

Lichfield District Strategic Green Belt Review

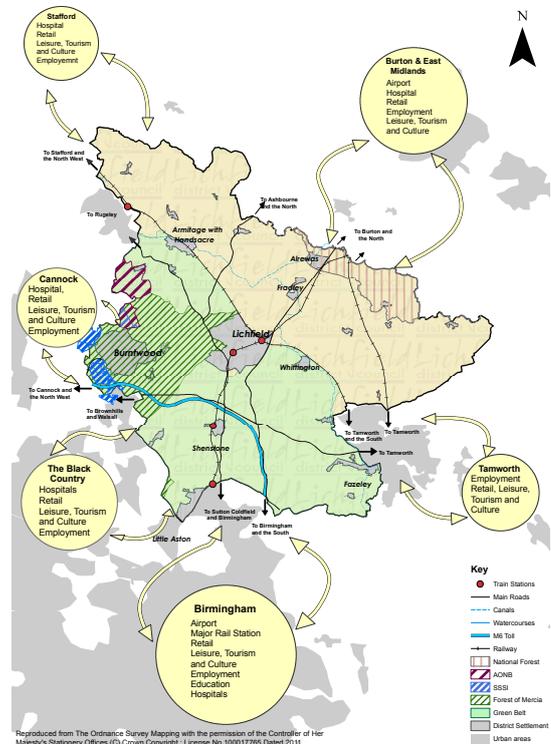
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Context & Principles for the Green Belt Review

1 Introduction & Purpose of the Review

1.1 The establishment and maintenance of Green Belts around many of England's main urban areas in order to strictly control development, has long been a part of national planning policy. In the West Midlands there is a Green Belt that encircles the main 'conurbation' area and encloses Birmingham, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton and the built up areas of Sandwell and Dudley. It extends to the east of Birmingham extending to Coventry. Although National Planning Guidance has identified five specific purposes of Green Belts, (see paragraph 4.14), the principal reason for establishing a Green Belt in the West Midlands was to stop the further outward spread of these main urban areas into the open countryside surrounding them.

1.2 Part of the West Midlands Green Belt lies within Lichfield District. It covers much of the southern part of the District Council area, extending from the West Midlands Planning Authorities areas to approximately the line of the West Coast Main Line railway. Green Belt therefore covers in excess of half of the area of Lichfield District, although the main towns and villages are excluded through the definition of 'Insets' within the Green Belt. This means that the built up areas of the settlements are not within the Green Belt, but there is a defined Green Belt boundary for the settlement that is generally tightly drawn against the edge of the existing built up area. The general extent of the Green Belt within Lichfield District is shown in the diagram opposite.



Picture 1.1

1.3 The development restraint imposed by Green Belt policy has been a major feature of land use planning within Lichfield District for many years, particularly in focussing new development on existing settlements. This Green Belt Review has been prepared to support the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy 2012. In particular its purpose is to ensure that Green Belt policy will continue to be applied within Lichfield District in locations that it is essential to keep open, taking account of the Local Plan spatial development strategy. In order to consider this fully however it is necessary to also examine whether there are places that it may not be essential to keep open in the long term through Green Belt policy, i.e. whether the existing extent and boundaries of the Green Belt are appropriate for the plan period (up to 2028) and beyond.

1.4 The spatial development strategy focuses major development mainly on the two main settlements of Lichfield and Burntwood and at Strategic Development Locations that are located beyond the outer edge of the Green Belt. It is based upon evidence of the relative degrees of sustainability of the existing settlements within the District. This has included a study of all rural settlements both within and beyond the Green Belt, in the Rural Settlements Sustainability Study, which was published in 2009 with an update in 2011. Sustainable development is therefore the central focus of the Local Plan,

1.5 The Local Plan is being prepared at a time when national planning policy is being re-shaped to empower local communities to have a greater say in the future of the settlements in which they live. Parish Plans and Neighbourhood Plans developed at a local scale will have more of a place in the future of the planning and there is therefore a need to provide for the flexibility within the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy to allow these to be prepared in the future. The Green Belt Review therefore needs to consider what the implications of this might be for the settlements that lie within the general extent of the Green Belt within the District.

1.6 Where Green Belt exists, severe restriction on the type of development that will be permitted applies, and national policy defines the limited types of development that are appropriate within Green Belts (now contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, published March 2012). The Review considers the implications of such restrictions on existing Green Belt villages and on existing development in open countryside, so as to ensure that the strategy of seeking sustainable development within Lichfield District is supported by, and not hindered by, Green Belt policy.

1.7 It is intended that Green Belt policy should direct development to appropriate and sustainable locations. It should not be used to constrain necessary and sustainable development. The approach followed in this Review is to consider whether there are or may be sustainable development needs within the plan period that require amendments to existing Green Belt boundaries and to suggest where these may be. This approach is entirely consistent with national planning policy, provided that it demonstrates appropriate evidence to support any proposed changes to existing Green Belt boundaries that would amount to 'exceptional circumstances' justifying boundary changes.

1.8 Where the Review concludes that it is, or may be, appropriate for changes to be made to existing Green Belt boundaries, either in relation to villages or employment locations, these are identified. This means that the principle of making a change to some existing boundaries and the general locations identified, can be addressed by the Local Plan Strategy. However, no detailed boundary changes are identified by this review or proposed to be included within the Local Plan Strategy. The details of boundaries will be the subject of the Allocations part of the Local Plan, to be prepared separately, so that any boundary changes can be scrutinised at that stage.

2 Scope of the Review

2.1 The Local Plan Strategy Evidence Base has already shown that there is no need within Lichfield District for any major ‘pulling back’ of existing Green Belt boundaries to meet major or strategic development needs. In particular the identified housing requirements for Lichfield District for the period up to 2028, which are significant in scale, are proposed to be accommodated either on previously developed or greenfield land outside the Green Belt. Overall there is only limited need for additional employment land within the District.

2.2 The context and scope of the Green Belt Review is therefore principally to consider whether there may be any specific requirements to amend existing Green Belt boundaries to meet more local, rather than ‘strategic’, needs (i.e. those that would have any significant impact upon a District spatial strategy) and therefore at a modest scale. It follows that any changes suggested within this review should not have a significant impact upon the overall spatial development strategy for the District for the period up to 2028.

2.3 A particular focus of the Green Belt Review is on the future needs of villages lying within the Green Belt and whether their future needs or aspirations to be vibrant and sustainable communities necessitate any Green Belt changes.

2.4 It is important to note that the Rural Settlements Sustainability Study (RSSS), revised in 2011, sets a general context for the study of Green Belt villages within the Green Belt Review in that it defines a ‘hierarchy’ of settlements across the District as a whole related to their size and access to services and facilities.

Key rural settlements

2.5 The larger villages of Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley, Little Aston, Shenstone and Whittington, were defined as key rural settlements within the RSSS. These settlements were the subject of a ‘rural masterplanning’ study during 2010 and 2011 that involved extensive local community engagement.

2.6 All of the key rural settlements except for Alrewas lie within the general extent of the Green Belt, although they are ‘Inset’ within it (i.e. their built up areas have been excluded from the Green Belt through a defined boundary). The Rural Masterplanning study resulted in a series of village reports that have already been published by the District Council as part of the Evidence Base for the Local Plan. The reports include recommendations on the potential for change and growth. The potential implications on existing Green Belt boundaries arising from the Rural Masterplanning Village Reports, are summarised within this Review.

‘Inset’ Smaller villages

2.7 There are several smaller villages lying within the Green Belt that are also ‘Inset’ within the Green Belt. These are Drayton Bassett, Hammerwich, Hopwas, Longdon (Brook End), Stonnall, and Upper Longdon. The Review considers each of these villages in some detail. This includes their existing size and function; constraints on and opportunities for small-scale development to meet any local needs; and the potential implications of these for existing Green Belt boundaries. These village reviews suggest locations or directions where it may be appropriate, or inappropriate, to consider any future development needs.

‘Washed-over’ Villages

2.8 Within the remainder of the Green Belt there are many small villages and hamlets that are not ‘Insets’, but where the Green Belt simply ‘washes over’ the village, meaning that Green Belt policies controlling development apply to all land and properties within the built up extent of a village rather than only land or property that lies outside a defined settlement boundary. These villages vary significantly in character and whilst some, such as Wall or Chorley, are compact in form, some such as Gentleshaw, have a more dispersed building form and are therefore more open in character. The Review considers whether there is any need to change current policy in relation to any of these villages.

Employment areas

2.9 There are also several existing employment areas located within the District’s Green Belt, of various sizes, types and scale. Several of these are currently subject to a specific planning policy on ‘Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt’. This policy is based on the former Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts. The Planning Policy Guidance has recently been replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012). It is therefore an appropriate time to consider future policy that should apply to all Green Belt employment sites.

Future Needs & Considerations

2.10 The Review also considers the particular issue of whether the general extent of the Green Belt meets not only the needs of the Local Plan Strategy for the plan period of up to 2028, but also foreseeable needs beyond then, so that there is a long term Green Belt boundary that will not need to be altered when the end of the Plan period is reached. This long-term consideration is a specific requirement of

the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore future long-term development needs have to be examined as part of the preparation of the Local Plan.

3 Green Belt Context & Planning History within Lichfield District

3.1 A Green Belt was first proposed in the West Midlands during the 1950's. It was devised principally as a means through planning policy of preventing the continuing outward expansion of the built up area of the West Midlands towns and cities into open countryside and towards the series of freestanding towns and villages surrounding the main West Midlands urban area.

3.2 The proposal to establish the Green Belt took many years to be formally approved. Within Staffordshire this was a gradual process, firstly including draft proposals within the Staffordshire County Development Plan in the 1960's and early 1970's, then by including broad proposals within the first Staffordshire Structure Plan of 1973. At this time the County Council prepared proposals for 'Insets' within the Green Belt. These 'Insets' defined boundaries around some towns and villages that were located within the general extent of the proposed Green Belt. The Insets took the approach of leaving out of the Green Belt the built up areas of the settlements concerned – mainly towns and the larger villages – and also areas on their edges that were identified at that time for development, or where detailed boundaries were to be defined in future Local Plans, taking account of development needs.

3.3 It was not until the early 1980's within Lichfield District that the preparation of Local Plans saw detailed Green Belt boundaries drawn for parts of the District. These were through the Northern Area District Plan, adopted in 1980, Burntwood Area District Plan, adopted in 1983 and the Southern Area District Plan, adopted in 1985.

3.4 These Plans defined detailed Green Belt boundaries, but allowed for major housing developments in Armitage with

Handsacre within the Northern Area, at Rake Hill in Burntwood and at Pinfold Hill, Shenstone, on land that had been included within the draft Green Belt.

3.5 After the approval of these Local Plans there remained parts of the Green Belt within Lichfield District that were not covered by Local Plans, in particular the area around the city of Lichfield and around Whittington. The latter was however included within an informal 'Eastern Area Village Plans' document.

3.6 Lichfield District Council prepared a District-wide Local Plan during the 1990's that was finally approved in 1998 following a major Local Plan Public Inquiry. This brought the Green Belt within a single Local Plan for the first time and defined a detailed Green Belt boundary within the District as a whole.

3.7 As for the earlier Area Local Plans, the District-wide Local Plan took account of development needs identified at that time in defining the Green Belt boundaries. In particular it allowed for the development of more than 1,000 houses as a south-western extension to Lichfield, with a Green Belt boundary defined by the route of the proposed Lichfield Southern Bypass between Walsall Road and Birmingham Road.

3.8 The 1998 Lichfield District Local Plan also allowed for the development of housing to the west of Burntwood, again with the Green Belt boundary defined by a proposed new distributor road.

3.9 At Burntwood, however, the largest scale of housing development was proposed by the redevelopment of St. Matthew's Hospital, which had become redundant. St. Matthew's was a former psychiatric hospital that lay at the north-eastern edge of the town. Whilst the hospital was proposed for housing development, the Local Plan policy

was that the area redeveloped for housing would remain within the Green belt and would be covered by a specific policy for 'Major Developed Sites within the Green Belt'.

3.10 The 1998 Local Plan did not contain any new proposals for development that would extend existing Green Belt villages and there were therefore no proposals included that amended any village Green Belt boundaries.

3.11 The Lichfield District Local Plan met the requirement of the then current Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts (PPG 2), to consider longer term development needs when drawing the Green Belt boundary. In the light of a forecast continuing development need for Lichfield, the Lichfield District Local Plan identified an area south of the city between Birmingham Road and London Road, then known as 'Berryfields', as an Area of Development Restraint. The 1998 Local Plan policy ensured that this area was protected from development during the Plan Period, but provided for its future to be reviewed when the Local Plan was itself reviewed. The Local Plan originally had a plan period of up to 2001, however the policy was one of those 'Saved' policies retained by the Secretary of State for the period beyond September 2007 and at the current time remains an extant policy.

4 Principles of the Approach to the Review: Considering the 'general extent' of the Green Belt and the need for change

The need for 'Exceptional Circumstances' to alter boundaries

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework continues the previous policy on Green Belts, set out in PPG2, that once established (in Local Plans), Green Belt boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. This is the process that is currently taking place for Lichfield District. The NPPF says that when reviewing their Local Plan, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period. No guidance is given in the NPPF on what may constitute 'exceptional circumstances' necessitating a change to boundaries, although clearly a need for development beyond the plan period being considered could be one such circumstance.

4.2 This Review takes the approach that there may be either a District-wide 'strategic' need, or a locally founded need, which could constitute the 'exceptional circumstances' and may require a Green Belt boundary change to be made. Because of the nature of the Local Plan being prepared by the District Council, (i.e. in two parts with a Strategy document being prepared first and an Allocations document to follow as a second part to the Local Plan once the Strategy has been adopted), no site specific boundary changes are proposed at this 'Strategy' stage of the 'Local Plan' preparation.

4.3 It is considered that the need to demonstrate the specific circumstances of any proposed change will, for the most part,

be required at the 'Allocations' stage, where detailed proposals will be made. Therefore in considering the specific circumstances of individual settlements and employment locations within this Review, potential exceptional circumstances are suggested and considered; these would need to be demonstrated in more detail if they are confirmed as being necessary in the 'Allocations' stage of Local Plan preparation. If there are situations where it is considered that the exceptional circumstances can already be demonstrated for the 'Strategy' stage of the Local Plan, these are set out in the Review.

The development strategy of the Local Plan Strategy

4.4 As noted in the introduction to this Review, the District Council has prepared a spatial development strategy for the Local Plan that is based broadly upon a principle of focussing the majority of new development on the existing settlements that show the greatest levels of 'sustainability'. In the Lichfield District context this means on those settlements that have the greatest range of facilities and the best access to employment by public transport. The Strategy is therefore aimed at achieving most growth in settlements where there is the least need to travel by car to meet daily or weekly needs for shops, schools, health, sport or community facilities, or to work.

4.5 The evidence base developed for the Strategy shows that the settlements within the District most able to function as sustainable settlements are Lichfield and Burntwood and therefore that most growth to meet the District's needs should be related to these towns. The Strategy also considers the needs of other towns in neighbouring Districts and as a result also proposes to focus some development on

the boundaries of Tamworth and Rugeley, which also have access to a wide range of services, facilities and employment.

4.6 It therefore follows that a lesser amount of new development should be located within or on the edges of smaller settlements where there are fewer facilities and generally less frequent or available public transport facilities and the spatial development strategy follows this approach.

