

Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

A report to Lichfield District Council of the Independent
Examination of the Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan
Review

Copy to Shenstone Parish Council

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Summary of Main Findings

The Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan was made by Lichfield District Council (the District Council) in April 2016. Shenstone Parish Council (the Parish Council) has decided the made Neighbourhood Plan should be replaced, and as the qualifying body has prepared the Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review and submitted it to the District Council. The plan review period runs until 2043. The plan review, like the previously made plan relates to an area within Shenstone Parish based on the 2013 Ward Structure which was designated as a Neighbourhood Area on 19 February 2013.

The Parish and District Councils consider the Neighbourhood Development Plan Review includes material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan. I have determined the Neighbourhood Development Plan Review involves material modifications which do not change the nature of the made plan that require examination but not a referendum.

This is the report of the Independent Examination of the Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review. The Neighbourhood Development Plan Review includes policies relating to the development and use of land but does not allocate land for built development.

This report finds that subject to specified modifications the Neighbourhood Development Plan Review meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements. It is recommended the Neighbourhood Development Plan Review should, subject to the specified modifications, be made.

Neighbourhood Planning

1. The Localism Act 2011 empowers local communities to take responsibility for the preparation of elements of planning policy for their area through a neighbourhood development plan. Paragraph 30 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that “neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area”.
2. Following satisfactory completion of the necessary preparation process neighbourhood development plans have statutory weight. Decision-makers are obliged to make decisions on planning applications for the area that are in line with the neighbourhood development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
3. The Stonnall Neighbourhood Area (the Neighbourhood Area) was designated by Lichfield District Council (the District Council) on 19 February 2013. A Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan was made (adopted) in April 2016. Shenstone Parish Council (the Parish Council) has prepared a Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review intended to replace the made Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan. The Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review (the Neighbourhood Plan) has been submitted by the Parish Council, a qualifying body able to prepare a neighbourhood plan, in respect of the Neighbourhood Area. The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by a Stonnall Strategy Group (made up of residents; Parish, District and County Councillors; and members of local organisations) supported by Land Use Consultants Ltd.
4. The submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan Review and accompanying documents were approved by the Parish Council and submitted to the District Council on 29 June 2025. The District Council arranged a period of publication between 11 August 2025 and 1 October 2025. The District Council subsequently submitted the Neighbourhood Plan Review to me for independent examination which formally commenced on 2 October 2025.
5. The Planning Practice Guidance (the Guidance) states there are 3 types of modification which can be made to a neighbourhood plan. The process will depend on the degree of change which the modification involves:
 - Minor (non-material) modifications to a neighbourhood plan are those which would not materially affect the policies in the plan. These may include correcting errors, such as a reference to a supporting document, and would not require examination or a referendum.

- Material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan would require examination but not a referendum. This might, for example, entail the addition of a design code that builds on a pre-existing design policy, or the addition of a site or sites which, subject to the decision of the independent examiner, are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.
- Material modifications which do change the nature of the plan would require examination and a referendum. This might, for example, involve allocating significant new sites for development.

6. The Parish and District Councils have both expressed opinions, with reasons, that the Neighbourhood Development Plan Review includes material modifications which do not change the nature of the made plan. I have considered those opinions, and the Regulation 16 representations insofar as they are relevant to the decision I must make. The made Neighbourhood Plan contains 23 policies, and the Submission Neighbourhood Development Plan Review contains 18 policies. The Neighbourhood Development Plan Review:

- retains 8 original Policies T1; LSH1; HC1; CF3 (renumbered as CF2); HB3 (renumbered as HB2); HB4 (renumbered as HB3); LE3 (renumbered as LE2); and LE5 (renumbered as LE4);
- retains 8 original policies H1; H2; H3; LSH2; CF1; CF5 (renumbered as CF3); HB2 (renumbered as HB1); and LE4 (renumbered as LE3), with modifications of the policy, (some of which include material modifications) to: update changed circumstances including in relation to national and local planning policy and good practice; improve clarity; strengthen criteria or principles; or change the scope. These modifications do not change the nature of the plan;
- deletes 7 original Policies H4; COM1; CF2; CF4; HB1; LE1; LE2; that are no longer considered to be relevant, necessary, or appropriate; or are addressed through a new Neighbourhood Plan policy or through national policy. These deletions do not change the nature of the plan; and
- introduces 2 new policies, D1 (relating to design and character); and LE1 (relating to wildlife friendly development) to address additional issues raised as of importance to the community, without introducing new land allocations for housing or other forms of built development. These additions do not change the nature of the plan.

7. I have found the modification of policies, some of which are material modifications; the deletion of policies; and the addition of new policies do not change the nature of the plan. For these reasons I have determined under Paragraph 10(1) of Schedule A2 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that the modifications contained in the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan Review do not change

the nature of the development plan which the modification proposal would modify. On this basis the Neighbourhood Development Plan Review will require independent examination but not a referendum.

8. On 2 October 2025 I advised the District and Parish Council of my determination with reasons. I have undertaken the Independent Examination to consider whether the Neighbourhood Development Plan Review meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements. From this point in my report, I refer to the Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review as 'the Neighbourhood Plan.'

Independent Examination

9. This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan. The report makes recommendations to the District Council including a recommendation as to whether the Neighbourhood Plan should be made. The District Council will decide what action to take in response to the recommendations in this report.
10. The District Council will decide what modifications, if any, should be made to the submission version plan and whether the Neighbourhood Plan should be made. Once made the Neighbourhood Plan will replace the current made Neighbourhood Plan (2016) in forming part of the Development Plan and be given full weight in the determination of planning applications and decisions on planning appeals in the plan area. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 requires any conflict with a neighbourhood plan to be set out in the committee report, that will inform any planning committee decision, where that report recommends granting planning permission for development that conflicts with a made neighbourhood plan. Paragraph 12 of the Framework is very clear that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date neighbourhood plan that forms part of the Development Plan, permission should not usually be granted.
11. I have been appointed by the District Council with the consent of the Parish Council, to undertake the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan and prepare this report of the independent examination. I am independent of the Parish Council and the District Council. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Neighbourhood Plan.
12. I am a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute; a Member of the Institute of Economic Development; and a Member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation. As a Chartered Town Planner, I have held national positions and have

extensive experience at local planning authority Director or Head of Planning Service level. I have been a panel member of the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS) since its inception, and have undertaken the independent examination of neighbourhood plans in every region of England, prepared in the full range of types of urban and rural communities.

13. Based on my determination under Paragraph 10(1) of Schedule A2 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that the modifications contained in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan do not change the nature of the development plan which the modification proposal would modify, as independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and must recommend either:

- that the local planning authority should make the draft plan,
- that the local planning authority should make the draft plan with the modifications specified in the report, or
- that the local planning authority should not make the draft plan on the basis it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

14. I make my recommendation in this respect in the concluding section of this report. It is a requirement that my report must give reasons for each of its recommendations and contain a summary of its main findings.

15. Paragraph 9 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that the general rule is that the examination of a neighbourhood plan is to take the form of the consideration of written representations. The Planning Practice Guidance (the Guidance) states “it is expected that the examination of a draft Neighbourhood Plan will not include a public hearing.”

16. The examiner can call a hearing for the purpose of receiving oral representations about a particular issue in any case where the examiner considers that the consideration of oral representations is necessary to ensure adequate examination of the issue, or a person has a fair chance to put a case. This requires an exercise of judgement on my part. All parties have had the opportunity to state their case and no party has indicated that they have been disadvantaged by a written procedure. Regulation 16 responses clearly set out any representations relevant to my consideration whether the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements. Those representations; the comments of the Parish Council on those representations; and the level of detail contained within the submitted Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents have provided me with the necessary information required for me to conclude the Independent Examination. As I did not consider a hearing necessary, I proceeded based on examination of the submission and supporting documents; the written representations and comments; and unaccompanied visits to the Neighbourhood Area.

