of this process is to consult on the scope of this document through a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report, so this was undertaken alongside the Local Plan consultation.

The consultation process

- 5.4 Consultation on both documents was undertaken between Monday 2nd July and Tuesday 28th August. Whilst the statutory requirement is to consult for six weeks it was felt that an eight week consultation period would be preferable as this would give the community more time to respond over the summer. Given that this is an early stage consultation, some limited flexibility was allowed beyond this to assist those who had problems responding (for example Parish Councils who were affected by the summer recess). Furthermore legally the Council is only required to consult with three statutory consultees (Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency) regarding the SA scoping report however it was felt it would be prudent to publicly consult on this at the same time.

- 5.5 Hard copies of the consultation documents and supporting literature (e.g. a non technical summary) were placed in the venues specified in the Statement of Community Involvement. Publicity for the consultation (and events) was via the Planning Policy team's website and consultation database which contains over 1000 entries (email and letter), via advertisement in the press, via press releases and social media as well as posters placed in a range of publicly accessible venues around the district (shops, community centres, noticeboards, libraries, theatres, leisure centres etc.). Officers were also proactive in contacting stakeholders, Parish Councils and community groups and gave presentations at a number of events as a result. A series of drop in events were held around the district, with exhibition materials and documents on display and officers available to answer any queries.
- 5.6 The drop-in consultation events were held in a range of venues, including libraries, supermarkets, community halls and leisure centres. The timing of the drop in sessions was varied to suit people at different times of day for example some were in the mornings, some in the late afternoon / early evenings, making the most of venue later opening hours where possible. All events contained the same materials and it was made clear that people could attend any session, whichever venue / time was most convenient. The range and number of venues (and number of events held) had been expanded since the previous consultation on Local Plan Part 2 as a result of feedback from the public. Some commented that events should be held later in the evening so this could be considered next time round subject to venue availability and team capacity, although every effort had been made to hold some events into the evening and an additional evening drop in session was added at Norton Canes as a result of requests from the community. All materials were also online however, and this time the ability to respond by online survey was an additional option.
- 5.7 Attendance at the events was lower than for the consultations held for Local Plan Part 2 although this is to be expected as the start of a Local Plan is essentially a high-level scoping process whereas later stages of plan preparation traditionally attract more interest as this is when sites and options are specified in detail and become more relatable to particular communities. Response levels were still good however, with 567 comments submitted and additional feedback received through workshops and meetings.
- 5.8 Further detail on the consultation feedback can be seen at [Appendix A](#).

The key issues raised through the consultation

- 5.9 A summary of the key issues are set out at Appendix A, and the representations will be published in more detail on the Planning Policy web page at www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/plannningpolicy.
- 5.10 Of major significance to the emerging plan is the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which the Government published in July whilst the Local Plan consultation was underway. The timing of this was helpful as many of the representations were able to set out what the implications of new national

policy might be for the plan and these will need to be considered in detail moving forward.

- 5.11 Members will recall that when the Local Plan Issues and Scope document was reported to Cabinet on 14th June 2018 for approval to consult, the draft changes to the NPPF were considered in some detail and had also been included in the consultation documentation. The new NPPF does not appear to deviate in any major way from the draft changes proposed which would be considered to have a significant impact upon this stage of the Local Plan process.
- 5.12 In terms of headline issues however, it is worth re-emphasising that the housing requirement will now be set via a standardised methodology, which is set by the Government. The draft standardised methodology sets the local housing need (LHN) by using the demographic household projections as a starting point and then uplifts dependent on local affordability based on the ratio of median workplace earnings and average housing prices.
- 5.13 At the time of writing, confirmation is awaited from Government as to the final standard methodology of calculating the LHN and what the impact of this will be for the district. Such figures, when confirmed, should be treated as a minimum. The NPPF does allow for Councils to obtain their own evidence if they wish to deviate from this (e.g. should they want additional growth) but this would need to be proven to be robust and would be a complex process so would need very careful consideration, especially given the complexities of the wider housing market area.
- 5.14 Furthermore, Members will recall that a new Housing Delivery Test is to be introduced from November 2018: this was set out in the previous Cabinet report but means that Councils will be performance measured against their housing requirement in terms of the delivery of new homes with potential policy related consequences for under delivery. However financial-related punitive measures have been mentioned in relation to the New Homes Bonus and are still under consideration by the Government with further consultation anticipated in 2019 / 20.
- 5.15 In terms of economic growth, it is worth noting that there are implications for the plan arising from the recent announcements that the Local Economic Partnerships are under review as this will have potential consequences for the plan moving forward.
- 5.16 Another major issue will be the need to continue to work under the Duty to Co-operate with partners across the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area on the wider housing shortfall. As Members will be aware from previous reports there is a significant shortfall across the area as identified in the Strategic Growth Study (SGS) produced by GL Hearn / Wood (published February 2018) which concluded that there is a shortage of 28,150 homes to 2031 and 60,900 to 2036. This is currently being monitored and work is ongoing across the partner authorities in relation to this.