4.7 As a principle therefore, the Strategy should allow for Green Belt boundaries that support this approach to spatial development, both in terms of restricting development in locations inappropriate to the Strategy, but also in terms of having boundaries that allow sufficient development to take place in those locations that would support the Strategy.

4.8 In relation to villages, this means that considerations in relation to Green Belt boundaries are:

- whether a particular village can make an appropriate level of contribution to District-wide development needs,
- whether there are local aspirations for some growth, or
- whether there is evidence of local need. In these cases then a further consideration is whether an appropriate scale of development can be achieved within the existing defined Green Belt boundaries.

4.9 For the larger or 'key' villages defined by the RSSS these considerations were the subject of the Rural 'Masterplanning' exercise, but for the smaller villages this is a consideration for this Review.

Rural Settlements Sustainability Study

4.10 The Rural Settlements Sustainability Study 2011 (RSSS) uses two types of measure to assess the degree to which villages within Lichfield District are able to meet the needs of their communities. The measures used in assessing how 'sustainable' a village is, were, firstly, the range of facilities contained within the village itself and secondly, the availability and frequency of public transport access from the village to opportunities for employment and services.

4.11 The RSSS considers villages across Lichfield District and has no regard to whether a village lies within or beyond the Green Belt, since it considers the function of villages rather than the implications of existing planning policy. It does however identify three broad groups of villages with different levels of access to facilities and job opportunities by public transport.

- **Key Rural Settlements:** These were the villages considered within the 'Rural Masterplanning' study and were Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley Mile Oak, Little Aston, Shenstone and Whittington. They have the greatest range of, and access to, facilities and services,
- A middle range of villages, where there are fewer facilities, but nevertheless they have some local facilities that allow for a cohesive local community to function. Amongst these villages were the smaller Green Belt 'Inset' villages of Hopwas, Longdon and Stonnall.
- A third group of villages that achieved low scores for both types of measure. These included the 'Inset' villages of Drayton Bassett, Hammerwich and Upper Longdon. There were no Green

Belt 'washed over' villages that achieved any mid-range or higher scores on either measure.

4.12 It is considered that as a broad principle, this 'hierarchy' of settlement groups should be used as a basis for considering the potential scale of development that might be appropriate to each village, set within the overall spatial strategy principles for the District. Specific local considerations could influence this general principle however, for example conservation issues, flooding or access constraints.

Local Features & Factors

4.13 Where there are local development needs, or aspirations that may help to support or increase the long-term sustainability of village communities, or indeed where there is interest from the development industry, there will always be local factors present that both make each place unique and which need to be taken account of in considering the most appropriate ways of meeting future needs. Therefore local factors have been given consideration within this Review. For the larger, 'key' rural settlements the Rural Masterplanning Village Reports examine the local issues, community views and options in a significant amount of detail and they are therefore only briefly summarised within this Review. For the smaller 'Inset' villages more detailed consideration is given within Section 7 of the Review.

4.14 Within the Rural Masterplanning Project some emphasis was given to both the key characteristics of villages and the way they had evolved, as pointers to the way that the future development might be addressed. One of the main elements of this was the way in which most villages had historically grown in relatively small increments and this was often referred to as

'organic' growth. There was a view among their residents about change that it should be limited to a scale and nature that was sympathetic to the character of the existing village and met a local need.

4.15 For the smaller 'Inset' villages there has been no similar public involvement exercise carried out, with the exception of Stonnall. Here a project led by the community has resulted in the village becoming a Neighbourhood Planning Frontrunner, supported by a Government grant. For this, and for the other villages, the more general public consultations carried out throughout the preparation of the Local Plan Strategy, have not revealed any desire for major growth among the residents or representatives of any of the smaller villages, although some villages are considering the need for change, potentially including housing to meet local needs. There is therefore no reason to believe anything other than that smaller scale, 'organic' growth, where villages have a local aspiration or identified need, would be the favoured local way forward.

4.16 It is considered therefore that this approach should be one of the general principles of the Green Belt Review. It has implications in terms of the potential scale of growth to be considered, but also since 'character' is also part of this approach, it has implications in terms of the types of development site that might be acceptable in principle at a local level.

4.17 Future change for a village that takes account of local character needs to consider several aspects – the history and nature of the built environment, the general form of a settlement (for example whether a historic form is relatively intact), the general setting of a village (e.g. is it concealed within a valley or prominent on a hilltop), and particular local features of landform or landscape. All of these factors can impact upon the suitability of any potential locations

for growth. In addition there may be specific local constraints, such as areas of flood risk or nature conservation interest, that would be best avoided if possible. These factors are therefore taken into account in the specific consideration of the smaller villages, as they were in the Rural Masterplanning Village Reports on the larger settlements.

Other evidence:

Employment needs

4.18 There is a significant rural economy within Lichfield District, and much of the rural area is covered by Green Belt. It is both national and local policy to seek a thriving rural economy and therefore the employment contribution made by the Green Belt area needs to be considered as part of the Review. The rural economy within the Green Belt is made up of agriculture, small rural-based employers, and some larger well-established employment sites. Several villages, such as Fazeley and Shenstone, have small industrial estates, but these do not lie in the Green Belt.

4.19 Therefore the Review needs to take as a principle that there should be an approach to Green Belt that meets the needs of the rural economy and allows it to continue to thrive. This means considering the extent to which there is any 'tension' between the stringencies of applying the national Green Belt policies in controlling development, and the ability of rural employment to function in the future.

Housing to meet Local Needs

4.20 During the course of preparing the Local Plan Strategy, several evidence reports have examined housing needs for the District and neighbouring local planning authorities within south-east Staffordshire. These have been a Strategic Housing Markets Assessment of 2008 (SHMA), a Rural Housing Needs Survey of 2008 and

most recently a Southern Staffordshire Districts Housing Needs Study and SHMA Update 2012, prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP).

4.21 Housing needs within the District fall broadly into the categories of needs arising from the attraction of the area to households 'migrating' from outside, and needs arising from households already living within the area, which is frequently referred to as local need. [The housing evidence base](#) has identified significant housing needs from within both categories, which have been identified at District and in 'sub-areas' within the District. The 'sub-areas' are aligned to more local housing markets, for example Burntwood, or the 'rural north' part of the District. A need for 'affordable' housing requiring some form of subsidy, has been identified within all 'sub-areas' of the District.

4.22 Consultations on the Local Plan Strategy and surveys have identified a view amongst many communities that there is a 'local need' for small levels of additional housing. People have tended to include a range of potential types of housing when referring to 'local need'. This has included open market housing for first time buyers or for people to 'downsize', and subsidised housing provided by Housing Associations. Consultations in rural communities have also shown that people have identified particular types of housing to meet a local need, such as bungalows for the elderly, sheltered accommodation, or houses for young couples and families.

4.23 To local communities a 'local needs' element of housing can therefore include a wide range of housing types and different tenures, whilst 'planning evidence' separately defines 'affordable housing' need, within the subsidised category. For rural areas no 'local needs' housing of any category has been assessed at the individual settlement level.

4.24 While the Local Plan Strategy will provide for all housing needs to be met within the District, it needs to be recognised that the greater empowerment of people to make decisions at local level, for example through Neighbourhood and Parish Plans, will potentially lead to communities identifying 'local housing needs' for their own communities and seeking to meet them. The Green Belt Review needs to acknowledge this developing context in considering the potential for future local demands to meet 'local needs' within individual communities that may lie within the Green Belt. A locally identified housing need where there are no non-Green Belt options available, may constitute 'exceptional circumstances' that justify amendment to the Green Belt boundary.

National Guidance: The purposes of Green Belt and guidelines on defining boundaries

4.25 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government policy towards protecting Green Belt land. This includes identifying five purposes that Green Belt serves, as well as guidance on defining Green Belt boundaries, and identifying the exceptions to the general rule that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate.

4.26 Local Plans are required to be consistent with the NPPF in order to be 'sound'. They should be plans that enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies of the Framework. It is important therefore that this Green Belt Review properly takes account of and follows, the policies and guidance within the NPPF.

4.27 The NPPF says that Green Belt serves 5 purposes. These purposes have been established for a long time through previous guidance and are:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

4.28 One approach to the principles of the Review would therefore be to consider, for any area, whether land currently in the Green Belt contributes to serving any of these purposes, either by itself or as part of a larger area. It may not be easy or simple, however, to apply all of these tests to individual parcels of land when defining or considering the amendment of specific Green Belt boundaries and they are not set out within the NPPF as 'tests' that should be met in defining boundaries.

4.29 To illustrate this point, it may be easy to see that there is a general issue of a potential to merge towns in a particular area, but it may be more open to argument whether the development of a particular parcel of land in a specific location would undermine this purpose. It could also be argued that any parcel of land on the edge of a settlement that is 'Inset' into the Green Belt is in effect assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. If that were simply to be applied by itself as a test, it would effectively defeat the purpose of reviewing Green Belt boundaries through Local Plans, which is the requirement set out in the NPPF.

4.30 This Review does not propose any specific detailed Green Belt boundary changes, but does include advice on settlements where boundary changes may be appropriate to take account of needed development. It also advises on potential preferred directions or locations for development within individual settlements that would require a Green Belt boundary change. The five purposes of Green Belt will therefore be taken account of as potential issues for a settlement and contribute, as a consideration, to any preferred locations for development, but not applied as individual tests.

4.31 There are however, specific guidelines for defining boundaries, which are set out in paragraph 85 of the NPPF. These need to be followed, since this Review will itself be providing guidance for future potential Green Belt boundary changes and identifying the locations where detailed changes may be brought forward within the Development Plan process in future. Most of the guidance relates to preparing an overall sustainable strategy and ensuring long-term Green Belt boundaries are established. In relation to considering individual settlements, including the villages 'Inset' within Lichfield District, the requirement to "not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open" is a specific 'test' that needs consideration.

Settlements within the Green Belt

5 Lichfield and Burntwood

5.1 The range of evidence compiled for the preparation of the Local Plan Strategy demonstrates that in the context of Lichfield District, Lichfield and Burntwood represent the two most 'sustainable' freestanding settlements within the District. This is shown through the range of facilities and services available within them, through their level of accessibility for movement to and from each settlement, and the resulting functions of each in serving a wider area.

5.2 Of the two settlements, Lichfield clearly has a distinctly greater range of facilities and services and functions as a centre for the whole District, for example for shopping, professional services and administration. The Local Plan Strategy has already used this evidence in the preparation of its spatial development strategy, which seeks to locate new development close to services and facilities and also recognise that the facilities, services and transport availability within both Lichfield and Burntwood need improvement.

5.3 The finalisation of the Local Plan Strategy has taken place against the background of the Government proposal to abandon Regional Spatial Strategies. Since the West Midlands RSS was to include District level housing requirements there has been a need to review housing needs at a more local level. For the Lichfield Local Plan this has resulted in re-focussing housing requirements to consider more broadly the needs of south-east Staffordshire. The proposed Local Plan Strategy has an emphasis on meeting the majority of housing needs up to 2028 within, or as extensions to urban areas. To meet Lichfield Districts' needs the Strategy provides principally for housing growth in Lichfield and Burntwood and at Fradley in Strategic Development Locations, without requiring any Green Belt land. In addition the Strategy proposes

significant development on the edges of Rugeley and Tamworth on land outside the Green Belt.

5.4 The preparation process for the Local Plan Strategy included the preparation of evidence on the development requirements of the District and on the range of potential development sites that are available. It has included the preparation of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which has been reviewed as the Local Plan process has continued. The assessment of needs and potential sites led to the publication of potential development options, which were tested by extensive consultation and reviewed to define preferred options, subsequently refining these into a proposed spatial development strategy.

5.5 This process included the identification of development options for strategic scale development, taking account of the physical and environmental constraints identified for each settlement. These factors limited the range of potential options for Lichfield and Burntwood. For example for Lichfield there were issues related to impact on the historic core of the city, whilst for Burntwood outward expansion is constrained by a number of factors including the presence of Chasewater reservoir and its associated SSSI's, and flood risk for some areas. It was clear that for large strategic scale development, significant areas of Green Belt land might be required. Options identified for consultation included the potential release of Green Belt land to the south and west of Lichfield and to the south, south-east and north of Burntwood.

5.6 There was significant local opposition to these options. The Local Plan preparation process has subsequently examined how Green Belt impact could be avoided and refined the Strategy to avoid any proposals requiring major Green Belt land releases. This has meant developing a spatial strategy which places greater emphasis on

redevelopment within the urban areas of Lichfield and Burntwood in particular, including existing employment areas and land identified for future employment.

5.7 For Lichfield the Strategy utilises Strategic Development Allocations at South Lichfield (on 'Safeguarded Land' already taken out of the Green Belt by the 1998 Local Plan) and at Streethay. For Burntwood the Strategy proposes a sustainable urban extension principally on employment land and urban redevelopment. Major development locations at Fradley, east of Rugeley and north of Tamworth will complement the emphasis on Lichfield and Burntwood with significant housing development close to existing urban areas but beyond the Green Belt.

5.8 Hammerwich was one of the communities that would have been particularly affected by the potential Green Belt land releases considered as extensions to Burntwood. As well as issues relating to the potential impact on the relatively small rural community at Hammerwich village, the options raised issues of the merging of settlements to the south of the town. Although the development of the spatial strategy has subsequently been able to avoid such major releases, the location of Hammerwich village in relation to the larger urban area of Burntwood remains relevant in considering smaller scale development.

5.9 As a result of the finalisation of the spatial strategy for the Local Plan involving the extensive consideration of strategic options and refinement of the strategy to take account of the sub-regional context, there is no need for the Green Belt Review to consider the issue of Green Belt further for the two main settlements of Lichfield and Burntwood for the period up to 2028.

5.10 Beyond the end of the Plan period there is the matter of the permanence of Green Belt boundaries in the longer term.

This issue is identified in the National Planning Policy Framework as one that should be considered in the preparation or review of the Local Plan. Permanence of the Green Belt boundary is therefore considered separately in Section 10 of this Review.

St. Matthews Hospital

5.11 St. Matthews Hospital was a psychiatric hospital located at the north-eastern edge of Burntwood, but lying in the Green Belt. It closed during the 1990's and was subsequently allocated for residential development through the Lichfield District Local Plan, adopted in 1998. The Local Plan, however, maintained the St. Matthews area within the Green Belt and included it as one of the Major Developed Sites (MDS) covered by a policy (Emp. 5) that followed the former PPG2: Green Belts guidance on MDS. The site was redeveloped, principally for 380 new dwellings, including the conversion of part of the former main hospital building to housing and of the church to a nursery.

5.12 When the District Council published its Core Strategy and Allocations of Land and Development Control Policies Development Plan Documents in 2005, it proposed to remove the St. Matthew's area from the Green Belt by preparing an Inset boundary on which it had previously consulted. The Inset was included on the Proposals Map, although the Core Strategy made no specific reference to the change to the Green Belt proposed in the St. Matthew's area.

5.13 At the Examination into the Core Strategy in 2006 the District Council proposed to make specific reference to the change within the Core Strategy document. It argued that the St. Matthew's area was now effectively a new suburb of Burntwood, that it was desirable to integrate the area with the town and allow it to function as part of the larger urban area in terms of the future control of development.

In the light of this major change in circumstances there was no longer a need to seek to keep the area open through a Green Belt designation. In his Examination Report on the Core Strategy, the Inspector accepted the argument that the area should be excluded from the Green Belt, but took the view that a specific reference to the change should be made in the Core Strategy and it should be given publicity. Since the proposed Development Plan Documents were subsequently withdrawn, the proposed changes have not been implemented.