17. This report should be read as a whole, and has been produced in an accessible format.

Basic Conditions and other Statutory Requirements

18. An independent examiner must consider whether a neighbourhood plan meets the “Basic Conditions.” A neighbourhood plan meets the Basic Conditions if:

- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the plan;
- the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- the making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
- the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations; and
- the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

19. With respect to the penultimate Basic Condition the European Withdrawal Act 2018 (EUWA) incorporates EU environmental law (directives and regulations) into UK law and provides for a continuation of primary and subordinate legislation, and other enactments in domestic law. An independent examiner must also consider whether a neighbourhood plan is compatible with the Convention Rights, which has the same meaning as in the Human Rights Act 1998. All these matters are considered in the later sections of this report titled ‘The Neighbourhood Plan taken as a whole’ and ‘The Neighbourhood Plan Policies.’ Where I am required to consider the whole Neighbourhood Plan, I have borne it all in mind.

20. In addition to the Basic Conditions and Convention Rights, I am also required to consider whether the Neighbourhood Plan complies with the provisions made by or under sections 38A and 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (in sections 38A and 38B themselves; in Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act (introduced by section 38A (3)); and in the 2012 Regulations (made under sections 38A (7) and 38B (4)). I am satisfied the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of those sections, in respect to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended (the Regulations) which are made pursuant to the powers given in those sections.

21. The Neighbourhood Plan relates to the area that was designated by the District Council on 19 February 2013. A map of the Neighbourhood Area is included on page 2 of the Submission Version Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area, and no other neighbourhood development plan has been made for the neighbourhood area. All requirements relating to the plan area have been met.
22. I am also required to check whether the Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies for the development and use of land in the whole or part of a designated neighbourhood area; and the Neighbourhood Plan does not include provision about excluded development (principally minerals, waste disposal, development automatically requiring Environmental Impact Assessment, and nationally significant infrastructure projects). I can confirm that I am satisfied that each of these requirements has been met.
23. A neighbourhood plan must also meet the requirement to specify the period to which it has effect. The front cover of the Neighbourhood Plan states the plan period is 2024-2043. Paragraph 1.1 of the Neighbourhood Plan confirms the new plan will cover the period 2024 to 2043.
24. The role of an independent examiner of a neighbourhood plan is defined. I am not examining the tests of soundness provided for in respect of examination of Local Plans. It is not within my role to examine or produce an alternative plan, or a potentially more sustainable plan, except where this arises because of my recommended modifications so that the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements that I have identified. I have been appointed to examine whether the submitted Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and Convention Rights, and the other statutory requirements.
25. A neighbourhood plan can be narrow or broad in scope. There is no requirement for a neighbourhood plan to be holistic, or to include policies dealing with all land uses or development types, and there is no requirement for a neighbourhood plan to be formulated as, or perform the role of, a comprehensive local plan. The nature of neighbourhood plans varies according to local requirements.
26. Neighbourhood plans are developed by local people in the localities they understand and as a result each plan will have its own character. It is not within my role to re-interpret, restructure, or re-write a plan to conform to a standard approach or terminology. Indeed, it is important that neighbourhood plans reflect thinking and aspiration within the local community. They should be a local product and have meaning and significance to people living and working in the area.
27. I have only recommended modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan (presented in bold type) where I consider they need to be made so that the plan meets the Basic

Conditions and the other requirements I have identified. I refer to the matter of minor corrections and other adjustments of general text in the Annex to my report.

Documents

28. I have considered each of the following documents in so far as they have assisted me in determining whether the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements:

- Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan Review 2024-2043 Submission Version July 2025
- Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan Review 2024-2043 Basic Conditions Statement June 2025 [In this report referred to as the Basic Conditions Statement]
- Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2043 Consultation Statement June 2025 [In this report referred to as the Consultation Statement]
- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan May 2025
- Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan List of Evidence Base Documents June 2025
- Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan Review 2024-2040 Regulation 17(e)(ii) Modification Statement of Shenstone Parish Council
- Information available on the Parish Council and District Council websites including the made Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029
- Representations received during the Regulation 16 publicity period
- Correspondence between the Independent Examiner and the District Council and the Parish Council including: the initial letter of the Independent Examiner dated 2 October 2025; and the comments of the Parish Council on the Regulation 16 representations of other parties which I received on 15 October 2025
- National Planning Policy Framework (2024) as amended 7 February 2025 [In this report referred to as the Framework]
- Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029 (adopted 17 February 2015) and Lichfield District Local Plan Allocations 2008-2029 (adopted 16 July 2019)
- Documents relating to the emerging Local Plan 2043
- Permitted development rights for householders' technical guidance MHCLG (10 September 2019) [In this report referred to as the Permitted Development Guidance]
- Planning Practice Guidance web-based resource MHCLG (first fully launched 6 March 2014 and subsequently updated) [In this report referred to as the Guidance which should be taken to also include all Written Ministerial Statements]
- Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)
- Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment and Consequential Provisions) (England) Order 2014
- Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment and Consequential Provisions) (England) Order 2015
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)

- Equality Act 2010
- Localism Act 2011
- Housing and Planning Act 2016
- European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018
- Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 and Commencement Regulations 19 July 2017, 22 September 2017, and 15 January 2019
- Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) [In this report referred to as the Regulations. References to Regulation 14, Regulation 16 etc in this report refer to these Regulations]
- Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015
- Neighbourhood Planning (General) incorporating Development Control Procedure (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018

Consultation

29. The submitted Neighbourhood Plan is accompanied by a Consultation Statement which outlines the process undertaken in the preparation of the plan. In addition to detailing who was consulted and by what methods. I highlight here several key stages of consultation undertaken to illustrate the approach adopted.
30. Public meetings in September and October 2023 led to the formation in January 2024 of a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to lead the plan preparation process. A public meeting in February 2024 considered local concerns and potential improvement of Stonnall. A well-attended meeting in September 2024 considered housing requirements, which were considered again at a meeting in November 2024. A general community survey that included housing needs was hand delivered to all households in December 2024. A public consultation day held in January 2025 was attended by 178 people. The emerging plan and results from the community survey were presented, and Steering Group members were available to answer questions. Throughout the plan preparation process publicity was achieved through: direct engagement of the Steering Group with a wide range of local community organisations and businesses; Facebook and a website; posters displayed on noticeboards; flyers distributed to all households and businesses; and articles in the quarterly Parish Council Magazine that is distributed to all households in the Neighbourhood Area.
31. In accordance with Regulation 14 the Parish Council consulted on the pre-

submission version of the draft Neighbourhood Plan for a period of six weeks between 14 March 2025 and 30 April 2025. Copies of the draft plan could be downloaded from the Parish Council website and hard copies were available in the library and coffee shop. Publicity was achieved through: a flyer delivered to all households; an article in the Parish newsletter delivered to all households; posters on noticeboards at bus stops, the public houses, the Community Centre and Village Hall; announcements at local group meetings; and social media. Statutory and non-statutory consultees were sent emails directly. The responses to the consultation from residents and other stakeholders are presented in Appendix B of the Consultation Statement which also sets out comments of the Steering Group in response and any action taken, including modification and correction of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. Suggestions have, where considered appropriate, been reflected in changes to the Neighbourhood Plan that was submitted by the Parish Council to the District Council.