- 5.17 Viability and deliverability is another major area which will need to inform plan preparation as under the new NPPF there is considerably more emphasis upon this which, coupled with the increasing emphasis upon bringing forward brownfield sites and smaller sites will require significant resourcing in order to have robust evidence to show the plan is deliverable. Furthermore the Government has been saying for some time that the developer contributions regime (CIL and S106) is to be reviewed, but after a consultation earlier in the year nothing further has yet emerged on this.
- 5.18 It is clear (as with the previous consultation on the now-ceased Local Plan Part 2) that there is still much concern about protecting the Green Belt and the environment, but also considerable pressure to consider Green Belt options should the 'brownfield first' aims of the new NPPF not yield a sufficient range of viable and deliverable sites to enable the plan to deliver its requirement and possible contributions to the wider shortfall over a fifteen year timeframe.
- 5.19 Furthermore, the representations raised several issues about the evidence base which will be needed to inform the plan. Much of this is already in train (e.g. playing pitch strategy, housing needs assessment, economic development needs assessment, updated evidence on gypsy, traveller and travelling show-people needs) however much more will need to be commissioned as the technical expertise required is not held within the Council. Such evidence relates in particular to infrastructure and also environmental matters including transport, biodiversity, open space, green infrastructure flood risk and air quality. These will all have significant resource implications for their production as evidence needs to be robust and up to date. Discussions are currently underway on these matters and efficiencies will be sought where possible via joint working with other authorities but this will not always be possible depending on the nature of the evidence needed and the different local plan timescales for different areas.

Next Steps

- 5.20 The outcomes of the consultation will be considered and incorporated into the next iteration of the Local Plan i.e. the Issues and Options document due to be reported to Cabinet in February 2019 for consultation as set out in the Local Development Scheme. This will consider the issues raised in the Issues and Scope consultation and will set out a suggested range of options for dealing with these, for consultation before refining into a series of 'preferred options' to be consulted on later in 2019.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

Any costs associated with the Local Plan will need to be contained within existing approved budgets.

As referred to in para 5.14 the introduction of the new Housing Delivery Test may potentially penalise Councils who under deliver the number of new homes in their District.

Failing Councils will be required to focus more Planning staff resources on preparing an action plan to redress the shortcomings which may affect Income generation and require additional staff to be funded.

The Government is also considering the introduction of financial penalties by way of reducing the amount of New Homes Bonus paid to Councils; this is being further debated in 2019-20.

There are no further direct financial implications for the Council as a result of this report; however a number of elements within the report do have a financial impact on the Council for example the housing requirement for the District during the plan period will affect the level of New Homes Bonus receivable by the Council.

These elements will form the basis of future Capital and Revenue reports which will be submitted for Members consideration and will include detailed financial implications as and where required.

6.2 Legal

Legal implications are set out throughout the report.

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None

6.5 Human Rights Act

The extensive consultation procedures provided for by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 cover human rights matters in terms of the Development Plan.

6.6 Data Protection

The Planning Policy Fair Processing Notice sets out how data is used in compliance with the GDPR.

6.7 Risk Management

The main risks relate to the plan not being found sound and to potential legal challenge to the plan. These risks can be minimised by ensuring that the plan and its accompanying documents are legally compliant; that legal support is

employed where necessary; that all interested parties are actively informed and engaged throughout the plan’s preparation; that the plan is based on sound, robust evidence.

6.8 Equality & Diversity

The Local Plan will be subject to Equality Impact Assessment at the appropriate stages.

6.9 Best Value

There are no Best Value implications arising directly as a consequence of this report.

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix A: Local Plan (Issues and Scope) Consultation Document.

Previous Consideration

Revised Local Development Scheme and Local Plan Review	Cabinet	25/01/18
Local Plan Review (Issues and Scope) Consultation	Cabinet	14/06/18

Background Papers

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Localism Act 2011
- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004
- The National Planning Policy Framework 2012, MHCLG consultation proposals regarding the NPPF and developer contributions 2018, new NPPF July 2018
- Local Plan Part 1 including Rugeley Area Action Plan (adopted June 2014)
- Local Plan Part 2 Issues and Options Paper (January 2017)
- Cannock Town Centre Area Action Plan Issues and Options Paper (January 2017)
- Local Development Scheme 2018
- Statement of Community Involvement 2014

Appendix A**Local Plan Issues and Scope consultation****Summary of issues raised throughout the consultation process in relation to the Issues and Scope document and Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report**

(NB this is set out on a theme by theme basis, summarising the written representations to the consultation, followed by other comments (which do not duplicate those already made via written representation) made at various events, workshops and meetings while the consultation was ongoing. Meetings with Duty to Co-operate bodies are held throughout the development of the plan and are logged separately as they occur).