5.14 It is considered that the proposal to exclude this area from the Green Belt remains valid for the reasons given at the time. The Local Plan Strategy should therefore specifically identify the proposed change, and the precise boundary for the change should be determined through the 'Allocations' part of the Local Plan.

6 The Larger Green Belt Inset Villages

6.1 The District Council has carried out a Rural Planning Project, which forms part of the Evidence Base for the Local Plan. This was also known as the 'Rural Masterplanning' exercise. The project, which considered the future of the larger villages, was carried out between March 2010 and the end of 2011. It involved the 6 larger villages of Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley, Little Aston, Shenstone and Whittington. All of these settlements, except for Alrewas, lie within the Green Belt.

6.2 The Rural Masterplanning Project was based on extensive community involvement through questionnaires, workshops and public events, to firstly establish if there was a local consensus on existing and future issues for each village, then to consider options for addressing issues and finally to seek public reaction to outputs from the report for each village. This last stage outlined the conclusions of separate reports for each settlement. The 'Village Reports' described the views expressed by local communities but also considered other factors relevant to the future, such as evidence on rural housing need, settlement evolution and character, and factors that might act as constraints to growth such as flood or ecological issues. Each Village Report suggested Guiding Principles and a Vision to guide future policy, but also drew conclusions on the housing development potential of each village. For settlements where it was considered there was potential for future additional housing, preferred locations were identified, some of which involved limited amounts of Green Belt land.

6.3 The Rural Masterplanning Project allowed 'grass roots' views to feed directly into consideration of rural planning and to wider strategy. It revealed some common themes for rural communities on issues

affecting their quality of life, approaches to future needs and potential development. These common themes were:

- a desire for more management of traffic within settlements, particularly related to speed;
- a desire for improved local facilities, in particular for younger people;
- a desire for environmental improvements; acceptance of the need for change but
- little enthusiasm for significant housing growth – an 'organic' approach to growth was preferred;
- where some housing need was identified it was normally related to meeting the needs of specific groups.

6.4 In most cases there was a consensus within the individual settlement, particularly on the issues, but often on potential solutions. However in the case of Little Aston, consensus was not really apparent amongst residents. The full [Rural Planning Project Report](#) including the detailed village reports can be viewed on the District Council website.

6.5 The following sections on individual larger settlements within the Green Belt include brief summaries of the conclusions of the separate Rural Masterplanning Village Reports and the overall conclusions from the study, in particular where they relate to future growth, potential 'exceptional circumstances' for development in the Green Belt, and possible locations for future development. It should be noted that the conclusions from the Rural Settlement Sustainability Study, which identified the settlements, and from the Transport Accessibility Study that forms part of the Local Plan Evidence Base, suggests that all

of the settlements may be capable of accommodating some housing growth as part of a sustainable strategy for development.

Armitage with Handsacre

6.6 General factors: The present day settlement results from the coalescence of the two formerly separate communities of Armitage and Handsacre, making it elongated along the main roads. It is unlike many rural settlements in having a single major employer, but the large settlement today results from mainly twentieth century development, including major housing development in the 1990's, which enabled provision of the village hall and major open space. Its main facilities, including the village hall, health centre and some shops, are loosely located in the New Road/Shropshire Brook Road area.

6.7 Local views: Whilst most people living in Armitage with Handsacre valued their rural environment, they were particularly concerned that a range of issues should be addressed that affected their quality of life. The priorities identified amongst residents were to reduce the impact of traffic and improve pedestrian accessibility, to maintain public transport, to improve the range of activities available for both younger people and adults, to address highway flooding issues and for environmental improvements to spaces. One of the issues raised was whether there is an issue of a single identity for the village as a result of its origins as separate communities. Today's physical structure with an elongated shape, a spread of local facilities and the distance of some areas from the village hall, main open spaces and some local services was considered by some to have a harmful impact on community 'identity'.

6.8 In terms of future development many villagers questioned the need for any new housing and it was apparent that there was

a view amongst some that facilities and environment had not improved to match recent housing developments. There was no consensus on the need for new housing development, but there was some perceived need for accommodation for particular groups: affordable housing for younger people, bungalows for the elderly housing for first-time buyers and smaller properties for downsizing were among the suggestions made on local need.

6.9 Despite disagreement on future need residents were willing to contemplate options for future housing growth. The key issue for many was maintaining physical separation from Rugeley and no-one was willing to consider options that would reduce the separation any further. Within workshop groups, whilst some felt the need to protect the Green Belt, others considered Green Belt land south of the village as the best location for new development.

6.10 Development needs and potential sites: The local community sees the priorities for Armitage with Handsacre as improvements to facilities and infrastructure rather than growth, although it does acknowledge that there may be some specific housing needs. The District Council has prepared evidence on housing need for the preparation of the Local Plan Strategy, including a Strategic Housing Markets Assessment, 2008. The evidence suggests a significant housing need within the District as a whole, a substantial element of which results from migration demand. Armitage with Handsacre has been a popular location for housing for both local residents and migrants because house prices tend to be a little lower than some parts of Lichfield District. A Rural Housing Needs survey prepared for the District Council in 2008 gave some indication that there is some local need, for people to move within the area, to form new households and as a destination for households moving from elsewhere. There were also indications that

there may be difficulty for some in being able to access the open market to realise their housing needs locally. It needs to be noted however that the needs have proved difficult to quantify at the local level.

6.11 In relation to potential future development locations for Armitage with Handsacre, some recent development has taken place and there is some remaining identified housing capacity within the settlement. A significant proportion of the new capacity would be through redevelopment of a small part of the Ideal Standard (Armitage Shanks) works. The Rural Planning Village Report identifies a total capacity of some 106 dwellings from 2010, taking account of recent developments and the potential Ideal Standard redevelopment.

6.12 In the absence of the redevelopment there is little remaining capacity within the settlement to meet local needs or any emerging community aspirations. However there is development under construction attached to the eastern edge of Rugeley that lies within the Parish of Armitage with Handsacre and the emerging Local Plan Strategy identifies a further proposal for a strategic site of 450 dwellings on brownfield land beyond the Green Belt. Whilst these developments will play a major part in meeting the housing needs of Rugeley they will nevertheless serve the local housing market around Armitage with Handsacre. It may be concluded therefore that there are a range of potential options to meet local housing needs, although development east of Rugeley is unlikely to contribute significantly to reinforcing community identity within the existing village.

6.13 Largely because of flood risk and flood plain constraints, all reasonable options for development beyond the village potentially relate to development within the Green Belt, either to the west, east, or south. These are described in the Rural

Masterplanning Village Report and the Report concludes that in the light in particular of the form of the village and where the existing facilities are concentrated, development in the area of Brick Kiln farm would be the preferred location for any village extension. Capacity in this area would be around 100 dwellings.

6.14 Recommendations for the Green Belt: Locally there is a short-term but significant increase in the availability of new dwellings in the local housing market, through the development of the major site east of Rugeley. There also remain potential options within the settlement boundary that involve redeveloping brownfield land, which are likely to come to fruition during the plan period. It is considered therefore that there is no immediate or short-term need presently identified that would require a Green Belt amendment. However it needs to be recognised in the case of Armitage with Handsacre that there are limited development options for village expansion and that those identified all lie within the Green Belt. There may therefore be medium or longer-term needs arising for development that would need to rely on Green Belt land and the absence of suitable alternatives may constitute 'exceptional circumstances' for amending the Green Belt boundary. In addition to meeting local housing needs, the local priority for additional community activities and facilities should be recognised and both of these could potentially be met south of the village in proximity to the existing centre of village activity. For these reasons it is considered that the Local Plan Strategy should acknowledge that there may be a need to amend the Green Belt boundary in the Brick Kiln Farm area to meet locally identified needs and aspirations. The 'Allocations' process, which would identify specific boundaries for the Green Belt, should clarify

the likelihood and timescales for the implementation of the redevelopment opportunities within the village.

Fazeley Mile Oak and Bonehill

6.15 General factors: Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill are three communities physically joined by twentieth century growth that today form a single settlement, although Bonehill retains some separation. It lies at the outer edge of the West Midlands Green Belt, the outer boundary here being formed by the Birmingham and Fazeley and Coventry canals. More significantly it is physically joined to the town of Tamworth at its north eastern and eastern edges. Tamworth has a population of around 76,000 people, but also a range of shopping and other facilities that are easily accessible to Fazeley residents. This relationship also means that Fazeley residents have access to the larger local housing market of Tamworth. The converse situation, i.e. that housing in Fazeley is very accessible to Tamworth residents, may have some impact upon local accessibility to housing, for example for first time buyers.

6.16 Fazeley and Bonehill have a historic industrial heritage linked to the tape milling industry and the Peel family. This heritage forms the basis of a Conservation Area that impacts upon the potential for realising housing capacity within the settlement. An example is the need to retain and re-use the local landmark building of Tolson's Mill, which is redundant. There is a Fazeley local centre, where most shops and facilities are located, and this is some distance from the communities at Mile Oak and Bonehill. The River Tame flood plain and the more limited flood risk area associated with Bourne Brook (which flows south of the settlement from the west to meet the River Tame) effectively prevent growth of the settlement to the east and south, where it is also restricted by Drayton Manor Theme Park.

6.17 Local views: People living in Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill were particularly concerned that a range of issues should be addressed that were seen as affecting their quality of life. In particular deficiencies in the quality of the built environment, (such as potential building dereliction and poor maintenance), and the poor quality of social and community facilities are seen as priority issues. In a similar way to Armitage with Handsacre, one of the issues raised through the Rural Planning Project was re-enforcing a single identity for the village, seen by some as an issue because of its physical form and origins as separate communities.

6.18 Residents were more concerned with improving the environment and the quality and range of local facilities than with future development. However current housing issues were raised, identified as limited social housing choice, including specialist housing for older people and housing for families. There was some acceptance of redevelopment potential within the settlement but a reluctance to consider options for expansion of the settlement. This was mostly because expansion threatened the separate identity of Fazeley and increased the likelihood of the settlement effectively merging into Tamworth, both physically and in administrative terms. Therefore, although the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment had identified potential greenfield sites around Mile Oak and Bonehill amounting to some 700 dwellings, all of which were in the Green Belt, it was clear that most residents would find development of any of these sites unacceptable.

6.19 Development needs and potential sites: The District Council's evidence on housing need for the preparation of the Local Plan Strategy, suggests a significant housing need within the District as a whole, and a need within the Tamworth Housing Market Area, although need within Fazeley,

Mile Oak and Bonehill has not been individually assessed. Within Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill the proportion of the total housing stock that is social housing is 22%, which is relatively high compared to other larger rural settlements within the District. The Rural Housing Survey (2008) found that the proportion both of households who planned a move and newly formed households expected to rent, was higher when compared to other parts of the District. Overall the evidence suggests that there is likely to be a need for affordable and social housing.

6.20 The constraints affecting Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill limit the development options available to locations to the north, west and south-west of the existing settlement. All of the housing options, which amount to some 700 dwellings, represent an outward spread of the settlement, or would lead to the enclosure of Bonehill, increasing its physical connection to Tamworth or Mile Oak.

6.21 Taking account of the fragile nature of the physical separation between Fazeley and Tamworth, but also of the significant level of redevelopment capacity already identified in the settlement, the Rural Masterplanning report recommends that no greenfield land releases should be considered at present. At 2010 there was identified capacity of 247 dwellings within the settlement, higher than any other larger rural settlement within the District. The report further notes that due to the presence of small industrial complexes and individual sites, there may be further redevelopment opportunities coming forward within the plan period. Since the preparation of the rural Masterplanning Report an Evidence Base Report on Employment within the District (Employment Land Review 2012) has identified the potential for redevelopment of the William Tolson Industrial estate.

6.22 Recommendations for the Green Belt: The conclusions of the Rural Masterplanning Report that there are existing and potential redevelopment opportunities and that the existing separation from Tamworth is important, effectively mean that no case has been identified and accepted by the District Council that there are any 'exceptional circumstances' that would justify amending the Green Belt boundaries in this area. For these reasons it is considered that the Local Plan does not need to identify Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill as an area where Green Belt boundary changes may be necessary.

Little Aston

6.23 General factors: The defining characteristics of Little Aston are that for the most part it has a very low density of development, much of which is set within a leafy landscape created by a tree canopy across the area. The architecture and quality of the environment are recognised through the designation of an extensive Conservation Area. Its position as an outer 'suburb' has also be recognised, since it effectively forms part of the outer edge of the built up area of the West Midlands conurbation. This is a fundamental consideration in considering the potential or options for any future development.

6.24 In the past Little Aston has seen a considerable level of infill development, mainly through redevelopments of large dwellings in extensive grounds. The adopted Local Plan includes a low density development policy to protect the existing character of the area, which covers the remaining area of Little Aston Park. The Rural Masterplanning Report recommends that this policy continues to be applied. It is notable that Little Aston covers an extensive area, has a number of locations where there are facilities and local shops, but no identifiable central place to the community.

It is not freestanding and relies on neighbouring areas for wider shopping and town centre facilities.

6.25 A key conclusion of the Rural Masterplanning Project was that Little Aston should no longer be included within the 'key rural settlements' of the District because its characteristics do not support it functioning as a local service centre or a focus for any future development, including housing. Important points leading to this conclusion were the limited range and wide spread of facilities and services, limited remaining scope for infill development, the significance of its Green Belt location in terms of the spread of the conurbation and that its limited facilities themselves have wider catchments to help support them for the longer term.

6.26 Local views: Little Aston is a community that lies at the inner edge of the Green Belt and for the most part the settlement is joined to parts of Sutton Coldfield and Streetly. It is generally of high environmental quality. Much, but not all, of the area is built at very low densities, which accounts for its large area and that Little Aston residents identified a number of separate 'districts' of Little Aston during the Rural Masterplanning workshops. It was clear that most people liked living in Little Aston, but the Rural Masterplanning Project found a divergence of views from residents on issues affecting the settlement. Maintaining the quality of the environment was important to most people who commented, and there appeared to be a level of consensus that Little Aston needs a clearer identity. There was little consensus however on whether there was a need for more local facilities, where any should be located, or if public transport improvements were needed.

6.27 Few residents who took part in the Rural Masterplanning Project had any desire for any significant expansion of Little Aston and their priorities were for maintaining the

character of the settlement. Some people suggested there was a local need for housing to provide opportunities for 'downsizing', but overall no strong view expressed on the need for new housing.

6.28 Development needs and potential sites: The Local Plan evidence base on housing shows that the 'rural south' part of Lichfield District has some of the highest levels of owner occupation and some of the highest house prices. For Little Aston owner occupation is at around 95%. There is a low supply of social housing. Most local people who expected to move in the short term expected to be in market housing, principally four and three bedroomed detached dwellings, with little specific demand for social housing. Against this context of a likely limited local housing need, the area would certainly be attractive to the housing market and a number of both large and small sites have been promoted through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. Most of these sites lie within the Green Belt and identified capacity within Little Aston at 2010 amounted to only 37 dwellings.

6.29 The conclusions reached about the future role of Little Aston, which focus on environmental and social objectives, rather than a role in meeting housing demand, mean that there is no strategy context to support the outward expansion of the settlement. This in turn would support the role of the Green Belt in this area, which fundamentally is to prevent the outward spread of the conurbation. Although there are significant development options that would be capable of implementation, none of them would be appropriate in this context.