32. Following submission of a plan proposal by a qualifying body, the local planning authority will check it includes all items set out in Regulation 15, and then publicise the plan in accordance with Regulation 16. The local planning authority then sends the Independent Examiner all the documents set out in Regulation 17, which includes a copy of any representations that have been made in accordance with Regulation 16. The actions necessary under Regulation 16 and Regulation 17 are entirely matters to be undertaken by, and under the control of, the local planning authority. The Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan has been the subject of a Regulation 16 period of publication. The District Council arranged a period of publication between 11 August 2025 and 1 October 2025. The representations that were duly made have been published on the District Council website.
33. The District Council has provided an update on preparation of the new Local Plan 2043 and drawn attention to published evidence that can be used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. The District Council stated “given the relatively early stage of the new Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan, which consists of the Local Plan Strategy 2015 and Local Plan Allocations 2019 documents.” The District Council has suggested minor modifications and corrections to Neighbourhood Plan Policies H1; H3; D1; T1; HB1; and LE1, and suggested renaming Policy LSH1. The District Council has also suggested changes to general text of the Neighbourhood Plan which I refer to in the annex to my report.
34. Staffordshire County Council has commented on archaeology/historic environment; landscape; ecology; and transport matters. I refer to these matters when considering the relevant policies later in my report or in the annex to my report.

35. National Highways state “Having reviewed the submission version of the plan, we note that the growth proposed is modest and is focused on infill, small scale affordable housing, and housing to meet the needs of older people. The transport policies in the plan concentrate on walking, cycling, and addressing local traffic issues. Given the scale and nature of development proposed, National Highways does not expect the Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan to have any material impact on the safe and efficient operation of the SRN. We note the community concerns raised regarding HGV traffic avoiding the A5 Wall Island, and highlight that this is being considered as part of wider partnership work on the A5 corridor. On this basis, we have no further comments to make and trust the above is useful in the progression of the Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan.”
36. Natural England, Historic England, and Network Rail have provided general advice only. The Canal and Rivers Trust, and East Staffordshire Council have confirmed they have no comments. Hammersmith Parish Council has referred to greenbelt. National Grid Electricity Transmission has identified its assets in the Neighbourhood Area and offered general advice only. National Gas Transmission has confirmed none of its assets are currently affected by proposed allocations within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
37. Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy has submitted a representation on behalf of David Wilson Homes. It is stated the Neighbourhood Plan as proposed is being produced in accordance with a Local Plan that is due to expire in less than 4 years’ time and, consequently, the Neighbourhood Plan will be largely out of date as soon, or very soon after, it has been adopted. The representation also states “Furthermore, whilst the proposed plan period of the NP runs to 2043 to mirror the plan period of the emerging Local Plan, this is still at a very early stage of preparation. The District Council consulted on Issues and Options in October 2024 and is proposing to go straight to publication of a Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Plan which the current Local Development Scheme states will take place in April 2026 with adoption anticipated in May 2027. Accordingly, the District has not yet published anything about how much development is needed or where it intends to direct this. The NP cannot, therefore, be prepared and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan as these aren’t known yet. The result being that a lot of time and expense is being expended to prepare an NP which makes no allowance or does not plan positively for the period from 2029 to 2043 and that will have, at best, a three-year life span. This is a fundamental flaw with this NP and one that could render it unsound and not in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan.”
38. The representation on behalf of David Wilson Homes also refers to the Standard Method for calculating a District’s housing need required in the 2024 Framework

stating the District Council must plan for 745 dwellings per annum (dpa) compared to the currently adopted figure of 478 dpa. The representation states the Neighbourhood Plan approach to housing with a policy of only permitting infill development within the village boundaries in order to meet local housing needs will be inadequate in terms of the settlement contributing to meeting the wider needs of the District. The representation states “Whilst it is acknowledged that the District Council is yet to identify the housing need that it is planning for, or the apportionment of how that housing need should be accommodated across the District, the size of the increase is significant, indicating that a variety of options will need to be tested in order to identify sufficient suitable sites in sustainable locations to meet this need.” The representation refers to the implications of a continuing reduction the proportion of economically active residents and associated issues related to reduced spending on local shops and services as well as implications for the continued viability of the primary school. The representation includes comments on Policies LSH1, HC1 and CF2. The representation concludes with “In order to address these concerns, we would suggest that consideration should be given to pausing progress of the NP and not progress to Examination until such time as the Local Plan has progressed further and the development needs of the District are established. At that point, the NP could be prepared having full regard to the strategic policies of the District and to make appropriate provision within it to cover the full plan period up to 2043.”

39. I have been sent each of the Regulation 16 representations. In preparing this report I have taken into consideration all the representations submitted, in so far as they are relevant to my role, even though they may not be referred to in whole in my report. Some representations, or parts of representations, are not relevant to my role which is to decide whether the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements that I have identified. Where the representations suggest additional policy matters that could be included in the Neighbourhood Plan that is only a matter for my consideration where such additions are necessary for the Neighbourhood Plan to meet the Basic Conditions or other requirements that I have identified. Having regard to *Bewley Homes Plc v Waverley District Council* [2017] EWHC 1776 (Admin) Lang J, 18 July 2017, and Town and Country Planning Act Schedule 4B paragraph 10(6), where representations raise concerns or state comments or objections in relation to specific policies, I refer to these later in my report when considering the policy in question where they are relevant to the reasons for my recommendations.
40. I provided the Parish Council with an opportunity to comment on the Regulation 16 representations of other parties. Whilst I placed no obligation on the Parish Council to offer any comments, such an opportunity can prove helpful where representations of other parties include matters that have not been raised earlier in the plan preparation process. On 15 October 2025 I received comments of the Parish Council

on some of the Regulation 16 representations and those comments were published on the District Council website. I have taken all the Parish Council comments into consideration even though I may not have referred to them all in my report.

41. The Regulations state that where a qualifying body submits a plan proposal to the local planning authority it must include amongst other items a consultation statement. The Regulations state a consultation statement means a document which:
- a) contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;
 - b) explains how they were consulted;
 - c) summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
 - d) describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.
42. The Consultation Statement includes information in respect of each of the requirements set out in the Regulations. I am satisfied the requirements have been met. In addition, sufficient regard has been paid to the advice regarding plan preparation and engagement contained within the Guidance. It is evident the Neighbourhood Plan Strategy Group has taken great care to ensure stakeholders have had full opportunity to influence the general nature, and specific policies, of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan taken as a whole

43. This section of my report considers whether the Neighbourhood Plan, when considered as a whole, meets EU obligations, habitats, and Human Rights requirements; has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State; whether the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development; and whether the plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area. Each of the plan policies is considered in turn in the section of my report that follows this. In considering all these matters I have referred to the submission, background, and supporting documents, and copies of the representations and other material provided to me.

Consideration of Convention Rights; and whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU

obligations; and the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

44. The Basic Conditions Statement states “The Plan is compatible with and does not breach the European Convention on Human Rights.” I have considered the European Convention on Human Rights and in particular Article 6 (fair hearing); Article 8 (privacy); Article 14 (discrimination); and Article 1 of the first Protocol (property). The Human Rights Act 1998 which came into force in the UK in 2000 had the effect of codifying the protections in the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. Development Plans by their nature will include policies that relate differently to areas of land. Where the Neighbourhood Plan policies relate differently to areas of land this has been explained in terms of land use and development related issues. I have seen nothing in the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan that indicates any breach of the Convention. I am satisfied the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the obligations for Parish Councils under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in the Equality Act 2010. From my own examination the Neighbourhood Plan would appear to have neutral or positive impacts on groups with protected characteristics as identified in the Equality Act 2010.
45. The objective of EU Directive 2001/42 (transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) is “to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.” The Neighbourhood Plan falls within the definition of ‘plans and programmes’ (Defined in Article 2(a) of Directive 2001/42) as the Local Planning Authority is obliged to ‘make’ the plan following a positive referendum result (Judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union (Fourth Chamber) 22 March 2012).
46. The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 require the Parish Council, as the Qualifying Body, to submit to the District Council either an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
47. In March 2025, Lichfield District Council published a draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report for consultation with the statutory bodies (the Environment Agency, Natural England, and Historic England). The conclusions of

the screening assessment found that Strategic Environmental Assessment would not be required. The statutory bodies agreed with this and in May 2025, the final SEA Screening Report was issued. I am satisfied the requirements regarding Strategic Environmental Assessment have been met.