General overall comments**Written Representations**

Most respondents targeted their comments to answer the questions asked in the consultation document. A few more generalised comments were made, some supporting the Council's decision to cease work on Local Plan Part 2 and progress a review instead, a couple not supporting this, others making general comments on the nature, distribution and scale of growth, and on the infrastructure needed in relation to this.

Comments on the district profile and key issues**Written Representations**

29 responses were received on the district profile section. Some supported the profile as suggested (this had been updated from the version in the adopted Local Plan to take account of changing circumstances). The inclusion of Rugeley Power Station was welcomed, and suggestions were made as to the future of the site eg infrastructure needs, and the need to help businesses relocate to the site, especially where they want to relocate from residential areas. Infrastructure was also mentioned in wider terms, for example education. The potential role of Parish / Town councils in project management and delivery was also raised.

Some respondents (mainly statutory agencies and individuals / interest groups / organisations) wanted more emphasis on particular topics eg a dedicated section for the historic environment, more focus on the role of canals and waterways and their role in addressing a range of agendas such as health, the economy and tourism, and more specific reference to affordable housing, and healthy and active lifestyles.

The need for the profile to reflect current national policy, the need to address the housing market area housing shortfall and the need to take into account an up to date evidence base were recurrent themes. Those representing the development industry were keen to state that the housing need identified by the new standard methodology is a minimum figure, that housing should have more of an emphasis in the profile, that CCDC should play a role in addressing the shortfall and that Green Belt release would need to be considered as part of this. Reference was made to the

Council's own economic growth ambitions and the need to ensure sufficient sites were available to deliver this, but also that the area should also be helping to deliver the wider growth aspirations of the region (eg the LEPs), and that this would have implications for the need for more housing and an integrated approach. Furthermore, some respondents then commented that employment land should not be lost to housing, and that environmental matters should be balanced with growth needs.

Some respondents felt there was a need to emphasise sustainability of communities: this varied from the need to identify the economic sustainability of towns (citing decline in Rugeley) to those representing some parts of the development industry stating that Cannock / Hednesford and Heath Hayes should be identified as the district's most sustainable settlement, along with the need to strengthen the sustainability of Norton Canes.

Finally, some pointed out elements which needed updating or correcting in terms of factual accuracy.

Wider context

Written Representations

39 responses were received regarding the wider context of the plan.

In terms of the comments on the strategies and plans the new local plan needs to align with, several examples were listed by a range of agencies and organisations including the AONB Management Plan, the Minerals and Waste Local Plans, the Staffordshire Learning Infrastructure Framework, and various West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) strategic economic and transport plans. There was much emphasis from the development industry on the duty to co-operate, having regard to the Birmingham Development Plan and the wider Strategic Housing Needs Study (although some developers cited concerns with this). The need for the plan to be based on up to date evidence, to help deliver the housing shortfall (including Green Belt release), to deliver the Council's own economic growth ambitions (as set out in the Corporate Plan), and the need for statements of Common Ground to be produced as work progresses were all matters raised. Stafford Borough Council acknowledged the cross boundary linkages identified but wanted more information on the relationship between Rugeley Town Centre hinterland and Stafford Borough stating that there should be no development impacting on the Green Belt or AONB in Stafford Borough. Rugeley Town Council wished to see more recognition not only of neighbourhood plans but of other Parish / Town plans and the role they play in regeneration and partnership working. Finally, other respondents stressed the importance of green / open spaces, environmental protection and enhancement.

In terms of 'other cross boundary issues' which should be addressed, a range of issues were mentioned including health, linked to the protection and enhancement of landscape character, recreation and economic activity; housing needs; gypsy and traveller needs; employment; retail; Green Belt (including those for, and against its release); green infrastructure; green corridors / ecological links and networks; water supply and drainage; Cannock Extension Canal SAC; Cannock Chase Special Area

of Conservation (SAC); transport links; mineral resources; air quality and water impacts under the Habitats Regulations 2017; protection of the route for the restored Hatherton Canal; Rugeley Power Station site; Rugeley having different needs to Cannock (ie Rugeley not getting economic benefits from the Midlands Conurbation due to geographical separation by Cannock Chase).

Vision and Objectives

Written Representations

22 representations were received on this theme, mostly supportive of the current vision and objectives. Two representations felt that the vision was too long and undeliverable, whereas others felt that more needed to be included, with more emphasis on housing delivery and meeting housing need; supporting the needs of neighbouring authorities via the Duty to Co-operate; supporting well designed and sustainable development close to / in the AONB including brownfield sites and linked opportunities to enhance the AONB; emphasising the importance of the canal network (and the need for a policy to substantiate this); the need to cross reference heritage to other areas of the vision; adding in reference to water quality / prevention of soil loss; reflecting the need to promote sustainable brownfield / urban sites; encouraging innovation eg in housing or new technologies for energy creation and storage; creative approaches to policy across boundaries to deal with cross boundary issues such as housing, open space, developer contributions etc; more emphasis upon project delivery and partnership working; making reference to Active Travel; continuing to support Designing out Crime; protecting the Green Belt; referencing the need for high quality education. Stafford Borough Council also stated that it generally supported the vision and objectives as set out but would not be in a position to provide for any unmet Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling showpeople needs in the Borough.