6.30 Recommendations for the Green Belt: The conclusions of the Rural Masterplanning Report on the future role of Little Aston and the importance of the existing Green Belt boundaries in limiting the spread of the conurbation mean that it

would be undesirable for the Local Plan Strategy to identify Little Aston as a location where Green Belt boundaries may need to be amended. Rather, the Strategy should emphasise that the inner edge of the Green Belt will continue to play a fundamental role in planning strategy and that there are no identified circumstances that suggest any amendment to its existing boundaries.

Shenstone

6.31 General factors: Key features of Shenstone are that it is a compact village with a Conservation Area at its heart, a range of facilities and a rail station on the cross-city rail line. Its residential area is largely contained within the rail line in the west and Birmingham road in the east, whilst to the north the Fotherley Brook limits the northward spread of the village. West of the railway line however is a significantly sized industrial estate, which, whilst it provides employment, has given rise to local issues about the impact of heavy traffic through the village. Some people have questioned whether the industrial units provided many jobs for local people. The estate parkland of Shenstone Court lies at the southern edge of the village, and was seen by many residents as an important feature to keep, adding to the village character.

6.32 Local views: Shenstone is a freestanding village that lies some two miles north of Little Aston and three miles south of Lichfield along one of the main commuter routes between Lichfield and Birmingham. It was clear from the Rural Masterplanning Project that people living in Shenstone valued the good quality of rural environment it provided and the relatively easy access the location gave them to both Lichfield and Birmingham, with a choice of private or public transport. There was a strong sense of a single community, a willingness to contemplate change, but a view that this should be limited.

6.33 Residents who took part in the Rural Masterplanning Project gave priority to resolving traffic and transport issues, such as traffic speed, heavy traffic and increasing the frequency of stopping trains. Retaining the character of the village was also a priority when contemplating the possibility of future development. Some people were interested in developing projects to provide renewable energy for the village. In terms of housing there were views supporting the need for some housing to meet local needs, which included homes for 'downsizing', smaller housing for young people and affordable housing, but no specific reference to 'social housing'. Villagers were willing to consider options for future housing growth, although the clear preference was for an approach that developed brownfield opportunities ahead of greenfield sites.

6.34 Development needs and potential sites: Shenstone falls within the 'rural south' part of Lichfield District, which has some of the highest levels of owner occupation and some of the highest house prices. There is a low supply of social housing. Evidence on local housing need is not specifically quantified for Shenstone, although overall it is considered that there are needs within the 'Lichfield south' part of the District that could potentially be met at Shenstone. The area would be attractive to the housing market and offer the opportunity of travel by train.

6.35 The SHLAA process has identified limited opportunities for redevelopment within Shenstone with capacity only of 36 dwellings (at 2010), including development of 14 dwellings on Lynn Lane outside the village boundary. Some major sites have been put forward by the development industry within this process, which either lie within the Green Belt or involve the redevelopment of all or part of the Shenstone industrial estate. At the workshops some residents contemplated an eastwards development of the village,

involving the construction of a bypass. This was seen as a longer term option by those people who thought it might offer opportunities for growth.

6.36 The conclusions reached by the Rural Masterplanning Project were that in addition to any infill capacity, preference should be given to the redevelopment of part of the Industrial Estate, principally for housing, but also potentially for small business development. Whilst employment evidence confirms the viability of the industrial estate, part of it is currently unoccupied. There is a need for the Local Plan to consider an issue of competing objectives in terms of the future of this area. A capacity of around 80 to 100 dwellings was recommended, as a partial redevelopment by the Rural Masterplanning Report. It was considered that redevelopment of the whole estate ran the risk of reducing the potential of Shenstone as a sustainable community. However there might be a range of options for redevelopment that would deliver different scales of housing if the recommended area could not all be delivered. Few people attending the consultation event on the draft Village Report were opposed to redevelopment in principle, although some identified that linkages between this area and the rest of the village would need to be improved.

6.37 Recommendations for the Green Belt: Taking account of the potential to deliver capacity of around 136 dwellings for Shenstone, through redevelopment of part of the Industrial Estate, it is considered that there is no currently identified 'exceptional' need to consider amendments to the Green Belt boundaries in this area. Should additional requirements for housing be identified, then a next step would be to consider whether the option of further redevelopment of the Industrial Estate could be implemented without unacceptable harm to the sustainability of Shenstone as a

settlement. It is concluded therefore that the Local Plan does not need to identify Shenstone as a location where the Green belt boundaries should be amended.

Whittington

6.38 General factors: Whittington is an historic village that 'nestles' into the landscape, sitting in a shallow depression, and having some significant slopes to its south rising towards Whittington Barracks. Whilst there are some local issues relating to ecology, flood risk and access, there are no over-riding physical constraints that would prevent future development. Although Whittington saw significant growth in the twentieth century up to the 1980's, there has been little development since then except for the recent redevelopment of a special school.

6.39 Local views: Whittington is a freestanding village that lies only some two miles from Lichfield. Separated from the village, but having an important relationship with it, is Whittington Barracks, which is in the process of being converted to a national medical training establishment for all three forces. Throughout the Rural Masterplanning Project it was clear that there was a strong local community and that people valued 'community spirit', some linking it to the scale of the settlement. Villagers valued the quality of their local environment and access to the countryside. Most people thought there was a good range of local facilities and recognised that their recreation facilities were being improved. There were issues, however, particularly relating to traffic speed, and some sought additional traffic management measures. A local group are seeking to develop Whittington as an 'exemplar' village in the use of renewable energy.

6.40 There was concern among many villagers that a significant scale of additional development involving village extension into

the countryside would erode the character of the village. Various views were expressed about a local need for particular types of housing, including starter homes, 'supported' housing, and smaller houses to allow 'downsizing'. However there appeared to be a fair degree of consensus that existing village boundaries should be retained.

6.41 Development needs and potential sites:

Whilst there is no evidence on housing need related to Whittington itself, Whittington forms the largest village of the 'rural east' part of the District. The Evidence Base does suggest that there is some local housing need, although both those households intending to move and those potentially forming new households were principally interested in owner occupation. Taking account of the limited capacity within the current Whittington settlement boundary, the SHLAA process has identified two significant sites on the north and south boundaries of the village respectively, together with a smaller area on Back Lane. The Rural Masterplanning Village Report identifies preferences for the smaller Back Lane sites and the Huddlesford Lane site (60 dwellings), in preference to development south of the village.

6.42 The housing capacity identified within Whittington through infill and redevelopment amounts to only some 33 to 38 dwellings (at 2010), part of which (Chapel Lane/Blacksmith Lane) remains untested in terms of availability and capacity. The overall situation of little recent development and little identified capacity is unique among the framework of key rural settlements within the District. It gives rise to a potential issue of whether the population of Whittington is likely to fall in the future through the continuation of the trend towards lower household occupancy rates. No development at all would result in a gradual fall in population. The effects of falling household size over a 20 year period are uncertain, including any impact on local

services and facilities, although it is likely that the scale of development currently identified would lead to a largely static or slightly declining village population. As a result of this the Rural Masterplanning Village Report concludes that following the resolution of the matter of the scale of housing need for the District as a whole, there is a need to confirm whether small scale Green Belt sites on the periphery of Whittington should be carried forward.

6.43 The consultation on the draft Village Report for Whittington showed some support for the view that there should be some growth to help maintain the viability of the local services in the longer term. Overall the Rural Masterplanning Report conclusions are that if Green Belt sites are proven to be necessary, those at Armitage and at Whittington should be considered in preference to other potential Green Belt sites.

6.44 Recommendations for the Green Belt:

Of all the 'key rural settlements', Whittington has the smallest identified housing capacity within its boundaries. As discussed above, the limited capacity gives rise to some risk of declining population and pressure on facilities. It is considered that the potential for a slow decline of a settlement could be an 'exceptional circumstance' that might justify an amendment to the Green Belt boundary in the village to allow for limited growth. However, as noted, there are uncertainties in the argument and in the potential impact of population decline.

6.45 It is suggested therefore that there needs to be additional weight given to arguments for amending the Green Belt. One such argument could be local aspirations for limited growth and the Rural Planning Project has revealed that there are some local people who see a need for growth. There remain uncertainties in these arguments. These may be resolved over

time, for example Whittington is itself developing a Parish Plan. In the light of the circumstances identified, there is a need to consider including Whittington in the Local Plan as a location where the Green Belt boundaries may be amended to meet local requirements for housing growth.

7 Smaller Green Belt Inset Villages

7.1 In addition to the larger villages considered above, there are six smaller villages that are also Inset into the Green Belt. These are Drayton Bassett, Hammerwich, Hopwas, Longdon, Stonnall and Upper Longdon. Each of these villages was inset into the Green Belt by the original proposed Staffordshire Green Belt as part of the County Development Plan, although the boundaries have had minor amendments made through subsequent Local Plans.

7.2 This section of the report considers each village individually. For these villages Lichfield District Council has not facilitated specific community participation exercises seeking local views on village issues or attitudes to change, although views have been received individually from villagers as part of general consultations on the Local Plan. The community in Stonnall is however developing its own Neighbourhood Plan and has undertaken considerable work locally in preparation for this. The approach taken for these villages has been to examine the known factors that would be relevant to the consideration of change, to potential growth and the implications of these for the Green Belt. Each village is considered in terms of 'sustainability' factors, character and constraints, potential development options, scale factors, and recommendations. A 'Context Plan' for each village has been prepared, which illustrates factors relevant to the consideration of the potential for

change or development. The Village Context Plans are included as an Appendix to this report, as a separate document.

7.3 It is known through responses to the preparation stages of the Local Plan Strategy, that some of the villages have local aspirations for change, which may include some development. It is intended that the consideration of each village will assist the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy to provide an appropriate framework for the local communities to consider their future and provide some guidance on appropriate directions for and scale of future development, should this form part of community aspirations. It is considered that this approach fits in with the emerging approach to local community development but also allows a view to be taken on whether there would be implications for Green Belt boundaries in individual villages that need to be highlighted within the Local Plan Strategy.

7.4 The Rural Settlement Sustainability Study, 2011, was able to group the District's settlements into high, medium or low in terms of both the facilities present within the settlement and their accessibility to facilities outside the settlement by public transport. These measures were used as a proxy for the level of 'sustainability' of each settlement. Whereas all of the larger villages considered in the previous section of this Report fell into the high category on both measures, the smaller 'Inset' villages showed a more mixed picture. The Table below shows how each of the villages performed overall within the RSSS on the two measures.

Village	Population ⁽ⁱ⁾	Dwellings	RSSS Facilities Measure	RSSS Accessibility Measure
Drayton Bassett	723	304	Low	Low

i Population & dwellings at 2001 with the exception of Hopwas, which is estimate at 2012

Village	Population ⁽ⁱ⁾	Dwellings	RSSS Facilities Measure	RSSS Accessibility Measure
Hammerwich	870	323	Low	Low
Hopwas	650	265	Medium	High
Longdon	557	245	Medium	Low
Stonnall	1,298	571	Medium	Low
Upper Longdon	399	175	Low	Low

Table 7.1

7.5 The Table also illustrates the general size of these villages, which is significantly smaller than the group identified as ‘key settlements’ within the District, where the size ranges from 2,000 to nearly 5,000 people. Stonnall seems to fall into a category of its own, lying between the two groups of villages in terms of its size.

Drayton Bassett

7.6 Sustainability: Drayton Bassett lies just to the south of Fazeley, one of the largest rural settlements within Lichfield District. At around 300 dwellings Drayton Bassett is of a mid-size in the group of smaller Inset villages, but has scored ‘Low’ for both the facilities and accessibility assessments within the Rural Settlements Sustainability Study (RSSS). It is noted however that a limited Community bus service now operates for the village, which slightly improves its accessibility. Despite the ‘Low’ score within the RSSS, the village does have a range of facilities to support local community life, in particular a primary school, church, recreation ground with some modern facilities, a Club and a W.I. Hall. The village has lost its Post Office and shop in the recent past; the former store/P.O. now being a residential property.

7.7 There are no current indicators that there are specific housing or other development needs or aspirations for growth in Drayton Bassett and it should be noted that no developer interest has been identified by the Strategic Housing Land Availability process. Two recent planning permissions for single dwellings have however been granted.

7.8 The range of remaining facilities present within the village provides the framework for a vibrant community life for residents. This suggests that Drayton Bassett is not a totally unsustainable rural location, but its lack of local shop and limited public transport increase reliance on the private car to access important facilities. These factors suggest that some future development could be appropriate to meet a local need or aspiration, but that it should be of a very limited scale.

7.9 Character and Constraints: Drayton Bassett is a compact village set on a slight rise above the valley of the River Tame. It is an ancient settlement. The Historic Environment Character Appraisal prepared by Staffordshire County Council as evidence for the Local Plan notes that settlement at Drayton Bassett is likely to date from at least the later Anglo-Saxon period since two water mills held by the King were recorded in the Domesday Book. However the village has

ⁱ Population & dwellings at 2001 with the exception of Hopwas, which is estimate at 2012

been much affected by modern development and there is only a small core of conservation interest, centred on the Listed buildings of St. Peter's church and New Row.

7.10 The compact and largely modern form of the village means that there are few spaces within the settlement boundary to provide potential for small-scale development and therefore it would be difficult to meet any development needs within the village without redevelopment of existing properties. There are a number of dwellings in large grounds outside the settlement boundary on the approach from Tamworth, that form part of the village, but lie within the Green Belt.

7.11 In the consideration of any development beyond the existing village boundaries, there are few specific flood risk or ecological issues, however the general setting of Drayton Bassett within the surrounding landscape is important. While a high point of the village is reached around the church, the village is set almost upon a gentle plateau, which is revealed from the south and from the east. Tree belts immediately to the north of the village, (including Edden's Wood), are important to the setting but also to screening from Drayton Manor Theme Park. Any growth or consolidation of the village northwards would tend to promote the merging of Drayton Bassett with the Drayton Manor Park complex. Most of the fields to the west, south and east of the village are large in scale giving an openness to the immediate surroundings of the village. This means that there would be no obvious boundaries that could define small-scale developments, but also that development on any of these edges would be prominent either on approaches to the village or in the wider landscape.

7.12 Development needs and potential sites: Within the village options to meet any small-scale need would be limited to either existing open spaces or to redevelopment. The existing open spaces within the settlement boundary are amenity spaces so small in size as to be impractical for consideration. There are no non-residential uses within the village that are currently redundant and therefore suitable options within the village cannot be identified. Outside the village boundary, the landscape difficulties caused by the large open fields referred to above make the definition of boundaries for future development options difficult. However it is considered that if a future development need is identified it is likely to be best met through the continuation of frontage development on the south side of Drayton Lane, as indicated on the village Context Plan (see separate Appendix document). Access here would not be a difficulty, compared to other potential locations and although there would clearly be an impact. A form and scale of development could be achieved here that would be sympathetic to the previous development of the village.

7.13 Scale: The 'sustainability' considerations assessed through the RSSS suggest that any development of Drayton Bassett should be very limited in scale. There is however little identifiable capacity within the existing village boundary and any site development options do not by themselves assist in defining scale because of the lack of boundaries. Options of around 10 - 15 dwellings would be capable of being defined along Drayton Lane in the area identified, through frontage development.

7.14 Recommendations for the Green Belt: No specific needs or aspirations are currently identified in the village. If future small-scale needs or aspirations for development emerge within Drayton Bassett, it is considered that the potential of any small infill or redevelopment opportunities

would need to be fully explored at the time, before consideration of village extensions. Dependent upon the outcome of this process, then development of a limited scale along the south side of Drayton Lane is likely to provide the most acceptable village extension option compatible with village form in this area.