48. In March 2025, a Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report was prepared by Lichfield District Council. This concluded that the Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan Review will not result in any negative impacts on European sites, either alone or in combination with other known plans and projects. The statutory consultee, Natural England, agreed with this and in May 2025, the final HRA Screening Report was issued. I am satisfied that the Neighbourhood Plan meets the requirements of the revised Basic Condition relating to Habitats Regulations.
49. There are other EU obligations that can be relevant to land use planning including the Water Framework Directive, the Waste Framework Directive, and the Air Quality Directive but none appear to be relevant in respect of this independent examination.
50. I conclude that the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with the Convention Rights, and does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations. I also conclude the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
51. The Guidance states it is the responsibility of the local planning authority to ensure that all the regulations appropriate to the nature and scope of a draft neighbourhood plan submitted to it have been met for the draft neighbourhood plan to progress. The District Council as Local Planning Authority must decide whether the draft neighbourhood plan is compatible with EU environmental law obligations (directives and regulations) incorporated into UK domestic law by the European Withdrawal Act 2018 (EUWA):
- when it takes the decision on whether the neighbourhood plan should proceed to referendum; and
 - when it takes the decision on whether to make the neighbourhood plan (which brings it into legal force).

Consideration whether having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Plan; and whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development

52. I refer initially to the basic condition “having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the

plan.” The requirement to determine whether it is appropriate that the plan is made includes the words “having regard to.” This is not the same as compliance, nor is it the same as part of the tests of soundness provided for in respect of examinations of Local Plans which requires plans to be “consistent with national policy.”

53. Lord Goldsmith has provided guidance (Column GC272 of Lords Hansard, 6 February 2006) that ‘have regard to’ means “such matters should be considered.” The Guidance assists in understanding “appropriate.” In answer to the question “What does having regard to national policy mean?” the Guidance states a neighbourhood plan “must not constrain the delivery of important national policy objectives.”
54. The most recent National Planning Policy Framework published in December 2024, and amended on 7 February 2025, sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The Planning Practice Guidance was most recently updated on 17 September 2025. As a point of clarification, I confirm I have undertaken the Independent Examination in the context of the most recent National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, as well as Written Ministerial Statements.
55. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 of the Basic Conditions Statement demonstrates how each of the Neighbourhood Plan aims relate to the goals of the Framework, and how each of the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan have regard for the Framework. I am satisfied the Basic Conditions Statement demonstrates how the Neighbourhood Plan has regard to relevant identified components of the Framework.
56. The Neighbourhood Plan includes under paragraph 2.3 a positive vision for the Stonnall Neighbourhood Area that has economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Paragraph 2.4 of the Neighbourhood Plan sets out 14 aims of the Neighbourhood Plan that are grouped under the headings of housing; design; local services; transport; environment and green spaces; historic environment; communication; health care; community facilities; and community groups. The vision and aims provide a framework for the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan that have been developed.
57. The representation of Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy on behalf of David Wilson Homes states the Neighbourhood Plan “as drafted does not meet the basic conditions principally in relation to its adherence to national policy.” The representation states the Neighbourhood Plan “contains no policies that would address the development needs of the plan area post 2029. NPs should be used to help address these needs by accommodating development within their plan areas and this plan fails to do so.” There is no requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify and address development needs, or to make housing allocations. I consider

the relationship between the Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging new Local Plan later in my report.

58. Part 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan identifies issues that have been raised through the plan preparation process that are not directly related to land use matters and which cannot be addressed directly by a planning policy. The identified issues are set out as five non land use policies relating to smarter travel choices; HGV/LGV traffic; local traffic issues; health; and community facilities. The plan preparation process is a convenient mechanism to surface and test local opinion on ways to improve a neighbourhood other than through the application of land use policies. It is important that those non-development and land use matters, raised as important by stakeholders, should not be lost sight of. The acknowledgement in the Neighbourhood Plan of issues raised in consultation processes that do not have a direct relevance to land use planning policy represents good practice.

59. The Guidance states, “Wider community aspirations than those relating to the development and use of land, if set out as part of the plan, would need to be clearly identifiable (for example, set out in a companion document or annex), and it should be made clear in the document that they will not form part of the statutory development plan.” The non land use policies are presented in a dedicated section of the Neighbourhood Plan although their status is not described. I have recommended text is added as an introduction to Part 14 that explains the status of the non-land use policies. I have also recommended Part 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan should be repositioned and retitled ‘Appendix C: Non-Land Use Issues’ so that it is more clearly distinguished from the statutory Neighbourhood Plan that it is intended will form part of the Development Plan. This will necessitate modification of the Contents page of the Neighbourhood including renumbering of Part 15 as Part 14. I have also recommended a correction and modification of paragraph 1.4 of the Neighbourhood Plan. I confirm Part 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan, including the issues identified, have not been subject to Independent Examination.

Recommended modification 1:

- **retitle and reposition Part 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan as “Appendix C: Non-Land Use Issues” and adjust the Contents page of the Neighbourhood Plan accordingly.**
- **insert introductory text to Appendix C to explain the status of the non-land use policies, and modify paragraph 1.4 of the Neighbourhood Plan to include that explanation and to correct the numbering of parts of the Neighbourhood Plan.**

60. Apart from those elements of policy of the Neighbourhood Plan in respect of which I have recommended a modification to the plan I am satisfied that the need to ‘have regard to’ national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary

of State has, in plan preparation, been exercised in substance in such a way that it has influenced the final decision on the form and nature of the plan. This consideration supports the conclusion that except for those matters in respect of which I have recommended a modification of the plan, the Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic condition “having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the plan.”

61. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be applied in both plan-making and decision-taking. The Guidance states, “This basic condition is consistent with the planning principle that all plan-making and decision-taking should help to achieve sustainable development. A qualifying body must demonstrate how its plan or order will contribute to improvements in environmental, economic, and social conditions or that consideration has been given to how any potential adverse effects arising from the proposals may be prevented, reduced, or offset (referred to as mitigation measures). To demonstrate that a draft neighbourhood plan or order contributes to sustainable development, sufficient and proportionate evidence should be presented on how the draft neighbourhood plan or order guides development to sustainable solutions.”
62. The Basic Conditions require my consideration whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. There is no requirement as to the nature or extent of that contribution, nor a need to assess whether the plan makes a particular contribution. The requirement is that there should be a contribution. There is also no requirement to consider whether some alternative plan would make a greater contribution to sustainable development.
63. The Framework states there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. Table 3.1 of the Basic Conditions Statement demonstrates ways in which identified aims and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan support the economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainable development. The statement does not highlight any negative impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan or its policies.
64. I conclude that the Neighbourhood Plan, by guiding development to sustainable solutions, contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Broadly, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to contribute to sustainable development by ensuring schemes are of an appropriate nature and quality to contribute to economic and social well-being; whilst also protecting important environmental features of the Neighbourhood Area. I consider the Neighbourhood Plan as recommended to be modified seeks to:

- establish support for infill housing development within the identified village boundary;
- establish conditional support for rural exception sites;
- establish support for homes that meet, or can easily be adapted to meet, the needs of older people;
- establish design principles for development;
- establish conditional support for new or improved active travel access;
- establish support for identified improved local retail facilities;
- establish support for street scene improvements at the village shops;
- establish support for improved healthcare provision;
- establish support for improvement of indoor community facilities;
- protect Stonnall Playing Fields from residential and other development and establish support for their improvement;
- establish conditional support for new community garden areas and allotments within or close to the village boundary;
- protect heritage assets including archaeology;
- establish criteria for support of development affecting historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings;
- ensure development respects the natural environment and is wildlife friendly;
- require development to retain good quality, historically important, or visually significant trees and hedgerows;
- establish landscaping, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage requirements for development; and
- ensure development has no adverse effect on the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation.