Review of CP1: strategy

Written Representations

This attracted 64 responses. There was much emphasis, mainly from the development industry about the need for the strategy to change to accommodate some of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA) housing shortfall; to treat the standard methodology as providing the minimum figure for housing; to increase the amount of housing and employment to meet not only the growth ambitions of the district but also the wider ambitions of the West Midlands; to allow for Green Belt release / amend Green Belt boundaries to accommodate growth (some made specific comments on the Green Belt review methodology); to allow for the development of brownfield sites in the Green Belt and AONB, and the need to safeguard some Green Belt to provide for growth needs beyond the plan period. A number of developers pointed out that brownfield sites are a finite supply (although some promoting brownfield sites felt they should be prioritised) and will not be sufficient to address the growth needs of the area, that the current spatial approach of distributing development in proportion to the size of existing communities will not work in terms of future growth needs and that large scale urban extensions provide the solution as they will be of a scale to provide new infrastructure and facilities. Many then went on to promote the sustainability merits of

their various proposals, some also promoting various spatial options accordingly. It was also commented that the growth needs of rural communities should also be taken into account to help with housing supply and affordability issues.

Others (mainly interest groups, some Parish Councils and members of the public) felt that the Green Belt should be protected and that Rugeley Power Station should be able to absorb the housing required. It was also felt by some (including Rugeley Town Council) that Rugeley was neglected, did not have strong links with the conurbation, attracted people who commute to neighbouring districts, and needed support to attract private sector investment to revitalise the area, and to provide employment which would benefit local people.

Many respondents offered specific local detail for instance the importance of keeping the separation between communities and the purposes of the Green Belt in this regard. Some raised objection to potential directions of growth / large strategic options, some referring to the detail of the previous consultation on Local Plan Part 2, citing a range of concerns (depending on the area) eg biodiversity, traffic safety, coalescence and so on. Norton Canes Parish Council supported infill but felt it could not absorb further strategic growth, and expressed concern about possible coalescence with Cannock if Kingswood Lakeside expanded. Concern was also expressed by Burntwood Town Council about the possibility of coalescence with Heath Hayes.

Some said that the current strategy works well as it balances growth with conservation needs. Natural England highlighted that the district faced many environmental constraints and would continue to work closely with the Council and its partners (for example on the Cannock Chase SAC) on these matters.

A range of other comments on spatial distribution and infrastructure were made (including those by developers as mentioned previously) Transport for West Midlands advised that regard should be had to travel to work patterns and existing transport routes / links with the West Midlands economy when allocating housing sites, and the links between supply chains and transport networks.

Staffordshire County Council felt that strategic sites should be considered as they can provide more on-site infrastructure, concerns were expressed about the pressures that a 'scattered approach of medium / small scale sites' would place on infrastructure if the current strategic approach of proportionate distribution was continued: in particular educational capacity would need to be taken into consideration including the need / ability to expand schools if needed, or provide a new school in some instances. A particular pressure point for infrastructure both in terms of schools and highways capacity was identified in relation to the Wimblebury area. It was also commented that new sites must not encroach on waste management infrastructure. In terms of smaller scale sites, however others (such as South Staffs. Council) mentioned the importance of such sites in contributing to the short to medium term supply of housing as identified in the Strategic Growth Study for the GBBCHMA.

In terms of the time period for the plan those who responded felt the time period is appropriate ie to run to 2036 provided that this covers 15 years from adoption.

Review of CP2: Developer Contributions for Infrastructure.

Written Representations

29 responses were received to this section. Some were high-level eg those from agencies (Natural England / Highways England) citing the need to engage as the plan progresses. Natural England also requested more emphasis on green / blue (ie water-related) infrastructure.

Many respondents cited the need for updated viability assessment work and the need for robust evidence to justify where contributions were needed and the need for clarity on how CIL would be allocated – and how proposed changes in CIL regulations would need to be applied. Some developers commented that a site by site approach might be needed to take account of specific circumstances so a generalised approach might not be appropriate, and ‘exceptional circumstances’ would need consideration in terms of how this might be applied. West Midlands HARP (representing a range of housing associations) commented that such providers should not have to pay contributions, and exceptions should apply for care homes / extra care facilities as these often provide their own health care facilities so should not have to contribute to health facilities or at least should have discounts applied. Some commented that if a developer could not deliver on the required infrastructure then the site should not be considered viable.

Other respondents provided information about their particular product (Eg Rentplus rent-to-buy housing) Some set out what they felt should be provided for in terms of developer contributions and an updated infrastructure delivery plan, including a range of projects and problems with local infrastructure (Rugeley Town Council), funds for the restoration of the Hatherton Canal, sport and recreation facilities as shown by updated evidence for the Rugeley Power Station redevelopment (Sport England) and the need for a new or expanded police custody facility in the southern Staffordshire area (Staffordshire Commissioner, Police Fire and Rescue).