7.15 It is difficult to identify 'exceptional circumstances' at present that would justify any change to the existing Green Belt boundary. If a local affordable housing need is identified in future this could potentially be dealt with through an 'exceptions site' policy, since this approach has been retained within the National Planning Policy Framework. However if a need or aspiration for a more 'mixed,' mostly market housing development is identified, for example involving both open market and affordable housing, then provided the options for development within the village have been fully explored, this may amount to 'exceptional circumstances' for a minor amendment to the Green Belt, potentially in the location suggested in paragraph 7.11. Despite the relatively poor 'performance' on sustainability issues in the RSSS and although future needs or aspirations for development are yet to emerge, in the light of the very limited possibilities for development within the existing village boundary, it is considered that Drayton Bassett should be identified in the Local Plan Strategy as a settlement where there may be a need to make minor amendments to the Green Belt boundary.

Hammerwich

7.16 Sustainability: Hammerwich is located immediately to the east of the built up area of Burntwood. It is a village of unusual form, which may relate to its origins as three different hamlets, but also to the landform of the area. At around 320 dwellings Hammerwich is of a mid-size in the group of smaller Inset villages, but has

scored 'Low' for both the facilities and accessibility assessments within the Rural Settlements Sustainability Study (RSSS). The village has limited facilities and no longer has a primary school. However there is a limited range of local facilities that contribute to community life. These include a shop and post office, church, community centre, social club and cricket and bowling club. Because of the proximity of Burntwood, some local needs are met there, including schools.

7.17 It is clear from the activities operating within the social and community facilities located in the village that Hammerwich has a thriving local community life. The limitations on the range of facilities however, suggest that the village is not a particularly suitable location for considering any significant growth, when compared with many other rural settlements within the District. This does not mean, however, that should a specific local need be identified in the future, there would necessarily be any significant harm in meeting the need within or on the edge of the village. The 'sustainability' considerations taken by themselves suggest that any development should be of a very limited scale.

7.18 Character and Constraints: The Historic Environment Character Appraisal prepared by Staffordshire County Council notes that Hammerwich is thought to have developed from three medieval hamlets, but there is no significant conservation interest in the settlement as it exists today. Although linear in parts, there is development in depth in some more recent parts of the village. The 'knoll' of higher ground known as 'Hammerwich Square' has been an important influence in the form of the village and although in distance, the eastern edge of Burntwood lies close to the village, landform as a whole tends to re-enforce the separateness of the village from the town. The location of Hammerwich between Burntwood and some of the main

commuter destinations within the West Midlands has resulted in some 'rat run' traffic issues that have been addressed through traffic management measures within the village.

7.19 At the northern end of the village there is a flood risk area, which includes the relatively modern triangular area of housing between Overton Lane, Pingle Lane and Burntwood Road. This area extends in an east-west band across the fields in this northern part of the village. It coincides with an area that has been identified as having some historic landscape interest in the small fields around Appletree Farm, with the fields also being of some ecological interest.

7.20 The relatively narrow lanes in the south of the village, the presence of some significant slopes and roadside banks, all contribute to the character of the village, but also limit suitable development options, even for small scale development. There are therefore a number of significant local constraints within and on the edges of Hammerwich that would need to be taken account of in considering any future development.

7.21 Development needs and potential sites: Within the village there are few spaces that could provide options to meet any small-scale development needs without redevelopment of existing property. Two small-scale areas of open land near the Burntwood Lane/Pingle Lane junction may have flood risk issues.

7.22 There has been significant developer interest in sites to the west of Hammerwich, which lie between it and the eastern edge of Burntwood. The size of these sites is strategic in scale, with a total capacity amounting to over 500 dwellings. Their development would have a major impact on the physical separation of Hammerwich from Burntwood. The promotion and consideration of these sites through the

Local Plan has led to a major local campaign against this scale and location of development. Whilst this review is not considering development of this scale, the issue of potential for coalescence with Burntwood is nevertheless relevant to small-scale development and is a major factor against locations that would extend the village to the west.

7.23 Beyond the eastern edge of the village in the Hall Lane/Church Lane area, there are a number of potential locations for small-scale development, should there be a future requirement. These locations are shown on the village Context Plan (see separate Appendix document). None of these have come forward through the SHLAA process and they would need to be investigated in detail to establish individual constraints. However this general location for small-scale development is likely to have less impact overall, taking account of the factors elsewhere, including the potential for coalescence.

7.24 Scale: The 'sustainability' considerations assessed through the RSSS suggest that any development of Hammerwich should be very limited in scale. Sites for a small number of dwellings on the edge of the existing village may, however, be possible, to meet a locally identified need or aspiration. The potential sites that may be suitable suggest that development should be limited in scale to around 10 dwellings.

7.25 Recommendations for the Green Belt: No specific local needs are currently identified in the village; indeed there remains a local campaign of opposition to Green Belt development related to strategic sites. If future small-scale needs or aspirations for development emerge within Hammerwich the potential of any small infill or redevelopment opportunities would first need to be fully explored, although none are apparent at present. Dependent upon the outcome of this process, then development

of a limited scale at the eastern edge of the village in the Hall Lane/Church Lane area is likely to be the most acceptable village extension option compatible with village form in this area, although care would be needed in the definition of boundaries.

7.26 It is difficult to identify 'exceptional circumstances' at present that would justify any change to the existing Green Belt boundary. If a local affordable housing need is identified in future this could potentially be dealt with through an 'exceptions site' policy, since this approach has been retained within the National Planning Policy Framework. If a need or aspiration for a more 'mixed,' mostly market housing development is identified, for example involving both open market and affordable housing, then options for development within the village would need to be more fully explored. If there are no suitable sites available, this may amount to 'exceptional circumstances' justifying a minor amendment to the Green Belt, potentially in the locations suggested. Despite the relatively poor 'performance' on sustainability issues in the RSSS and although future needs or aspirations for development are yet to emerge, in the light of the very limited possibilities for development within the existing village boundary, it is considered that Hammerwich should be identified in the Local Plan Strategy as a settlement where there may be a need to make minor amendments to the Green Belt boundary.

Hopwas

7.27 Sustainability: Hopwas lies to the west of Tamworth, but separated from it by the valley of the River Tame. Hopwas is at a river crossing point and today lies on the A51 route between Lichfield and Tamworth. At around 265 dwellings Hopwas is relatively small, but nevertheless scored the best of the group of smaller Green Belt 'Inset' villages in the Rural Settlements

Sustainability Study. In relation to facilities Hopwas was a mid-range scoring village and in relation to accessibility it was a high scoring village. The latter is related to the frequency of service on the bus route between Lichfield and Tamworth. The village has a range of facilities to support local community life, in particular a primary school, two churches, a small recreation ground with some modern facilities, two pubs and a Club. The village has however, lost its Post Office and shop.

7.28 There are no current indications that there are identified local housing or other development needs or aspirations. It should be noted that no developer interest has been identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability process, other than on 3 infill plots, for 1 or 2 dwellings, within the village boundary, which are now completed.

7.29 Despite the lack of a village store, the range of facilities present within the village provides the framework for a vibrant community life for residents. Although there is reliance on the shopping and other facilities of nearby Tamworth, the combination of the range of local facilities and good accessibility suggests that some small-scale development of the village could be sustainable in the rural context of Lichfield District.

7.30 Character and Constraints: Hopwas is an example of a relatively well preserved rural village, which is largely linear in form. The older part of the village is aligned north – south along Hints Road and School Lane. This area is the historic core of Hopwas and is a designated Conservation Area. It sits just above the flood plain of the River Tame and its linear form is parallel to the river. More recent parts of the village lie both sides of the A51, which rises up from the river on a hill that reaches to the heathland plateau of Whittington Heath to

the west. This area mainly comprises frontage development plots most of which are detached and have large deep gardens.

7.31 Seen from the south and east the village has a dramatic setting as it rises up from the river valley, particularly because it also has the backcloth of Hopwas Woods that reaches to the edge of the village. This ancient woodland and site of biological interest effectively limits the growth of the village northwards.

7.32 The character of Hopwas is enhanced by the presence of the Fazeley canal, which as well as providing a local tourist attraction, impacts upon the quality of access particularly because of the three hump-backed bridges on the A51 Lichfield Road, Nursery Lane and Hints Road. As well as the obvious constraint of the River Tame flood plain to the east, these bridges and the narrowness of the lanes within the village, are limiting factors in relation to the potential for future development.

7.33 Development needs and potential sites: Within the village boundary there are few spaces that could provide options to meet any small-scale development needs. One potential option would be an area of former orchard off Church Drive that fronts Lichfield Road, however it is positioned adjacent to St. Chad's church, which is listed building. This open land forms part of the setting of the church and it is considered that development would be harmful to this setting. There are small fields adjacent to the southern edge of the village on Hints Road. These however lie within the Conservation Area and form part of its setting on the approach to the heart of the village from the south. The combination of the impact on the Conservation Area and poor road access make this area unsuitable for consideration as a development option.

7.34 Options outside the village boundary that may have some potential to meet future needs lie in the south-west part of the village, between Plantation Lane and Nursery Lane. These are shown on the village Context Plan (see separate Appendix document). These include the site of the nursery itself, where the existing nursery buildings and glasshouses are largely derelict, and the field (divided into two by a fence) between the end of Plantation Lane and Nursery Lane. As indicated above, access to this area from Nursery Lane has the difficulty of the canal bridge and poor width and this would need careful consideration to determine whether an acceptable access could be achieved. The alternative of accessing this area from Plantation Lane appears preferable, however it would potentially have the effect of limiting the integration of any development with the core of the village.

7.35 Scale: The consideration of the size of the village suggests that a local need, if any, would be small. However the sustainability assessment suggests that some limited growth of the village might be acceptable. The site availability considerations indicate no effective capacity within the village. Options that have potential are located on the south side of the village, where effective limits to development could be established. These limits suggest that a choice of development sites could be considered ranging from in the order of 5 dwellings to 15 dwellings.

7.36 Recommendations for the Green Belt: At present there are no identified development requirements established that are specific to Hopwas and no developer interest. In terms of the implications for the Green Belt therefore, it is difficult to identify 'exceptional circumstances' at present that would justify any change to the existing Green Belt boundary. If a local need or aspiration for development is established for the village, there is no identified capacity

that would not be harmful to conservation interests. However, the sustainability assessment suggests that Hopwas could be a village where some limited growth might be acceptable. The likely preferred option sites to the south of the village lie within the Green Belt. In the light of this combination of factors consideration should be given to whether the Local Plan Strategy should identify Hopwas as one of the villages where a minor amendment to the existing Green Belt boundaries might be necessary to facilitate local/neighbourhood planning in the future.

Longdon

7.37 Sustainability: The village of Longdon has less than 250 dwellings, with a population of around 550 people. There are however a number of hamlets nearby, mainly west of the A51 Lichfield Road, that are close to the village and help to support its facilities and services, for example Upper Longdon, Stockings Lane and at Longdon Green. There is a relatively wide range of facilities for the size of the village and these include a primary school, church, pub, shop and Post Office, Village Hall, social club, and small W.I. Hall. One of the facilities lacking within the village however, is a public recreation ground to provide for play and informal activity. The village lies against the A51 at its western edge where it forms part of the settlement boundary. Although it therefore has excellent road access, the bus service has a relatively low frequency, since through services from Stafford to Lichfield take the alternative route through Armitage with Handsacre, which lies some two miles to the north east.

7.38 For these reasons the village scores among the mid range of villages for facilities within the Rural Settlement Sustainability Study, but scores among the low range villages for accessibility to other services and facilities by public transport.

7.39 The range of facilities present in the village suggests that it has the potential to support a limited level of development. The opportunities for social and recreational activities available and the publicity apparent within the village through notices and posters suggest a vibrant local community. Despite the limitations of public transport, in overall terms Longdon could be a sustainable location for limited rural development that meets a local need or aspiration.

7.40 Character and Constraints: Longdon is an attractive village with significant charm at its heart along Brook End, although there is no Conservation Area. It is set within the shallow valley of Shropshire Brook, which flows through the centre of the village on its route from the edge of Cannock Chase to the River Trent to the east. There is some flood risk arising from the presence of the brook, although this is restricted close to the brook course. Flood risk would however have the potential to have an impact on some potential development options. As well as the brook course, landform has an important role in the character and setting of the village. There are some significant slopes to the east that add to the setting of the village but also have an impact on development options in that direction. North of the village above the slope of the valley, the land is flatter, but is relatively high ground. The A51 creates a barrier to any westward expansion of the village.

7.41 Development needs and potential sites: Like most of the Inset villages, the settlement boundary for Longdon is drawn tightly against existing development, so there are limited opportunities for infill development. The current village boundary is shown on the village Context Plan (see separate Appendix document). There are however two potential opportunities for development of undeveloped land within the settlement boundary. The first is at the end

of Hawcroft and to the rear of the Swan with Two Necks and is allocated for public open space in the adopted district Local Plan, to address the local shortage. The second possibility is land to the rear of the 'Club', although the land is used for club activities and access to it could only be achieved through the club access – it is otherwise lined by residential properties to the north and south. However, there is no indication that the club land would be available for development and for these reasons does not appear to be a viable option.

7.42 The land allocated for public open space is therefore likely to be the only reasonable or viable option within the village boundary, although it is understood that no agreement has been able to be made to bring the land into public use. The land has been allocated for open space since 1980 and is presently used as paddock land. Despite the current Local Plan allocation, there is the potential to consider future development of all or part of the site, which amounts to about 0.4 hectares, provided that the objective of meeting an open space shortage could also be achieved. A Local Plan, Parish Plan or Neighbourhood Plan could for example consider options for this area.

7.43 Beyond options that lie within the village boundary, a further option for limited development could be the consideration of land north of Swan Close where there is a limited area of flatter higher land, presently used as a paddock. Limited development in this area may provide an alternative if the open space land is unavailable as an option.

7.44 There is considerable market and developer interest in development at Longdon, and all of the land to the east and the north of the village has been submitted as potential development sites through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The full capacity of these sites is around 340 dwellings and individually they

range from 93 dwellings to 150 dwellings. It is considered that any one of these sites would be an inappropriate scale of development in terms of its impact and the ability to assimilate such a level of growth. As indicated earlier, much of the area to the east and north of the village is on rising ground and development would additionally have significant landscape impact. This, combined with access difficulties and small areas of flood risk, lead to the conclusion that only limited development areas to the north of the village are appropriate and should be considered.

7.45 Scale: Both the size of the village and the sustainability considerations suggest that any future development in Longdon should be quite limited in scale. The potential acceptable development options considered above could each potentially deliver new housing in the order of 10 to 15 dwellings, or less, depending on the nature of development. This scale of development is likely to be more successful in terms of the 'organic' development of the village and assimilation into the community whilst potentially helping to support local services.

7.46 Recommendations for the Green Belt: At present there are no firmly established local development requirements that are specific to Longdon, although there is considerable developer interest in the village. There is, however, a longstanding shortage of public open space and play facilities that is currently not resolved. There are no infill options that are apparent in the village that might meet a future local need, because of the compact and largely modern nature of development. However there are opportunities for a limited scale of growth to the north of the village that could potentially be acceptable in form and design. If a local need is established then two options are possible, although the option of development within the village boundary should be fully

explored before an alternative is considered because this would not require any alteration to the established Green Belt boundary.