65. Subject to my recommended modifications of the Submission Plan including those relating to specific policies, as set out later in this report, I find it is appropriate that the Neighbourhood Plan should be made having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State. I have also found the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

Consideration whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area)

66. Paragraph 13 of the Framework states neighbourhood plans should “support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.” Paragraph 21 of the Framework states “plans should make

explicit which policies are strategic policies.” Footnote 17 of the Framework states “Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area.” Paragraph 30 of the Framework states “Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”

67. In this independent examination, I am required to consider whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area). The District Council has confirmed the Development Plan applying in the Stonnall Neighbourhood Area comprises the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029 (adopted 17 February 2015), and the Lichfield District Local Plan Allocations 2008-2029 (adopted 16 July 2019). Whilst the Minerals Local Plan for Staffordshire (2015-2030), the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Waste Local Plan (2010 to 2026) and the review of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan 2010-2026 form part of the Development Plan they are not relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan.
68. The Guidance states, “A local planning authority should set out clearly its strategic policies in accordance with paragraph 21 of the National Planning Policy Framework and provide details of these to a qualifying body and to the independent examiner.” The District Council has confirmed for the purposes of neighbourhood planning the strategic policies of the development plan comprise the Core Policies within the Local Plan Strategy and the ‘Rural Areas’ policies within the same document to be the strategic policies of relevance. Additionally, the ‘Rural Areas’ policies within the Local Plan Allocations document would also be considered strategic.
69. The District Council has begun the preparation of a new Lichfield District Local Plan for the area to provide the future strategic planning framework up to 2043. The Local Development Scheme published in February 2025 indicates the new Local Plan will be adopted in May 2027.
70. The representation of Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy on behalf of David Wilson Homes has commented in detail on the relationship of the Neighbourhood Plan to its Local Plan context. The representation includes the following summary “the NP as drafted does not meet the basic conditions principally in relation to its adherence to national policy or being in conformity with the strategic policies of the District. This is ostensibly due to the NP being produced to accord with an adopted Local Plan that is due to expire in just over 3 years’ time and which would make the policies of the NP out of date once a new Local Plan had been adopted. The NP fails to acknowledge that the District Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan which will need to address a significant increase in its housing requirement, over and above the adopted figure, that it will have to accommodate. The NP contains no

policies that would address the development needs of the plan area post 2029. NPs should be used to help address these needs by accommodating development within their plan areas and this plan fails to do so. There is every prospect that the District Council when it prepares the Local will direct new allocations to Stonnall in order for it to meet its housing need, because Stonnall is a sustainable settlement capable of accommodating residential development. As such, allocating sites in Stonnall would ensure the NP is in accordance with the Local Plan in the period up to 2043. As it stands, the NP fails to make any contribution over and above the bare minimum to meeting the needs of the District as identified in the current Local Plan which is a serious flaw with the NP and which will render it out of date when the new Local Plan is adopted. In order to address these concerns, we would suggest that consideration should be given to pausing progress of the NP and not progress to Examination until such time as the Local Plan has progressed further and the development needs of the District are established. At that point, the NP could be prepared having full regard to the strategic policies of the District and to make appropriate provision within it to cover the full plan period up to 2043.”

71. Commenting on the representation of Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy made on behalf of David Wilson Homes the Parish Council state “There is nothing in NPPG which states that a neighbourhood plan must cover a minimum time period. If that were the case then it would mean not being able to prepare neighbourhood plans within districts whose adopted local plans had a shorter lifespan. That could not reasonably be the intention of national planning guidance. The Reg 16 Neighbourhood Plan Review is considered to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan at the time of submission. Clearly it cannot be in general conformity with as-yet undrafted development plan policies covering a longer time period. The requirement to plan positively appears to be taken in these representations to mean planning for housing. A neighbourhood plan, in the context of planning positively, is under no obligation to plan for new housing development. It is considered that the suite of policies in the Reg 16 Neighbourhood Plan Review plan positively within the context of Stonnall and its role as an ‘Other Rural’ district in the settlement hierarchy. The development of the Neighbourhood Plan Review takes into account the strategic policy context on the Neighbourhood Plan Area, specifically that Stonnall village is entirely surrounded by green belt. A neighbourhood plan is not at liberty to make housing allocations in the green belt and therefore any potential to address housing outside of infill and windfall development in the village is restricted.”
72. The whole of the Neighbourhood Plan area outside the defined village boundary of Stonnall is Green Belt. Paragraph 18 of the Framework states neighbourhood plans contain just non-strategic policies. Paragraph 145 of the Framework makes it clear the need for changes to Green Belt boundaries must be established through

strategic policies before detailed amendments to those boundaries may be made through non-strategic policies.

73. The Neighbourhood Plan can proceed ahead of preparation of the new Local Plan. The Guidance states: "Neighbourhood plans, when brought into force, become part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area. They can be developed before or at the same time as the local planning authority is producing its Local Plan. A draft neighbourhood plan or Order must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in force if it is to meet the basic condition. Although a draft Neighbourhood Plan or Order is not tested against the policies in an emerging Local Plan the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process is likely to be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested. For example, up-to-date housing needs evidence is relevant to the question of whether a housing supply policy in a neighbourhood plan or Order contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Where a neighbourhood plan is brought forward before an up-to-date Local Plan is in place the qualifying body and the local planning authority should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between policies in:

- the emerging neighbourhood plan;
- the emerging Local Plan;
- the adopted development plan;

with appropriate regard to national policy and guidance. The local planning authority should take a proactive and positive approach, working collaboratively with a qualifying body particularly sharing evidence and seeking to resolve any issues to ensure the draft neighbourhood plan has the greatest chance of success at independent examination. The local planning authority should work with the qualifying body to produce complementary neighbourhood and Local Plans. It is important to minimise any conflicts between policies in the neighbourhood plan and those in the emerging Local Plan, including housing supply policies. This is because section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the conflict must be resolved by the decision maker favouring the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan.

Neighbourhood plans should consider providing indicative delivery timetables and allocating reserve sites to ensure that emerging evidence of housing need is addressed. This can help minimise potential conflicts and ensure that policies in the neighbourhood plan are not overridden by a new Local Plan."

74. I am mindful of the fact that should there ultimately be any conflict between the Neighbourhood Plan, and the new Local Plan when it is adopted; the matter will be resolved in favour of the plan most recently becoming part of the Development Plan; however, the Guidance is clear in that potential conflicts should be minimised. To satisfy the basic conditions, the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity

with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The emerging new Local Plan is not part of the Development Plan and this requirement does not apply in respect of that. Emerging planning policy is subject to change as plan preparation work proceeds. The Guidance states “Neighbourhood plans, when brought into force, become part of the development plan for the neighbourhood areas. They can be developed before or at the same time as the local planning authority is producing its Local Plan.” Whilst the District Council has commenced the review of its existing Local Plan this is at an early stage of consultation and does not include specific policies or site allocations. I agree with the District Council representation where it states “Given the relatively early stage of the new Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan, which consists of the Local Plan Strategy 2015 and Local Plan Allocations 2019 documents.” There is no requirement for Neighbourhood Plan preparation to be paused until such time as the Local Plan has progressed further.