Review of CP3: Design

Written Representations

32 comments were received to the questions posed in relation to the review of the design policy. Some respondents wanted it bolstering, for example the Canal and River Trust suggest a canal specific policy and suggest that the canals offer opportunities for high quality integrated design, also highlighting that land stability matters need to be considered in relation to canals. Sport England requested inclusion of Active Design, suggesting this should go in the Design SPD. Rugeley Town Council felt that despite design policy, planning applications were of a poor standard in Rugeley, eroding the historic qualities of the area. Others commented that high quality, innovative design should be encouraged and policy CP3 should be amended to reflect this.

Housing density was a key focus of the responses. It was felt that the matter should be addressed via the Local Plan rather than SPD as this has implications for viability. It was felt that policy enforcing specific densities across all sites was not appropriate

as provision should be made for the character of a particular area (including design guides and codes), although some felt that minimum density standards could work in town centres / areas with good public transport links for example. Rugeley Town Council advised that a range of densities should be encouraged, and 'accessible' properties close to amenities would be appropriate.

Staffordshire County Council expressed concern that minimum density standards could conflict with achieving above ground SuDS (Sustainable Drainage System) and that the SuDS handbook should be referenced in the Local Plan. Natural England advised that green infrastructure can still be achieved with high densities referencing the Town and Country Planning Association Biodiversity by Design publication.

In terms of minimum / maximum off street parking standards, developers commented that this should be in accordance with the NPPF Paras 105 and 106 ie if standards are to be set this must be backed up by robust evidence to justify this. Others commented that parking levels required at present are too low.

Review of CP4: Neighbourhood-led planning

Written Representations

8 responses were made to this section. There were mixed views, with some feeling that there was no need for the policy and others feeling that the Local Plan still needed to make clear reference to the link between the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans (including continued guidance for the latter), and two commented that the local plan should have policies if the Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites.

Review of CP5: Social Inclusion & Healthy Living

Written Representations

44 responses were received on this policy. In terms of which issues the policy should be covering it was felt that there should be more emphasis on the health benefits of canals, and on green and blue infrastructure. The policy needs more emphasis on schools and doctors and village regeneration (mentioned in relation to Norton Canes) to accompany growth, and open spaces need careful planning: some respondents commented that play areas were out of date (Rugeley) or badly located (Norton Canes) and play provision should be provided where an up to date audit shows it is needed. Careful consideration is needed when locating development next to farmland in terms of considering the maintenance of rights of way (given the increase in their use) and avoiding trespassing, fly tipping and negative impacts on livestock (and potentially the impact on farm management practises too). Farmers and landowners need to be engaged in discussions from the outset. It was also commented that Active Design should be incorporated into policy, that a holistic approach is needed to planning for residential and open space, that green spaces contribute to clean air, and that community, cultural and social facilities should be protected from loss.

Others commented that infrastructure for health needs to be flexible and adaptable and relevant / appropriate to the needs of the site and its context. Viability was emphasised by many respondents and it was felt that standards for open space and recreation provision should go in Local Plan policy and not SPD. It was also commented that SPD should be flexible and should not 'lead policy'.

Several comments were made on the evidence base including a request to allow some brownfield sites in the green belt and AONB to be developed, to encourage innovation, the need to inform policy via an updated Indoor and Built Facility strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy which would also set levels of provision needed (setting standards is not supported by Sport England), incorporating wider determinants on health (to be discussed with Public Health), and informing policy using a range of Natural England and DEFRA publications on the natural environment and obesity, physical activity, physiological health, mental health, dementia, and human health.

In terms of offsetting, respondents interpreted this differently. Some, for example, saw this as net gain in terms of additional quantity (eg footpath length along a canal or opening up an area of countryside for recreation or sports) or even landscape enhancement. Others advised that this terminology is used in terms of biodiversity net gain, SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace). Respondents focusing on this issue commented that the Council would need to be clear as to how this would be measured and what metrics should be used. Natural England advised that the Council will need to consider whether it is considering delivering biodiversity net gain outcomes or wider ecosystem / natural capital outcomes, commenting that the latter two will require additional advice and expertise. It was considered that biodiversity net gain can be sought on a proportionate basis using an up to date evidence base (Phase 1 habitat survey).

Other comments on CP5

Air quality was raised a number of times: more evidence is needed together with consideration as to how policy and supplementary policy should be prepared and applied.

The policy needs to include more emphasis on social inclusion, avoiding isolation and more about mental health and wellbeing as the current emphasis is currently on physical health. It needs more on community support, activities, social engagement and the role venues play in this – spaces need to be multifunctional and flexible.