7.47 Amendment to the Adopted Local Plan allocation could offer the opportunity to achieve open space alongside the provision of limited development. The potential to achieve local need and aspirations, both for limited growth and open space provision, might be considered to amount to 'exceptional circumstances' needed to make a minor adjustment to the Green Belt boundary. However, provision of open space on a revised site could be made without any Green Belt amendment and potentially affordable housing need could be met through the 'exceptions' policy mechanism without any Green Belt amendment.

7.48 In the light of this combination of factors consideration should be given to whether the Local Plan Strategy should identify Longdon as one of the villages where a minor amendment to the existing Green Belt boundaries might be necessary to facilitate local/neighbourhood planning in the future.

Stonnall

7.49 Sustainability: Stonnall is the largest of the group of smaller 'Inset' Green Belt villages, with a population of around 1,300 people and around 570 dwellings. The village has a good range of facilities and services for its size, including a primary school, church, surgery, a small group of purpose built shops, youth centre, village hall and 2 pubs. The shops include a newsagent, fish and chip shop and restaurant although one of the units is currently empty. It is likely that people from other nearby communities use Stonnall shops and facilities including residents of Lower Stonnall, Lynn and Hilton. One of the two public houses has been granted planning permission for redevelopment for

housing, although this is not yet implemented. There is a bus service through the village between Lichfield and Walsall, but this is infrequent.

7.50 As a result of the range of facilities present in Stonnall, it was included within the mid range of villages within the Rural Settlement Sustainability Assessment in relation to facilities present. It was however included in the 'low' category in terms of its accessibility to facilities and services outside the village.

7.51 The range of facilities and services present in the village suggests that the settlement could be appropriate for limited development, where a local need or aspiration is identified. Such growth should be limited in scale however in view of the restricted accessibility by public transport.

7.52 Character and Constraints: Stonnall was originally a small linear settlement, together with a hamlet located around Lazy Hill close to what is now the A452 Chester Road. It is now consolidated into a single village, containing a number of small modern estates and additional linear growth. Stonnall has a higher proportion of bungalow development than seen in most other villages within Lichfield District. It lies at the boundary of Lichfield District, with areas of Aldridge and Brownhills close by to the west. Whilst some parts of the village have an older character, the village is predominantly 1960's to 1980's development and there is no Conservation Area. Much of the village is set at the low point of a gently undulating landscape although there are rises to the west and south of the village that add to its setting and would be relevant to considering suitable directions for any growth.

7.53 The number of flatter fields located between the properties on Main Street and Church Road, and fields to the west of Main Street are generally large with few significant areas of trees or hedgerow boundaries.

7.54 Overall whilst Stonnall is a pleasant village, with a largely commuter function, there are few constraints to future development, in terms of the need to preserve Conservation Area interest, ecological or landscape features. The [Surface Water Management Plan](#) identifies 135 properties in Stonnall at risk of surface water flooding, although this is understood to be largely related to highway flooding and would not provide a major constraint to considering potential development options.

7.55 Neighbourhood Planning: The Stonnall community is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, with funding from the Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner Scheme. Extensive work has already taken place to identify the main challenges for the village and the key elements of a Neighbourhood Plan. The community has identified factors including high house prices, low turnover of housing and an 'older demography', that suggest a need for some additional affordable housing provision in the village. It has identified a need for both housing for the elderly and to enable younger people to stay in the village, potentially requiring family housing. Proposals are being developed through the Neighbourhood Plan to meet identified needs through two schemes, each able to deliver about 12 dwelling units. Sites for the schemes are being sought, preferably on land that is already developed and potentially involving redevelopment of the existing shop units. The main aim of shop unit redevelopment is to regenerate the 'retail offer' in the village, but it is considered that it could also provide environmental benefits by incorporating a 'village green'

and may provide some housing. The local community proposes to further assess the viability of a project for this area.

7.56 Development needs and potential sites: There is a current planning permission for the redevelopment of one of the village's public houses, the Royal Oak. This lies within the existing village boundary and would provide for 12 dwellings. Because of the nature of previous development in the village there are likely to be few other opportunities for infill or redevelopment within the village boundary.

7.57 There has been significant developer interest in Stonnall, indicated through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. Submissions have been made for consideration of 6 sites outside the village boundary, ranging from a single plot to sites of between 20 dwellings to 565 dwellings. All of the submissions lie within the Green Belt. The larger site would infill the area between Main Street and Church Road if fully developed and would be strategic in the context of Lichfield District. Such a scale of development is considered inappropriate both in terms of developing a sustainable strategy for growth and in the context of its potential impact on the village. However smaller development options of around 20 to 40 dwellings lying east of the village on Church Road, would be more appropriate in terms of scale, provided a need or aspiration for growth is identified. The sites are shown on the village Context Plan (see separate Appendix document) and are capable of being developed with limited impact, although improved pedestrian/cycle connections through to Main Street would be desirable.

7.58 Scale: The sustainability considerations of the Rural Settlements Sustainability Study (RSSS) suggest that Stonnall could be appropriate for some limited growth. At present there is no definitive level of identified requirement for

development in the village, although there are locally identified housing issues that the proposed Village Plan will seek to address. There is a range of potential sizes of development site identified through the SHLAA, including sites of 20, 40, 50+ and 60+ dwellings. The larger sites would be likely to have a significant impact both physically and in terms of assimilation into the community. It is considered that the two smaller sites, identified on the village Context Plan, would be more suitable sites in terms of their integration within the village both in physical and social terms. Taking account of the existing potential within the village boundary, the limited possibility of additional capacity within the boundary, and the potential impact of larger sites, it is considered that additional potential should be limited to the consideration of the two sites identified.

7.59 Recommendations for the Green Belt: At present the Evidence Base has not established development requirements that are specific to Stonnall, although the local community has identified housing and other redevelopment needs through the Neighbourhood Plan process. There is some identified housing capacity within the village, alongside significant developer interest in larger scale housing than that which is being considered by the local community. In terms of the implications for the Green Belt, it is difficult to identify 'exceptional circumstances' at present that would justify any change to the existing Green Belt boundary. If a local need or the local aspiration for development is established for the village, it is not clear whether there would be sufficient capacity within the village boundary. The sustainability assessment (RSSS) however suggests that Stonnall could be a village where some limited growth might be acceptable. The suggested option sites on Church Lane, from which a future local choice might be made if required, lie within the Green Belt. In the light of this

combination of factors consideration should be given to whether the Local Plan Strategy should identify Stonnall as one of the villages where a minor amendment to the existing Green Belt boundaries might be necessary to facilitate local/neighbourhood planning in the future.

Upper Longdon

7.60 Sustainability: Upper Longdon is situated on the edge of Cannock Chase in the western part of Lichfield District, with the town of Rugeley some two miles to the north. It is the smallest of the villages that are Inset into the Lichfield District Green Belt, with only 175 dwellings and a population of around 400 people. It also has the most limited facilities, with these being restricted to a public house, and it has no school or shop. An infrequent bus service operates for the village.

7.61 The Rural Settlement Sustainability Study assesses the village in the 'low' category for both the availability of services and for its accessibility by public transport to services and facilities outside the village. The lack of local services and poor access by public transport suggests that Upper Longdon has few sustainability factors and that there would be little merit in considering growth of the village.

7.62 Character and Constraints: Upper Longdon lies on a minor road that leads into Cannock Chase and has a calm and tranquil setting. Most of the village lies within the boundary of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the designation is reflective of the general character of the village. The area of AONB is shown on the village Context Plan (see separate Appendix document). Whilst the village is of no particular conservation interest, it nevertheless has an attractive character brought about through the

predominance of detached dwellings in large plots that allow substantial planting giving a green appearance to the village.

7.63 The form of the village is unusual and developed on a significant south-facing slope. This has led to housing being developed essentially on three parallel levels and on two parallel roads linked by the steeply sloping lanes of Huntsman's Hill, Grange Hill and Shaver's Lane, names that reflect its location within Cannock Chase forest. The village road network is very narrow except for Upper Way. The approaches to the village from the west, south and east are also along narrow lanes with poor alignment. Although there are no flooding issues or local Sites of Biological Interest, slope and access issues would be important to the consideration of any development potential.

7.64 Development needs and potential sites: There are very few opportunities for development within the existing village other than very limited potential for 1 or 2 dwellings arising within larger plots. There are two planning permissions for such development within the village, amounting to 4 dwellings. There has been some limited interest in development that has been submitted through the SHLAA process. The larger of these sites has potential for around 20 dwellings and the smaller for 8 dwellings or less. Both sites however, have slope and access issues.

7.65 Scale: The potential for harm to the character of a village set within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the poor level of facilities and the poor quality of access (both within and on the approaches to the village), support the view that Upper Longdon is not an appropriate location for growth. Any development should be very limited in scale and confined within the existing village boundary.

7.66 Recommendations for the Green Belt: It is considered that the limited facilities and poor accessibility of Upper Longdon lead to the view that it is inappropriate to consider further growth of the village. It is not considered necessary therefore to identify Upper Longdon as a location where there may need to be any minor amendment to the Green Belt boundary. Any local need established within this area is likely to be better met at the settlement of Longdon.

8 Other Villages and Hamlets within the Green Belt

8.1 There are a number of other small settlements within Lichfield District that are located within the Green Belt, including established villages, hamlets and other loose groups of dwellings. The more significant of these are Chorley, Farewell, Gentleshaw, Hints, Shenstone Wood End and Wall. All of these villages and remaining settlements are 'washed over' by a Green Belt designation, so that Green Belt policies apply to development proposals that are either within what is recognised as the village, or outside it. None of these settlements have any designated settlement boundary, except for Chorley, which is an anomaly considered below. None of these settlements have anything significant in terms of local facilities, although some have pubs or village halls and none were included within the Rural Settlement Sustainability Study. It is considered that these settlements are not appropriate for the consideration of any growth and that there is no need to create any new Green Belt Inset villages from among these settlements, since this would not sit well with the sustainable development strategy proposed by the Local Plan Strategy.

8.2 Green Belt policies will therefore continue to set the framework for the consideration of development within these settlements. The policies for Green Belt within the National Planning Policy Framework include the identification of exceptions to the normal rule that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate. These exceptions are based upon the former definitions included within the cancelled Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts, although former references to the extension, alteration or replacement of dwellings, now refer to buildings. New buildings that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt include: the

extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building; the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces; and, limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the local plan.

8.3 The main issue arising from the NPPF statement on Green Belt 'exceptions' is the need to consider whether the advice that infilling in villages is appropriate, leads to a need to define villages where it is considered to allow some infilling. The former advice in PPG2 was that 'washed over' villages where infilling would be allowed, should be listed in the Development Plan. There are several villages within the Lichfield Green Belt that are loosely structured settlements with extensive gaps between buildings. Gentleshaw is a prime example of this type of settlement. Others, such as Chorley, are more compact with few gaps. There might also be arguments whether some settlements should be considered to be villages.

8.4 The key consideration is preserving the openness of the Green Belt. The NPPF advises (paragraph 86) that where the openness of the character of a village makes an important contribution to the character of the Green Belt and it is therefore necessary to prevent development, then it should be 'washed over'. On the other hand if the character of a village needs to be protected for other reasons, the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.

8.5 Several of the washed over villages within Lichfield District's Green Belt are compact in character and have very little openness within them. In other words they contribute little to the openness of the Green Belt. The application of the advice in paragraph 86 would therefore lead to the

view that several villages currently 'washed over' by Green Belt, should in fact be excluded. Those most needing consideration for the creation of new Insets would be Chorley, Hints, Wall and Shenstone Wood End. Chorley already has a defined settlement boundary. Following the approach suggested by paragraph 86 may however lead to issues and dispute over the definition of boundaries that would need to be taken through the 'Allocations' part of the Local Plan.

8.6 The alternative approach previously referred to in PPG2, that of listing villages where infill would be considered in the Development Plan would be a simpler approach, which should be considered. This would avoid the creation of new Insets to an established Green Belt, but has the potential to require boundary definitions for any village listed in order to define where infilling could be permitted and avoid disputes in the development management process.

8.7 It is the approach of listing those villages where infilling would be allowed which is recommended. It is recommended that the settlements identified should be Chorley, Hints, Wall and Shenstone Wood End, on the basis that these settlements contribute little to the openness of the Green Belt. Consideration of the need to define appropriate 'infill' boundaries would be a matter for the 'Allocations' stage of the Local Plan.

Summary of Conclusions in relation to Green Belt settlements

8.8 The analysis of settlements situated within the Lichfield District Green Belt has drawn a number of conclusions relating to the two principal urban areas through the main rural settlements, smaller villages and hamlets. The main recommendations on settlements are summarised below.

8.9 It is appropriate to note however that this Green Belt review has been prepared at a time when significant changes are being made to the planning system within England. This is intended to simplify the system and includes a short National Planning Policy Framework policy statement from the Government that replaces many former guidance notes and policy statements. The changes also provide for empowering local communities through the Localism Act, to play a greater role in determining the future of their areas, for example through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. It remains to be seen how local communities within Lichfield District will wish to exercise the potential given to them through the new planning structure, but it is a relevant consideration for the Green Belt Review that the Local Plan Strategy needs to take this into account in framing its policies to allow more decisions about the future of their areas to be taken by individual communities within parts of the District.

8.10 The recommendations contained in this Review do not suggest any strategic changes to the Green Belt, with the exception of the issue of the permanence of the Green Belt boundary around Lichfield. They do however suggest that the Local Plan Strategy should identify those settlements where minor changes to Green Belt boundaries may be appropriate, in particular to meet local housing needs or aspirations and to facilitate local and neighbourhood planning in the future.

8.11 The indicators of future housing need for Lichfield District have not been defined at the level of individual settlements, but for rural areas they are at a housing market sub-area level. All of the indicators suggest that there is a rural housing need, for various types of housing and tenures. The spatial strategy for the District to be included within the Local Plan Strategy seeks to accommodate both housing and other development needs in a sustainable way

and has identified how urban areas and 'key' rural settlements may play a role in this. This does not mean however that smaller communities do not have a role in maintaining the vibrancy of their communities, perhaps through more minor development and seeking to maintain and improve their local facilities.

8.12 The assessment of settlements contained within the Green Belt Review has drawn upon considerations of individual settlements in terms of their potential capacity to accommodate growth or change, the size and location of potential sites and community views, where available. For rural settlements the analysis has sought to identify the potential effect of these considerations upon the level of growth that might be appropriate for individual some villages, so that the potential need for minor changes to the Green Belt can be assessed. A generalised summary of where such changes might be appropriate, to be defined in detail later, is included in the Table below:

Settlement	Potential need for minor Green Belt amendment	Summary reasons
'Key' Settlements		
Armitage with Handsacre	Yes	Sustainable settlement with limited and uncertain capacity
Fazeley	No	Has capacity. Coalescence issues important
Little Aston	No	Not a 'key' settlement in strategy, urban sprawl a vital issue
Shenstone	No	Sustainable settlement with

Settlement	Potential need for minor Green Belt amendment	Summary reasons
		capacity from non-green belt options
Whittington	Yes	Sustainable settlement with very limited and uncertain capacity and potential for decline
Small 'Inset' Villages		
Drayton Bassett	Yes	To provide opportunity to meet local needs in a community with facilities and very little capacity
Hammerwich	Yes	To provide opportunity to meet local needs in a community with facilities and very little capacity
Hopwas	Yes	To provide opportunity to meet local needs in a community with facilities but limited capacity options
Longdon	Yes	To provide opportunity to meet local needs in a community with facilities but limited capacity options
Stonnall	Yes	To provide opportunity to meet local needs in a community with facilities but

Settlement	Potential need for minor Green Belt amendment	Summary reasons
		limited capacity options
Upper Longdon	No	An inappropriate location for limited growth
'Washed over' Villages	No	Inappropriate locations for growth and impact on openess. Infill in villages allowed for in national green belt policy

Table 8.1

8.13 The site analysis for each village contains guidance on what might be considered to be appropriate sites for development. These have been considered against the general background of the spatial development strategy, the idea of 'organic' growth of villages as opposed to the development of larger estates, village constraints and the potential impact of sites or directions of growth on the character of villages and their landscape. For the smaller Green Belt 'Inset villages, taking account of this analysis, the recommendations for each village tend to suggest that options might be preferable that range from less than 10 dwellings to around 20/40 dwellings in the case of Stonnall, which is the largest of this group of villages.