75. In considering a now-repealed provision that “a local plan shall be in general conformity with the structure plan” the Court of Appeal stated “the adjective ‘general’ is there to introduce a degree of flexibility” (Persimmon Homes v. Stevenage BC the Court of Appeal [2006] 1 P &CR 31). The use of ‘general’ allows for the possibility of conflict. Obviously, there must at least be broad consistency, but this gives considerable room for manoeuvre. Flexibility is however not unlimited. The test for neighbourhood plans refers to the strategic policies of the development plan, rather than the whole development plan.

76. The Guidance states, “When considering whether a policy is in general conformity a qualifying body, independent examiner, or local planning authority, should consider the following:

- whether the neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal supports and upholds the general principle that the strategic policy is concerned with;
- the degree, if any, of conflict between the draft neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal and the strategic policy;
- whether the draft neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal provides an additional level of detail and/or a distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policy without undermining that policy;
- the rationale for the approach taken in the draft neighbourhood plan or Order and the evidence to justify that approach.”

My approach to the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies has been in accordance with this guidance.

77. Consideration as to whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area) has been addressed through examination of

the plan as a whole and each of the plan policies below. I have taken into consideration Table 4.1 of the Basic Conditions Statement that demonstrates how the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan are in general conformity with relevant strategic policies. Subject to the modifications I have recommended, I have concluded the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan Policies

78. The Neighbourhood Plan includes 18 policies as follows:

- Policy H1: Infill housing development
- Policy H2: Rural exception sites
- Policy H3: Housing to support the needs of older people
- Policy D1: Design and character
- Policy T1: Cycling and walking
- Policy LSH1: Improving local retail
- Policy LSH2: Stonnall Village shops – street scene improvements
- Policy HC1: Healthcare provision
- Policy CF1: Improvement of community facilities
- Policy CF2: Stonnall Playing Fields
- Policy CF3: Community gardens and allotments
- Policy HB1: Listed buildings and structures
- Policy HB2: Historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings
- Policy HB3: Archaeology
- Policy LE1: Wildlife-friendly development
- Policy LE2: Visually important trees and hedgerows
- Policy LE3: Green infrastructure and flood mitigation
- Policy LE4: Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation

79. Paragraph 30 of the Framework states “Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct, and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.” Footnote 17 of the Framework states “Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area.”

80. Paragraph 15 of the Framework states “The planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social, and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.”
81. Paragraph 16 of the Framework states “Plans should: a) be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development; b) be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable; c) be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees; d) contain policies that are clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals; e) be accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation; and f) serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area (including policies in this Framework, where relevant).”
82. The Guidance states “A policy in a neighbourhood plan should be clear and unambiguous. It should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise, and supported by appropriate evidence. It should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared.”
83. “While there are prescribed documents that must be submitted with a neighbourhood plan ... there is no ‘tick box’ list of evidence required for neighbourhood planning. Proportionate, robust evidence should support the choices made and the approach taken. The evidence should be drawn upon to explain succinctly the intention and rationale of the policies in the draft neighbourhood plan.”
84. A neighbourhood plan should contain policies for the development and use of land. “This is because, if successful at examination and referendum (or where the neighbourhood plan is updated by way of making a material modification to the plan and completes the relevant process), the neighbourhood plan becomes part of the statutory development plan. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (See section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).”
85. “Neighbourhood plans are not obliged to contain policies addressing all types of development. However, where they do contain policies relevant to housing supply,

these policies should take account of latest and up-to-date evidence of housing need.” “A neighbourhood plan can allocate sites for development, including housing. A qualifying body should carry out an appraisal of options and an assessment of individual sites against clearly identified criteria. Guidance on assessing sites and on viability is available.”

86. If to any extent, a policy set out in the Neighbourhood Plan conflicts with any other statement or information in the plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy. Given that policies have this status, and if the Neighbourhood Plan is ‘made’ they will be utilised in the determination of planning applications and appeals, I have examined each policy individually in turn. I have considered any inter-relationships between policies where these are relevant to my remit.

Policy H1: Infill housing development

87. This policy seeks to establish conditional support for infill housing development within the defined village boundary. The policy does not seek to establish any cap on the number of dwellings that can be developed through infill housing development within the defined village boundary.

88. Paragraph 129 of the Framework states planning policies should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens). Paragraph 135 of the Framework states planning policies should ensure developments are sympathetic to local character and history.

89. The representation of the District Council suggests an amendment to the policy text to read “The design of development should comply with the principles outlined in the Stonnall Design Guide and the Lichfield District Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (see Policy D1).” I have recommended this correction is made.

90. The term “will be permitted” does not have sufficient regard for paragraph 2 of the Framework which requires material consideration to be taken into account. Those material considerations may not be known until the time of determination of a development proposal. The policy refers to Map A which defines a settlement boundary. I have recommended the scale of Map A is increased so that boundaries and features can more easily be identified. I have also recommended use of the same terminology in Policy H1 and on Map A to avoid confusion. I have recommended a modification in these respects so that the policy has sufficient regard for national policy and “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.

91. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan, in particular the land within the defined village boundary is excluded from Green Belt. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
92. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a 'made' neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 2:

In Policy H1

- **replace “village boundary (as shown on Map A)” with “Stonnall settlement boundary (defined on Map A of the Neighbourhood Plan)”**
- **replace “permitted” with “supported”**
- **replace “Guidance document” with “Document”**

In the legend to Map A of the Neighbourhood Plan insert “Stonnall” before “Settlement Boundary”.

Increase the scale of Map A so that boundaries and features can more easily be identified.

Policy H2: Rural exception sites

93. This policy seeks to establish conditional support for small scale affordable housing development on exception sites. The policy also seeks to establish a basis for letting of resulting affordable housing units.
94. Paragraph 82 of the Framework states “In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs, including proposals for community-led development for housing. Local Planning Authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs, and consider whether allowing some market housing on these sites would help to facilitate this.”
95. Policy H2 of the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy includes conditional support for housing development on small rural exception sites. Policy H2 refers to the type and location of development and occupancy controls.
96. The term “in the Plan area” is unnecessary and confusing as all the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan apply throughout the plan area unless a lesser area is

specified. I have recommended a modification in this respect so that the policy “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.

97. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.

98. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 3:

In Policy H2 delete “in the Plan area”

Policy H3: Housing to support the needs of older people

99. This policy seeks to establish support for development that provides homes adapted, or that can be easily adapted, to meet the needs of older people.

100. The District Council has suggested a modification to improve clarity. I have adopted this suggestion in my recommended modification.

101. Paragraph 63 of the Framework states that within the context of establishing need the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups (including older people) in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. Paragraph 82 of the Framework includes “in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.”

102. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.

103. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 4:

Replace Policy H3 with “Support will be given to residential development proposals that provide well designed homes which meet the needs of older people or can be easily adapted to meet their needs.”