It was commented that Public Health need to engage with the plan. It was asked if a "Planning for Health" SPD, could include an approach to hot food takeaways / A3 uses where hot food is available eg drive-throughs or delivery of hot food, but covering a much wider approach than this as per the SPD produced in Dudley. Consideration could be given as to whether developer contributions could be taken from applicants of A5 (or A3) uses to ensure improved education in relation to healthy eating. The plan should consider whether developments should undergo health impact assessment where relevant aimed at addressing areas of poor health in the district.

Workshops with primary schools across the area showed that children were concerned about lack of places to play which they could get to easily and which were good quality, including skate parks and facilities for older children. They wanted places where activities were on offer. They often cited being intimidated by large groups of older children / adults who gather in public places and smoking and antisocial behaviour was a concern repeatedly mentioned, as was litter and general maintenance issues as they stop children wanting to be outside / feeling safe.

Review of CP6: Housing Land

Written Representations

Housing Land attracted 97 responses. In terms of the issues needing to be addressed, as with the strategy section there was much emphasis from the development industry about the need to accommodate some of the housing shortfall, to treat the standard methodology as a minimum figure and to release Green Belt sites including brownfield sites in the Green Belt which could offer natural capital. References to the need to speed up delivery were also made, and also the need to speed up the plan making process.

Merits of various sites and directions of growth were also submitted, (and more flexibility in the allocation at Pye Green Road) as was a summary of a suggested way of apportioning the housing shortfall across the Housing Market Area. Comments were also submitted questioning the robustness of the Housing Market Area evidence base and its approach to densification.

Conversely, a number of objections were raised to the potential use of Green Belt emphasising the need to prioritise brownfield sites, with some making specific reference to Rugeley Power Station. It was also commented that Green Belt land is cheaper to develop, and it should not be selected on this basis.

Comments were submitted regarding the need to ensure that growth is accompanied with the right levels of infrastructure for example impacts on highways or the need to invest further in village centres (eg Norton Canes), but would also benefit by being located close to existing infrastructure such as transport hubs and services and facilities. It was commented that sites should not be allocated close to farming livestock units. In terms of self build and custom build housing it was commented that this should not be in place of affordable housing.

As with the strategy section the role of the Cannock Chase AONB was highlighted by Staffordshire County Council, citing the NPPF in terms of the definition of 'major development' being a matter for the decision maker in this context and it is suggested that some sites could be initially scoped out using the Landscape Character Assessment but cautions that further area / landscape sensitivity studies would be required for this approach to be robust.

With regard to the evidence base it was commented that urban capacity evidence needs to be updated as does the Green Belt study (the methodology for which is also questioned), housing needs study and information on viability and infrastructure.

In terms of densities, no respondents felt that a blanket approach to densities should be applied, as densities should reflect the surroundings and character of an area so flexibility is required and sites should contain a variety of densities. It was felt that higher densities would be more appropriate in urban areas and around transport hubs, however it was also commented that efficient use of land was key so some rural sites might be appropriate for high densities in some instances. Others expressed concern about problems with parking and high density development, and also logistics in being able to accommodate SuDS.

The question was asked as to how the Council might ensure it had considered all potential brownfield options and whether there were any new sites which should be put forward. Some respondents felt that the brownfield land register / SHLAA¹ was sufficient, some felt further capacity work would be helpful, some suggested some specific sites / made general suggestions. It was also commented that there are risks with an over-reliance on brownfield sites because they are finite so availability will decline over time, may present viability issues and may inhibit the delivery of affordable housing.

In terms of the question regarding which key locations should be considered for growth, various suggestions were made by developers promoting their own sites and the locations to which those sites apply, including Green Belt and edges of settlements in various locations across the district. Others set out the need to have a clear mix of sites of varying sizes in a range of locations, reflecting national policy in terms of delivery and five year supply.

It was also asked whether some sites could be screened out early because they were not reasonable options. There was no consensus on this: some commented that the NPPF should be followed but allowing for Green Belt options to be considered, some felt that AONB / SAC sites and SSSI impact risk zones should be excluded but others advised that sites should not be screened out just because they were in an AONB. Others felt Green Belt should be excluded at the outset. It was commented that the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land should be screened out. Others stated that the assessment process should be clear, referencing national planning practice guidance, the approach to assessment used by Cheshire East Council and the need to be consistent in assessing reasonable alternatives including via the sustainability appraisal.

Other comments on CP6

It was commented that the policy could be strengthened to emphasise the need for supporting social infrastructure. Workshops with children showed that they wanted their local areas to be supported by the right facilities and there were a number of comments about the type of home they would like (eg large garden to play in etc).

¹ Strategic Housing Land Availability assessment

Review of CP7: Housing Choice

Written Representations

37 comments were received. Generally these tended to reiterate national policy and guidance, stating the need for updated evidence including the standard methodology, housing delivery test, housing needs assessment and whole plan viability. Some commented that larger sites could deliver a wider range of products; that if the Council wishes to opt for higher standards for accessible / adaptable homes then these should be evidenced on need rather than being 'nice to have'; that policy should not set out housing mix in policy; the need to include a policy for agricultural workers' dwellings which are not in current policy; to provide certainty on viability affordable housing should be expressed as a single figure rather than a range; that viability should be considered in terms of how it will be applied across local authority boundaries; that affordable housing in perpetuity should only be applied as per the NPPF; that Staffordshire County Council is developing an evidence base regarding specialist housing for older people; that housing for older people should be close to town centres, services and facilities.