8.14 Comparing the suggested village options with the existing sizes of the villages, gives a range of potential acceptable levels of growth of between 2% and 7.5%

Employment & Other Land Uses Outside Settlements

9 Developed Sites in the Green Belt

Background:

9.1 The main land use across the Green Belt area is agriculture and Lichfield District has significant areas of good quality agricultural land, allowing a wide variety of agricultural uses. There are however several more or less freestanding non-residential developed sites in the Green Belt, of varying sizes and functions, but all having a level of built development that potentially makes an impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. For the control of development within these sites, the adopted Local Plan either applies the general Green Belt policies, E.4 and E.5, to restrict new development, or a specific policy, Emp.5 for certain major developed sites.

9.2 Land use policy for the Green Belt has recently been re-stated within the National Planning Policy Framework and it is an appropriate time to consider policy for the employment sites in this revised context, including whether any special policy designations are necessary or appropriate.

9.3 The principal developed sites within the Green Belt are a number of sites that provide employment at a significant scale, although for the most part that is not their main function. The adopted Local Plan defines a number of sites for which a specific Local Plan policy applies, of 'Major Developed Sites' (Policy Emp. 5). The Adopted Local Plan 'MDS' sites are:

- Drayton Manor Theme Park
- Drayton Manor Business Park (formerly Foseco)
- St. Matthews Hospital, Burntwood

- Sir Robert Peel Hospital, Mile Oak
- Whittington Barracks

9.4 The Local Plan defines boundaries for these sites and applies a policy that provides for infilling and redevelopment subject to specific criteria that restricts impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, including footprint, and height. The Local Plan policy was a re-statement of national policy set out within the former Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts, which has now been cancelled, to be superseded by policy within the NPPF. Since the adoption of the Local Plan the St. Matthews Hospital site has been redeveloped for housing.

9.5 Other developed sites of some significance within the Green Belt operating within normal Green Belt policies, are: Little Aston Hospital, Swinfen Prison, three private schools, the 'Heart of the Country' craft centre, Buzzards Valley vineyard, the Forest of Mercia Centre and workshops at Chasewater, and garden centres, for example at Shenstone. Whilst these all have a level of built development of significance in the immediate locality, none of them has employment as their main function. The more recently developed 'Lichfield South' complex, based upon a former brick and pipe works, whilst being a mixed development including major recreation and leisure facilities, has a significant area where it functions as an employment site, with significant office floorspace. The Lichfield South site is considered in more detail in paragraphs 9.10 to 9.21 below.

9.6 Taken together, the developed sites contribute significantly to the economy of Lichfield District through the provision of employment, but also contribute to health, recreation, education and to a more limited extent, retail, needs. It is important therefore that they are encouraged to thrive,

functioning successfully and effectively within the overall context of maintaining the openness of the Green Belt.

The National Planning Policy Framework

9.7 The NPPF does not include any separate policies for 'Major Developed Sites'. It does, however, list development types (paragraph 89) that are identified as exceptions to the normal Green Belt 'rule' that the construction of new buildings is 'inappropriate'. These include: the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building, and; the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces. These two exceptions may be relevant to the functioning of the range of developed sites within the District identified above. There is a specific exception that is key to the future functioning of the existing sites. This is defined as: limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

9.8 This 'framework' of permitting extension, alteration, replacement, limited infilling and redevelopment of previously developed sites, subject to meeting the criteria identified, has some differences with previous policy and in some instances is less specific. For example the former major developed sites policy included specific limitations on height of buildings. It is however considered to provide a policy basis within which the existing sites can develop and modernise their existing operations without the need to include

specific site based policy within the Local Plan. It could provide for example, a basis for considering a new 'ride' at Drayton Manor Theme Park, or an extension or replacement building for Sir Robert Peel Hospital. It is also not clear whether any site-based policy (such as the former MDS policy) would be consistent with the NPPF and the potential proliferation of policy would certainly be contrary to its approach.

9.9 It is considered therefore that the most appropriate approach for the Local Plan is not to define any site boundaries for developed sites in the Green Belt, but to allow the functioning of existing sites through the operation of the framework provided by the NPPF. What is apparent, however is that there will be a continued and perhaps greater need for the interpretation of these policies for specific proposals – particularly in relation to the impact on the openness of the Green Belt, for example where siting and scale of new buildings are concerned. It is also notable that the references to previously developed sites give no advice in relation to the uses of land in relation to complete redevelopment. The NPPF does however provide elsewhere a context for redevelopment in terms of sustainable development, core planning principles and supporting a prosperous rural economy.

Lichfield South

9.10 Lichfield South is the marketing name for the site at the junction of the A5 Trunk Road with the A5127 Birmingham Road. It lies some 3 miles south of Lichfield city centre and now includes an indoor leisure centre with outdoor tennis courts, an hotel, fast food outlets and some 5,000 sq. metres of office floorspace. It is a relatively recent development and the subject of a specific policy in the adopted Local Plan – policy SA. 5 (Shenstone Brick and Pipe Works). This was a derelict brickworks site, part of which

had been used as a refuse tip and the focus of the local plan policy was on the provision of leisure and tourist facilities.

9.11 Lichfield South is considered separately here since the nature of the site has changed in recent years to include a specific employment function, unlike the other larger developed sites within the Lichfield Green Belt, and there is developer pressure to expand that aspect of its function through the provision of additional office floorspace by further development of the site. There is available derelict land on the site amounting to some 4.4 hectares, on which there is an existing planning permission for a golf driving range.

9.12 While the NPPF provides policies to consider the future functioning of existing developed sites in the Green Belt, this does not provide for the expansion of existing sites. The potential land for the expansion of Lichfield South, whilst derelict brownfield land, was the site of a tip and not former buildings and its development would clearly have an impact in terms of the openness of the Green Belt in this area.

9.13 In the light of the developer pressure for expansion of this area which may lead to either a planning application and representations on the Local Plan preparation, the District Council will in any event need to consider whether, in terms of national Green Belt policy, either 'very special circumstances' exist that outweigh the general rule that such 'inappropriate development' should not be permitted, or whether the 'exceptional circumstances' exist that justify an amendment to the Green Belt boundary in this location. The latter would mean creating an 'Inset' in the Green Belt at this location through the Local Plan.

9.14 Since this is a Green Belt site, the key questions in relation to Lichfield South are whether there is a need for development that can only be met in this location. The site

promoters argue that Lichfield South is the only location within Lichfield District that can provide large footplate, 'Grade A' office floorspace in a location to attract inward investment and the site is therefore essential to the future employment 'portfolio' for the District. The arguments against this relate both to the harm to the Green Belt principles and to the sustainability of the location. In other words the site is not in a city centre, edge of centre or even edge of urban location, so that its accessibility and relationship with other uses and facilities is much poorer than would normally be expected of an office location.

9.15 The NPPF provides, within its Core Principles, that "every effort should be made objectively to identify then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area". (paragraph 17) and to "set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities". Its specific advice on building a strong and competitive economy provides that in drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should "set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period". There is clearly therefore a role for the Local Plan to identify the employment needs for Lichfield District and then provide a strategy for meeting those needs.

9.16 The District Council has recently updated its evidence on employment needs within the District through the [Employment Land Review 2012](#), prepared by consultants GVA. Whilst in overall terms there is an oversupply of employment land within Lichfield District, the GVA Report identifies a specific issue of an under-supply of land for office accommodation. For a range of scenarios tested, there was a deficit in the committed supply of office accommodation compared to the forecast demand. In relation

to the preferred scenarios considered, of housing provision of 8,000 dwellings, the undersupply of land for office accommodation amounted to 3.77 hectares. The Report recommends that the Local Plan should seek to allocate land to meet this level of deficit for offices.

9.17 The GVA Report considers the growth of the centres of Lichfield and Burntwood and identifies particularly that the eight sites identified within Lichfield city centre would only accommodate around 11,000 sq. metres of office floorspace. Although the GVA Report does not prepare its own assessment of city and town centre future office floorspace requirements, it refers to the estimates prepared for the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, which identified a requirement 30,000 sq. metres for Lichfield city centre for to period up to 2026. The GVA Report notes that unless accommodation of around 30,000 sq. metres in Lichfield and 5,000 sq. metres in Burntwood is met, there will be additional requirements for accommodation outside the centres. Taking account of the conclusions in the GVA Report on the need for and potential supply of office accommodation within Lichfield, there is a clear issue to be addressed within the Local Plan of providing for the identified need for office accommodation within Lichfield city centre.

9.18 The GVA Report specifically refers to the Lichfield South site and estimates its floorspace capacity at around 15,000 sq. metres, noting that it is one of the few readily available office sites within the District. The Report does not specifically identify any other potential locations in its conclusions and recommends that the Lichfield South land be allocated for office development to ensure its development in the short to medium term.

9.19 The GVA Report does not, however, consider the issue of the Green Belt location of the site, nor the requirement for 'exceptional circumstances' in relation to its recommendation to allocate the site. The NPPF directs planning authorities to allocate a range of sites to meet the scale and type of identified town centre requirements and also to undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites. It retains a sequential test for main town centre uses, firstly locations within centres and then edge of centre, before considering out of centre locations.

9.20 It is considered that whilst the Local Plan Strategy should identify the level of office accommodation to be sought within Lichfield and Burntwood town centres to fully meet identified need, there needs to be a particular exercise that establishes whether there are options that fall within the sequential test process, including the expansion of Lichfield town centre, to meet the forecasts of office floorspace needed. There is also a site quality issue to be considered within this process, since it is recognised that sites need to be able to provide accommodation that is attractive to the market.

9.21 This exercise should form part of the Local Plan Allocations process where options could be considered. If such an exercise shows that there are insufficient options to meet the need in terms of quantity or quality, then it may be considered that the 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify the provision of new office floorspace in the freestanding Green Belt location at Lichfield South in the absence of other sequentially preferable and available locations.

The Permanence of Green Belt Boundaries

10 Looking Beyond the Plan Period

10.1 The National Planning Policy Framework notes that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. It indicates, at paragraph 83, that when preparing or review their Local Plans, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries “having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.” To assist in the consideration of long term permanence of Green Belts the NPPF guidance (paragraph 85) further says that local planning authorities should satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period. They should also not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open and where necessary identify areas of ‘safeguarded land’ between the urban area and the Green Belt in order to meet longer-term development needs “stretching well beyond the plan period.” For the purposes of the Green Belt Review it has been taken that consideration of the potential needs of the next Local Plan period after the current Local Plan period of 2028, would meet the needs of the term ‘well beyond’ the plan period.

10.2 There are a number of questions to address in relation to the issue of what might be required to ensure that the Green Belt boundary for Lichfield District endures in the longer term. These are:

- will there be a continuing need for development beyond 2028?
- what might be the scale of any need, if need is likely?

- could the need be met within existing settlements or beyond the Green Belt?
- if there is a need to provide for longer term needs within existing Green Belt, what are the most appropriate locations to accommodate it?

10.3 Looking ahead at development needs beyond 2028 is a difficult exercise and it needs to be recognised that present projections or forecasts for that far ahead will be superseded many times over before then. Nevertheless any judgements now must be based upon the best information available. Two published national sources of projections are available, the latest being the Office for National Statistics Sub-National Population Projections 2012, which give population projections at Local Authority and regional levels up to [2035](#). The CLG publishes Sub-National Household Projections; the latest of these was published in 2010, providing household projections to 2033. The household projections have been usefully summarised in a Staffordshire County Council [Briefing Paper](#). Both of these sets of projections are based upon trends and therefore reflect recent population and household changes.

10.4 As part of the Local Plan Evidence Base Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners has prepared a Southern Staffordshire Districts [Housing Needs Study, 2012](#). This includes consideration of a range of 12 different scenarios for the future, mainly based upon differing demographic, economic and housing modelling scenarios. This includes population and household forecasts up to 2031, based upon each scenario. This work therefore represents consideration of varying future policy, as opposed to simply projecting trends, although its consideration is only a short way into the next plan period.

10.5 Both the population and household projections show a continuing growth within Lichfield District beyond 2028. The population projections give a general indication of an expectation of significant growth nationally, regionally and locally during the period from 2010 to 2035, including the period between 2028 and 2033. For 2028 to 2035 population increase for Lichfield District is projected to be some 4,000 people. The household projections show growth of some 2,000 households for the period 2028 to 2033.

10.6 In the NLP Report nearly all of the scenarios considered result in continuing population, household and labour force growth for 2028 to 2031, although for some scenarios there is a reduction in the labour force. For all scenarios except for 'zero net migration' (see NLP Report), the number of households continues to rise, partly as a consequence of the continuing trend for smaller household sizes. For some scenarios there is a significant labour force increase, which would require policy consideration of the extent to which this would need to be addressed within Lichfield District.

10.7 The limited evidence, considered above, suggests that it is most likely that there will be a continuing need for development within Lichfield District for the next Plan period, beyond 2028. This is most likely to be for housing development, but could potentially also be for employment. The evidence also suggests however that it is most difficult to assess now, the scale of need that might arise over a full plan period. It depends upon so many variables and future strategies that might be developed to address any growth issues. One policy element that is missing is the absence of any national or regional development strategies, which if developed in the future, could impact upon need within the District.

10.8 One approach that could be taken to considering the longer-term impact of potential growth upon the current Green Belt boundaries is to consider if there are options available within the District to cater for an uncertain level of development needs beyond 2028, assuming that the development proposed within the emerging Local Plan Strategy is implemented. There would in effect remain similar options, in principle, as those considered through the preparation of the Local Plan Strategy. These would be, the extent to which there is urban capacity derived from redevelopment, principally within Lichfield and Burntwood, the potential to develop in settlements lying beyond the outer edge of the Green Belt, the expansion of the two main sustainable urban areas of Lichfield and Burntwood, and the role of villages.

10.9 Lichfield and Burntwood are recognised as the two most sustainable separate settlements within the District context. As significant urban areas there may continue to be redevelopment opportunities within them in the longer term, for example from employment locations or as part of town centre development or redevelopment. Taking account of past changes there is no reason to conclude that there will be no opportunities for 'urban capacity' within the next plan period.

10.10 The outward expansion of Burntwood is constrained by a number of factors that will remain in the longer term. These include physical and environmental constraints, such as the presence of Chasewater and its the SSSI's, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the north and flood risk for some areas. In addition there are strong coalescence issues that account for the current boundaries of the Green Belt and are fundamental to its purpose in this area. This relates not only to the outward spread of the West Midlands conurbation, but also the proximity of villages such as Hammerwich. It is considered that all of the

constraints at Burntwood are long-term and it would not be possible to identify 'land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open'. Therefore in terms of the options for growth beyond the current plan period, the identification of 'safeguarded' land on the edge of Burntwood is not considered a reasonable one.