Policy D1: Design and character

104. This policy seeks to establish design principles for development.
105. Paragraph 132 of the Framework states neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development. Paragraph 135 of the Framework states planning policies should ensure developments are sympathetic to local character and history. Paragraph 139 of the Framework states significant weight should be given to development which reflects local design policies. Paragraph 129 of the Framework includes planning policies should support development that makes efficient use of land considering the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens).
106. The term “preserve,” as applied to the appearance of the village, does not have sufficient regard for national policy which supports sustainable development. The term “parish of Stonnall” is without meaning. The terms “defined village boundary” and “sensitively designed” are imprecise and do not provide a basis for the determination of development proposals. I have adopted the suggestion of the District Council that the title of the Lichfield District Design Code SPD should be corrected. I have recommended a modification in these respects so that the policy “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.
107. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
108. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 5:

In Policy D1

- **replace the first sentence with “To be supported development proposals must be sympathetic to, and where appropriate enhance, the character, appearance, and setting of Stonnall village.”**

- replace “Guidance document” with “Document”
- replace “defined village boundary” with “Stonnall settlement boundary (defined on Map A of the Neighbourhood Plan)”
- replace “sensitively designed” with “designed to be appropriate for its location”

Policy T1: Cycling and walking

109. This policy seeks to establish conditional support for new or improved cycling or pedestrian access to facilities and services.
110. Staffordshire County Council state “It is unlikely that a stand-alone active travel scheme would require planning consent. It is much more likely that the delivery of infrastructure shall form part of the mitigation required of a proposed development. We would suggest to improve interpretation of the Policy reference should also be made to DfT’s LTN 1/20 and Active Travel England’s emerging Rural Guidance in the supporting text.” The Parish Council has stated support for such an amendment. I have recommended a modification in this respect so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.
111. Paragraph 111 of the Framework states planning policies should provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks.
112. The term “planning permission will be granted” does not have sufficient regard for paragraph 2 of the Framework which requires material consideration to be taken into account. Those material considerations may not be known until the time of determination of a development proposal. I have recommended a modification in this respect so that the policy has sufficient regard for national policy. I have adopted the suggestion of the District Council that “do not” should be replaced by “would not” to correct an error.
113. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
114. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 6:

In Policy T1

- **replace “Planning permission will be granted” with “Development proposals”**
- **after “services” insert “will be supported”**
- **replace “do not” with “would not”**

Include in part 7.1.1 of the Neighbourhood Plan reference to DfT’s LTN 1/20 and Active Travel England’s emerging Rural Guidance.

Policy LSH1: Improving local retail

115. This policy seeks to establish support for proposals that extend the range of facilities offered from identified retail units.
116. The representation of Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy on behalf of David Wilson Homes states “Policy LSH1 confirms that proposals that seek to extend the range of facilities offered from the existing retail units in the village will be supported. Clearly, the extension or provision of additional retail units would only be possible if there was an increase in the size of the residential population that they would serve. If there was a requirement for improved retail facilities within the village then securing additional new homes in the village would help sustain an expansion of these facilities.”
117. Paragraph 97 of the Framework states planning policies should plan positively for provision of community facilities such as local shops and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
118. It is not clear that the references in the first and second paragraphs of the policy are to the same retail units. I have recommended a modification in this respect so that the policy “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.
119. The term “planning permission will be granted” does not have sufficient regard for paragraph 2 of the Framework which requires material consideration to be taken into account. Those material considerations may not be known until the time of determination of a development proposal. I have recommended a modification in this respect so that the policy has sufficient regard for national policy. I have adopted the suggestion of the District Council that the policy title should be adjusted to improve clarity.

120. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
121. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a 'made' neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 7:

Replace Policy LSH1 with “Development proposals that enhance the range of retail and other local services offered from the Main Street retail centre, identified on Map A of the Neighbourhood Plan, will be supported where the proposed uses do not detract from the vitality and viability of the centre.

Modify the policy title to “Improving local retail provision”

Policy LSH2: Stonnall Village shops – street scene improvements

122. This policy seeks to establish support for development proposals that enhance the street scene in the vicinity of the Main Street retail centre.
123. Paragraph 97 of the Framework states planning policies should plan positively for provision of community facilities such as local shops and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. Paragraph 135 of the Framework states planning policies should ensure developments will function well, are visually attractive, and create attractive welcoming and distinctive places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible.
124. The requirement that enhancements to the street scene will ensure the vitality and viability of shops does not provide a basis for the determination of development proposals. The term “Stonnall village shops” is imprecise and it is unclear how this description relates to the location referred to in Policy LSH1. I have recommended a modification in these respects so that the policy “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.
125. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.

126. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a 'made' neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 8:

Replace Policy LSH2 with "Development proposals that enhance the street scene in the vicinity of the Main Street retail centre, identified on Map A of the Neighbourhood Plan, will be supported."

Policy HC1: Healthcare provision

127. This policy seeks to establish support for improvements to healthcare provision, including infrastructure that enables mobile services.
128. The representation of Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy on behalf of David Wilson Homes state "Policy HC1 also seeks improvements to existing healthcare provision and infrastructure within the village. Clearly, attracting additional residents into the village would provide a greater case for improvement or enhancement of existing healthcare facilities in the village. A similar point can also be made in respect of improvements to community facilities."
129. Paragraph 96 of the Framework states planning policies should aim to achieve places which enable and support healthy lives.
130. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
131. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy is appropriate to be included in a 'made' neighbourhood plan. This policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy CF1: Improvement of community facilities

132. This policy seeks to establish support for the enhancement or adaptation of indoor community spaces to provide for a range of community needs.
133. The representation of Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy on behalf of David Wilson Homes states attracting additional residents into the village would provide a greater case for improvements to community facilities.

134. Paragraph 97 of the Framework states planning policies should plan positively for community facilities.
135. The term “The plan supports” does not provide a basis for the determination of development proposals. I have recommended a modification in this respect so that the policy “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.
136. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
137. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.
- Recommended modification 9:**
In Policy CF1 replace “The Plan supports” with “Development” and after “needs” insert “will be supported”

Policy CF2: Stonnall Playing Fields

138. This policy seeks to protect Stonnall Playing fields from residential and other development and establish support for improvements to the range and quality of equipped play facilities and additional infrastructure to facilitate greater use of the playing pitches.
139. The representation of Harris Lamb Planning Consultancy on behalf of David Wilson Homes state “Policy CF2 identifies the playing fields as a community resource and states that improvements to the range and quality of play facilities and additional infrastructure to facilitate the greater use of the playing pitches will be supported. New development could help fund improvements through developer contributions where there is a need to increase capacity as a direct result of the development. This could include for example contributions to fund a new pavilion and changing facilities along with improved parking areas for the recreation area.”
140. Paragraph 103 of the Framework states “Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on

robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport, and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.” Paragraph 104 of the Framework states existing open spaces, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless stated circumstances exist.

141. I am satisfied the provisions of Policy CF2 have been adequately justified including in paragraphs 10.2.1 and 10.2.2 of the Neighbourhood Plan. I have recommended a modification to clarify the reference to Map A of the Neighbourhood Plan.

142. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.

143. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 10:

In Policy CF2 after “Map A” insert “of the Neighbourhood Plan”

Policy CF3: Community gardens and allotments

144. This policy seeks to establish conditional support for new community garden areas and allotments in or very close to Stonnall village

145. Paragraph 96 of the Framework states planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive, and safe places which enable and support healthy lives and refers specifically to access to healthier food and allotments.

146. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.

147. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. This policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy HB1: Listed buildings and structures

148. This policy seeks to establish a policy approach to the determination of development proposals affecting heritage assets.
149. Part 16 of the Framework relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The first paragraph of Policy HB1 does not have sufficient regard for the balanced approach set out in national policy. I have recommended the first paragraph of the policy is deleted for this reason. I am satisfied the second and third paragraphs of Policy HB1 have sufficient regard for national policy relating to non-designated heritage assets. I have recommended the policy title should be modified to relate to non-designated heritage assets.
150. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
151. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a 'made' neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 11:

In Policy HB1 delete the first paragraph

Modify the Policy title to be Policy HB1: Non-designated heritage assets

Policy HB2: Historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings

152. This policy seeks to establish that development affecting historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings should be sensitive to their distinctive character, materials, and form. The policy also requires due reference to the Staffordshire Farmstead Assessment Framework.
153. Paragraph 135 of the Framework states planning policies should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history.
154. The term "sensitive to" does not provide a basis for the determination of development proposals. It is confusing and unnecessary for the policy to state "within the Neighbourhood Area" as all the policies relate to the Neighbourhood /area unless a lesser area is specified. I have recommended a modification in these respects so

that the policy has sufficient regard for national policy and “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.

155. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
156. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 12:

In Policy HB2 replace “sensitive” with “sympathetic” and delete “within the Neighbourhood Area”

Policy HB3: Archaeology

157. This policy seeks to ensure that development takes account of known archaeology, and that potentially significant archaeology is appropriately considered during development.
158. In response to comments of Staffordshire County Council the Parish Council has confirmed, that apart from its numbering, Policy HB3 remains unchanged from the made Neighbourhood Plan. The County Council comments do not necessitate modification of Policy HB3 to meet the Basic Conditions. Paragraph 207 of the Framework states where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
159. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
160. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. This policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy LE1: Wildlife-friendly development

161. This policy seeks to ensure development respects the natural environment and is wildlife friendly.
162. It is confusing and unnecessary for Policy LE1 to refer to trees and hedgerows when Policy LE2 is specifically dedicated to that topic. I have recommended a modification in this respect. Paragraph 187d of the Framework states “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.” I have recommended the first sentence of Policy LE1 is modified in this respect. The second sentence of Policy LE1 does not have sufficient regard for national policy and is inconsistent with the third sentence of the policy. It is inappropriate to refer to a specific minimum percentage biodiversity net gain as this may vary throughout the plan period. I have recommended a modification in these respects so that the policy has sufficient regard for national policy and “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.
163. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
164. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 13:

In Policy LE1

- **replace “aim to protect existing habitats and species, including hedgerows and mature trees” with “minimise impacts on existing habitats and species”**
- **delete “(a minimum of 10%)”**
- **delete “. This should be provided on site”**
- **delete “(such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows etc)”**
- **delete the final paragraph**

Policy LE2: Visually important trees and hedgerows

165. This policy seeks to establish that development proposals should retain existing trees and hedgerows of good quality, visual significance, or of historic importance. The policy also seeks to ensure such trees and hedgerows are protected during any development.
166. Consistent with my recommendation relating to Policy LE1 that matters specific to trees and hedgerows should be dealt with in Policy LE2 I have recommended text is transferred from Policy LE1 to Policy LE2. I have also considered the representation of Staffordshire County Council where it relates to trees and hedgerows here. The County Council state the tree replacement ratio “could cause confusion because the biodiversity net gain statutory metrics contain a tree calculator, which must be used to assess whether tree loss has been mitigated in biodiversity terms. This will usually require a higher ratio of trees to be planted, but these could be offsite or even outside the area. It is suggested therefore the wording is amended to ‘Where mature trees need to be removed to facilitate development, these should be replaced with suitable tree species at a ratio of 2:1, or as indicated onsite by the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, whichever is the greater number’”. I have recommended a modification in this respect so that the policy has sufficient regard for national policy and “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.
167. Paragraph 136 of the Framework states existing trees should be retained wherever possible. Paragraph 193 c) of the Framework states development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons (for example infrastructure projects including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills, where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat) and a suitable compensation strategy exists. I have recommended a modification in these respects so that the policy has sufficient regard for national policy and is “clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework. I am satisfied the inclusion of the term “wherever possible” in the first sentence of the policy provides necessary flexibility to accommodate unavoidable loss of trees and hedgerows, for example to accommodate the construction of a safe site access.
168. The policy title does not adequately reflect the policy content which refers to trees and hedgerows of good quality, or of historic importance, as well as those that are visually significant. I have recommended the policy title is modified so that the

policy “is clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals” as required by paragraph 16d) of the Framework.

169. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.

170. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy, as recommended to be modified, is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. Subject to the recommended modification this policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Recommended modification 14:

In Policy LE2

- after “required” insert “, wherever possible,”
- insert a second paragraph “Where mature trees exceptionally need to be removed to facilitate development, these should be replaced with suitable tree species at a ratio of 2:1, or as indicated onsite by the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, whichever is the greater number. When selecting floral species for new planting schemes, these should consist primarily of native species or those considered to be climate resilient. Planting schemes should be designed to provide landscape scale connectivity and contribute to wider habitat enhancement.”

Delete “Visually” from the policy title.

Policy LE3: Green infrastructure and flood mitigation

171. This policy seeks to ensure development proposals include appropriate new landscaping and green infrastructure, and when sustainable drainage systems are required, they must, where practical, demonstrate they will enhance wildlife and biodiversity as well as minimise flooding.

172. Paragraph 135 of the Framework states planning policies should ensure that developments have effective landscaping and are sympathetic to their landscape setting.

173. Paragraph 162 of the Framework states “Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk”. Paragraph 181 of the Framework states “When

determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere”. Paragraph 182 of the Framework states “Applications which could affect drainage on or around the site should incorporate sustainable drainage systems to control flow rates and reduce volumes of runoff, and which are proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. These should provide multifunctional benefits wherever possible, through facilitating improvements in water quality and biodiversity, as well as benefits for amenity.”

174. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
175. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. This policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy LE4: Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation

176. This policy seeks to ensure development will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation.
177. Paragraph 194 of the Framework states Special Areas of Conservation should be given the same protection as habitats sites.
178. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan. The policy serves a clear purpose by providing an additional level of detail or distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policies.
179. The policy seeks to shape and direct sustainable development to ensure that local people get the right type of development for their community. Having regard to the Framework and Guidance the policy is appropriate to be included in a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan. This policy meets the Basic Conditions.

Conclusion

180. I have recommended 14 modifications to the Submission Version Plan. I recommend an additional modification in the Annex to my report. The definition of plans and programmes in Article 2(a) of EU Directive 2001/42 includes any

modifications to them. I am satisfied that the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with the Convention Rights, and would remain compatible if modified in accordance with my recommendations; and subject to the modifications I have recommended, meets all the Statutory Requirements set out in paragraph 8(1) of schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and meets the Basic Conditions:

- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the plan;
- the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- the making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
- does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations; and
- the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

I recommend to Lichfield District Council that the Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review for the plan period up to 2043 should, subject to the modifications I have put forward, be made.

Annex: Minor Corrections to the Neighbourhood Plan

181. I have only recommended modifications and corrections to the Neighbourhood Plan (presented in bold type) where I consider they need to be made so that the plan meets the Basic Conditions and the other requirements I have identified.
182. If to any extent, a policy set out in the Neighbourhood Plan conflicts with any other statement or information in the plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy. I recommend supporting text and illustrations are adjusted to achieve consistency with the modified policies.
183. I also recommend the following minor modifications are made to correct errors or achieve updates:
- in paragraph 2.4 correct culverts to coverts

- resolve the inconsistency between Map A and the description of that Map in paragraph 3.2
- update paragraph 14.3.1 to state public consultation on the Local Transport Plan 2025 is scheduled for late 2025
- amend the first sentence of paragraph 4.1 to “Neighbourhood Planning is supported in the National Planning Policy Framework through paragraphs 30 and 31.”
- correct spelling of neighbourhood in paragraph 5.1.1
- create a separate bullet point commencing “Impractical” in paragraph 9.1.2
- update paragraph 10.2.1 to refer to “The Lichfield Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment (May 2025) and the accompanying action plan (Lichfield Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy & Action Plan)
- in paragraph 12.1.1 line 2 after “area” insert “. However,”

Recommended modification 15:

Incorporate in the Neighbourhood Plan the above minor modifications, and modify general text and illustrations to: achieve consistency with the modified policies, achieve updates and clarifications, correct identified errors, and ensure sufficient regard for national policy.

Chris Collison
Planning and Management Ltd
31 October 2025
REPORT END