In terms of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople it was commented that updated evidence should also assess the need for caravan and houseboat accommodation. It was considered that sites should be allocated for both those who fall within, and those who fall outside the 2015 definition of Gypsy and Traveller; that as well as the A5 area of search there should be support for a range of sites across the district; that sites could be small 5-6 pitch extended family sites (another commented up to ten pitches); that large housing developments should be required to provide sites; that transit sites should be located away from other Gypsy and Traveller settlements; that transit sites are required for those moving off unauthorised encampments.

There was very little response on criteria for screening out sites although Natural England reiterated the same comments as for housing sites in relation to SSSI impact risk zones.

Review of CP8: Employment

Written Representations

14 comments were received which were concerned with the following; the need for up to date evidence including the functional economic market area (and aligning cross-boundary eg with South Staffs) ; the need to align with the LEPs; the need to address the shortfall in employment land supply; the need for a balance between homes and employment and the role for housing-led regeneration (in relation to Rugeley Power Station); the need to ensure employment delivered at Rugeley Power Station links to the town centre; the need to ensure jobs are disseminated throughout the district to promote sustainable travel patterns; to address the need for overnight HGV parking; to encourage employment generation in a range of sectors not just B class uses; to consider viability issues where retaining lower quality employment areas; not to allow sites to be fragmented; to ensure the right infrastructure is delivered including taking account of the impact on the strategic road network.

Some felt enough sites had already been provided. Others sought to promote their own schemes.

Review of CP9: A balanced economy

Written Representations

13 responses were received. These were varied in nature and included: recognising the economic and environmental benefits of the canal network; the need to align new policies for the restored Hatherton Canal and the Extension Canal SAC with Walsall and South Staffordshire (as per recent local plan examinations); the need to strengthen references to the rural economy; improving town centres and links to these to encourage people to visit and shop there. Merits of particular development proposals were cited.

Review CP10: Sustainable Transport

Written Representations

16 responses were received. It was commented that policy wording and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan needs to be updated to reflect current developments and partnerships, including the need to assess the impact of development on the strategic road network and the potential to use the Midlands Region Transport Model (to be discussed with Highways England). Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) sets out details of rail policy and how this applies locally, which would need to be included in the local plan (eg electrification, redevelopment of Cannock station, improvements to Rugeley and Hednesford Town stations, improvements and connections at Rugeley Trent Valley, promotion of the extension to Chase Line services beyond Rugeley Trent Valley post HS2, promotion of improved bus and rail integration between stations, promotion of initiatives to develop rail freight especially to support the mid-Cannock site as a multi modal freight terminal). TfWM also references the West Midlands Stations Alliance and its remit, including Cannock station as one of the master planning pilots. Finally, TfWM references a new link road between the M6/M54 and M6 Toll to support economic growth and improve traffic flow in the area.

The Road Haulage Association highlights the importance of reliable and consistent journey times and the need for lorry parking facilities. It also points out the importance of air quality policies and the need for these to take account of the movement of goods.

Other responses highlighted the need for improvements to stations including better services (eg late evening trains) and the need for disabled access at the Rugeley stations. Some expressed concern about the decline in bus service provision / public transport generally with some areas having no provision at all, and the need for more investment including developer contributions. The reference to Active Travel was welcomed, and opportunities for developing sustainable travel networks in relation to canals were set out.

Other comments

Concerns about cuts in bus services and lack of late trains from Birmingham to Rugeley as these stop at Hednesford.

Workshops in the local primary schools showed children were concerned about fast traffic, often commenting that they did not feel safe / were not allowed to play out because of it. Many also said they did not feel safe cycling, and there were lots of potholes. Those in rural areas in particular also commented on the lack of buses.

Review of CP11 Centres Hierarchy**Written Representations**

This attracted 12 responses. These commented on the need for town centres to be cleaner and tidier; the centres hierarchy being appropriate; opportunities from the Rugeley Power Station site to help link to and regenerate Rugeley; the introduction of a lower impact test threshold for retail being unhelpful to the regeneration of the power station; tourism and centres as a gateway to the AONB needing to be carefully managed; Area Action Plans (AAP) only being a useful tool if their policies are utilised; the need to reassess the Rugeley AAP as its aim of replacing the market hall in Rugeley with a shopping mall would no longer be viable; the need to cross reference Local Plan policy to the Government's Prevent and Crowded Places documents.

Other comments

Workshops with primary school children highlighted concerns with the lack of shops and 'food places' especially in Rugeley, and nothing to do. Others however liked the leisure centres, shops and restaurants.

Review of CP12: Biodiversity and Geodiversity**Written Representations**

9 responses were received to this section. Comments included: the importance of waterways for recreation, as boundaries to sprawl and as a biodiversity resource; the need to protect the Cannock Extension Canal SAC and SSSI; the need for the plan to set out a strategic approach to biodiversity (similar to green infrastructure planning); the need to include geodiversity conservation; the need to establish a method for measuring net gain in biodiversity; the need to strengthen the plan in terms of irreplaceable habitats in line with the new NPPF; the need to engage and acknowledge the role of farmers and landowners as they own and manage many natural capital assets and routinely invest in landscape and enhancement works.

It was also pointed out that paragraph 5.117 of the consultation is slightly incorrect and an amendment provided.

In terms of the evidence base, Natural England advised that the conservation objectives for each European site are now available. Others commented that ecological networks should be mapped (including cross boundary), and that the plan

should be informed by a biodiversity assessment which could impact on the developable area of a site. It was also commented that whilst a network / opportunity strategy would be unlikely to be able to be developed within the plan production period, any policy should recognise that such a strategy should be utilised once produced.

It was also considered that a strategy for the water environment should be produced which could be helpful in terms of both biodiversity and flood management.

Review of CP13: Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Written Representations

3 comments were received. Natural England confirmed they would continue to work with the SAC partnership on the evidence base needed to inform and mitigate for further development over and above that in current plans. Staffordshire County Council also welcomed the commitment to further evidence. Rugeley Town Council stated that the Chase, canal and river were important physical boundaries to Rugeley and any Green Belt development in the area would erode significant natural features.

Review of CP14: Landscape Character and Cannock Chase AONB

Written Representations

11 responses were received. These were that: exceptions to policy should be allowed to enable brownfield sites to be appropriately developed; to support the wording of the existing policy; to operate enforcement to prevent damage to the AONB; to allow for some Green Belt release; to reflect the relationship between the landscape and heritage in any reviewed policy; to encourage heathland corridor creation; to recognise the importance of the Hednesford Hills; to recognise the role farmers and landowners play in protecting and enhancing the environment; to steer development to sites which are not designated for any landscape of ecological reason; to be consistent in assessing sites and options and to prioritise previously developed land.

Review of CP15: Historic Environment

Written Representations

21 comments were received. These included the need to include specific policy on canals as the network is important not just the designated conservation sections; to ensure the plan provides a positive and proactive strategy (including setting) for heritage; heritage policy should not be 'stand alone'; heritage-led regeneration references are welcomed; planning decisions in Rugeley are undermining the conservation area policies; the recognition of the Historic Environment Character Area and Extensive Urban Survey work is welcomed (although some updating may be needed); the Chase Through Time project may need to be included; the mining history of the area should be celebrated; interpretation boards in suitable locations are supported eg the Hatherton Canal; the plan needs to recognise that protection of historic assets requires use of statutory powers; that any consideration of the

regeneration of 'Brereton Colliery' should be limited in scale and reflect the character of the area as AONB and Green Belt.

Review of CP16: Climate Change and Sustainable Resource use

Written Representations

14 comments were received to this theme. The Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water each set out a detailed list of guidance and information to be utilised and requirements for the evidence base. The Canal and River Trust commented that the canal network could provide potential for heating and cooling the district heat network or individual schemes; the policy should be amended to reference the potential of the canal network to contribute to low carbon technologies; there is a need to highlight the potential for surface water drainage and any associated mitigation in terms of biodiversity, water quality or structural integrity of the waterway. Others commented that canals could help address flooding in the district. The Coal Authority supported the wording of the current policy criterion for issues applicable to mining legacy and safeguarding. Other comments were concerned with: the impacts of development on farmland (waterlogging, flooding, downstream impacts, demands on water abstraction and water treatment and mitigation); the need to ensure conformity with waste and minerals plans and safeguard sites accordingly; the need to protect green spaces to contribute to air quality.

Other issues

Some respondents made comments on other matters which the plan should address. The following matters were raised (in no particular order):

- Consider a canal – specific policy
- A Cannock Extension Canal Special Area of Conservation policy is needed
- Soils need to be covered in the plan
- The plan should safeguard the best and most versatile agricultural land
- Fire prevention measures such as sprinklers in all buildings should be considered as part of the planning process
- Separate policy for green infrastructure should be considered
- Measures to stop land banking are needed
- Consultation on planning applications needs improving
- A better planning portal is needed
- Processes for getting information from statutory bodies in terms of infrastructure spending, statutory bodies need to engage more locally eg with headteachers and GPs and this should be communicated to Parish Councils.

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report representations

10 respondents made comments on this. Mainly the detailed comments were from the three statutory consultees ie the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England although suggestions were made from other respondents too. The consultants working on the Sustainability Appraisal will consider the comments in detail and discuss any potential amendments with officers before proceeding with the sustainability appraisal for the Issues and Options consultation.