10.11 For Lichfield, the situation is slightly different, in that the city is not entirely surrounded by Green Belt. Unlike Burntwood it is located at the outer edge of the West Midlands Green Belt. This means that there are areas that abut the north-east of the city, beyond the West Coast railway line, that lie beyond the Green Belt. Options for Lichfield growth of housing and employment not affecting Green Belt, could therefore be urban capacity and expansion north-east. However Lichfield is also different to Burntwood in being the main District centre, the focus for town centre and cultural facilities, transport connections and administration. It is regarded as the most sustainable location, and has long been the focus of market interest. This gives rise to the question of whether the limited options for long-term growth indicated above would unduly constrain the options for the sustainable development of the District, and of the city, in the longer term. To an extent that depends upon the scale of growth needed, which is uncertain, however, it is considered that there is some weight to the view that future options for Lichfield should not be limited to one direction for future growth. This would in effect pre-judge issues of sustainability now that should be considered at a later date.

10.12 It is therefore considered that the Local Plan should consider the safeguarding of land between the Lichfield urban area and the Green Belt, which should be protected during the Plan period, but whose future should be considered in a review of the Local Plan. The options for the location of

safeguarded land should be considered during the 'Allocations' phase of the Local Plan preparation.

10.13 The guidance within the NPPF on considering 'safeguarded land' continues past Planning Policy Guidance advice in referring to land 'between the urban area and the Green Belt'. It is considered that the issue does not require to be considered in relation to villages. Further it is considered that 'safeguarded land' is not appropriate within Lichfield District at the inner edge of the Green Belt, where it abuts the West Midlands conurbation, since this would undermine the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy in the West Midlands to prevent urban sprawl, by opening up to possibility of the outward expansion of the conurbation.

10.14 There is one other longer term Green Belt situation that does require consideration however, which is whether there are any implications on the Lichfield District Green Belt of longer term growth of neighbouring freestanding towns, in particular of Tamworth and Rugeley for which the Lichfield District Local Plan makes provision within this Plan period without recourse to Green Belt land. Considering Tamworth, which has a limiting local authority area, there remain some options within the Borough following the implementation of its proposed Local Plan, although some may include its Green Belt land. In addition there are potential development options beyond the Green Belt within both Lichfield District and North Warwickshire areas that could be considered. Consideration of Green Belt areas lying within Lichfield District abutting the Tamworth boundary would give rise to fundamental issues of coalescence, in this case with Fazeley/Mile Oak and Hopwas. It is considered therefore that because of the combination of the potential options for Tamworth and the implications for

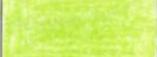
coalescence, identifying 'safeguarded land' within Lichfield District to meet Tamworth's needs is neither necessary nor desirable.

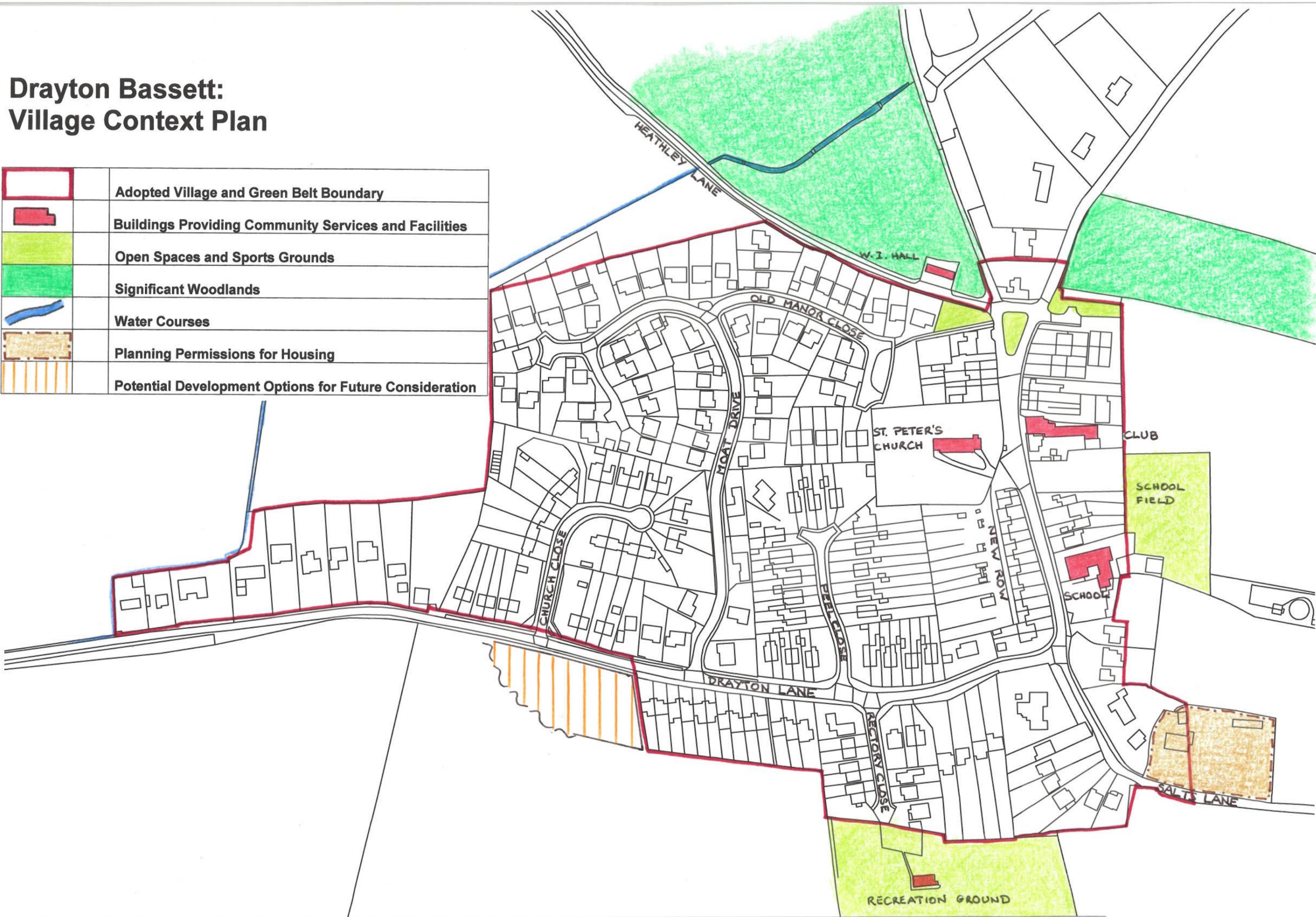
10.15 In relation to Rugeley, which is a significantly smaller town than Tamworth, it also lies at the outer edge of the Green Belt. Its location at the edge of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Area for Conservation may be limiting factors in relation to future growth, but it is one of two main settlements within Cannock Chase District. There are potential non-green belt options for future growth, together with Green Belt options that lie within the Cannock Chase Borough area. Options for 'safeguarded land' within Lichfield District to meet any longer term need arising from Rugeley would potentially give rise to coalescence issues with Armitage with Handsacre. Taking account of these factors it is therefore again considered both unnecessary and undesirable to identify any 'safeguarded land.'

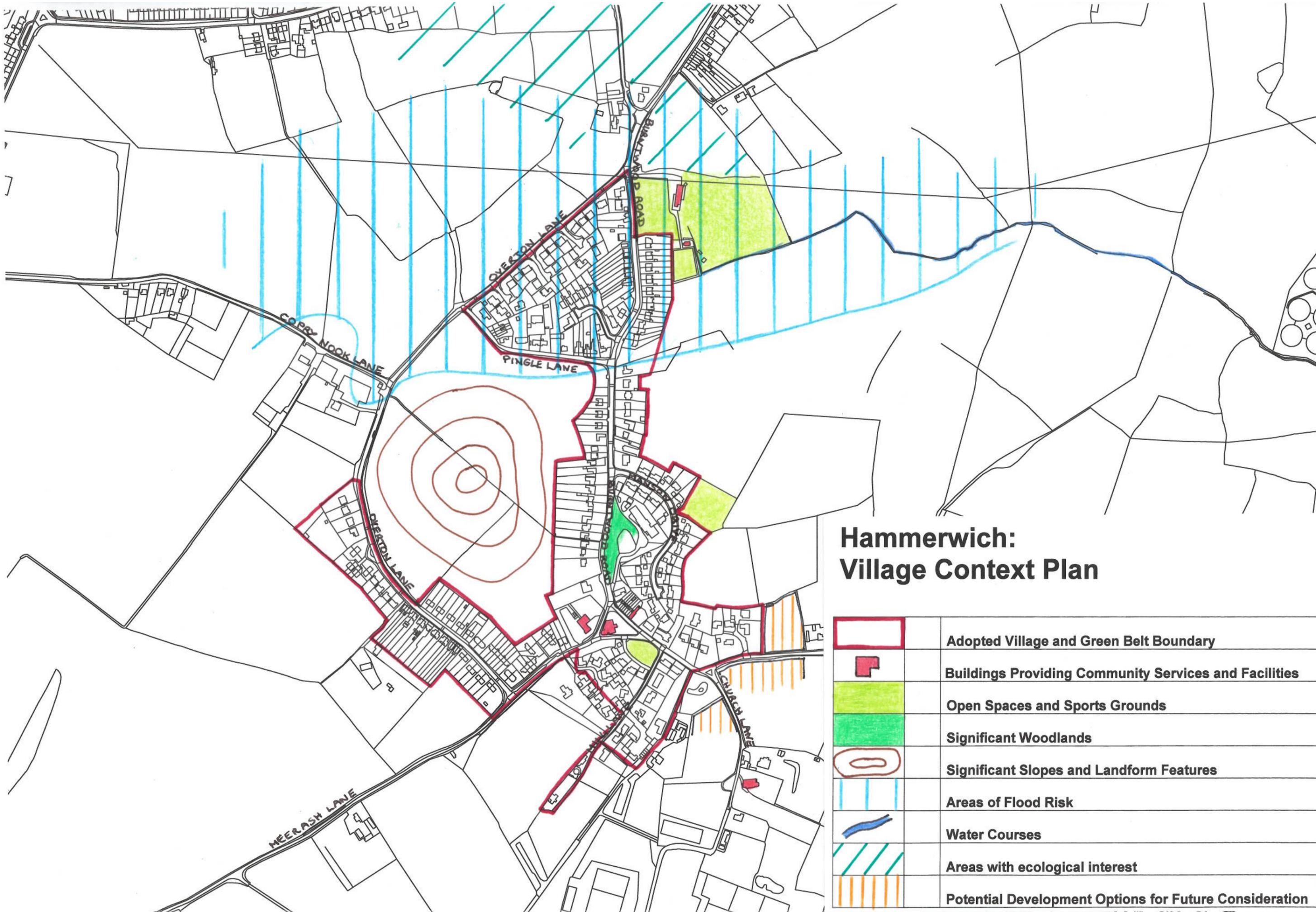
10.16 It is concluded therefore that for Lichfield District, the only situation where the amendment to existing Green Belt boundaries needs to be considered through the identification of 'safeguarded land' is in the case of Lichfield city, where potential options for such amendment to the Green Belt should be considered through the process of Land Allocations as part of the Local Plan.

Appendices

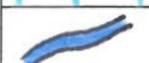
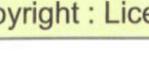
Drayton Bassett: Village Context Plan

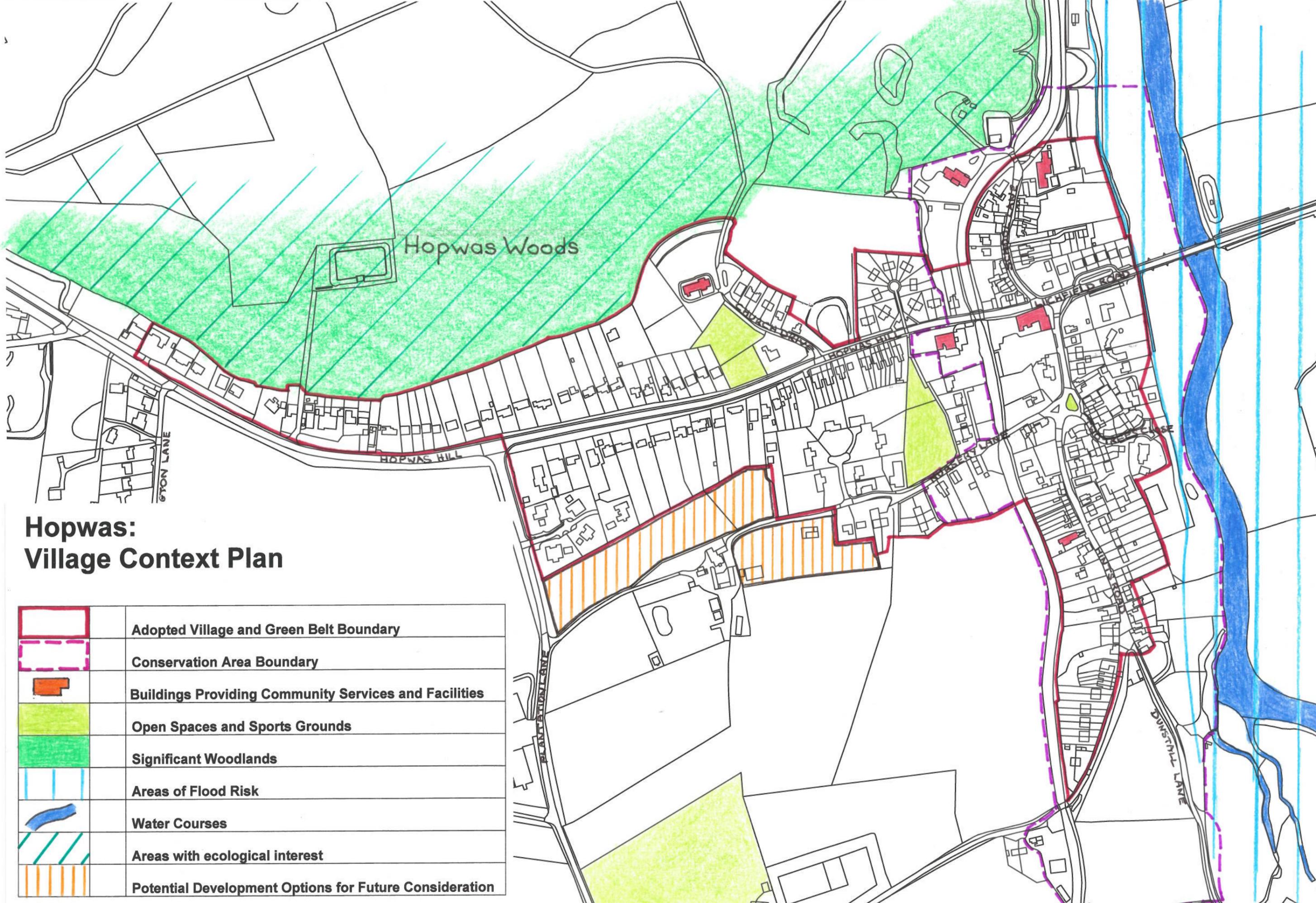
	Adopted Village and Green Belt Boundary
	Buildings Providing Community Services and Facilities
	Open Spaces and Sports Grounds
	Significant Woodlands
	Water Courses
	Planning Permissions for Housing
	Potential Development Options for Future Consideration



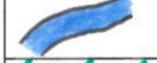


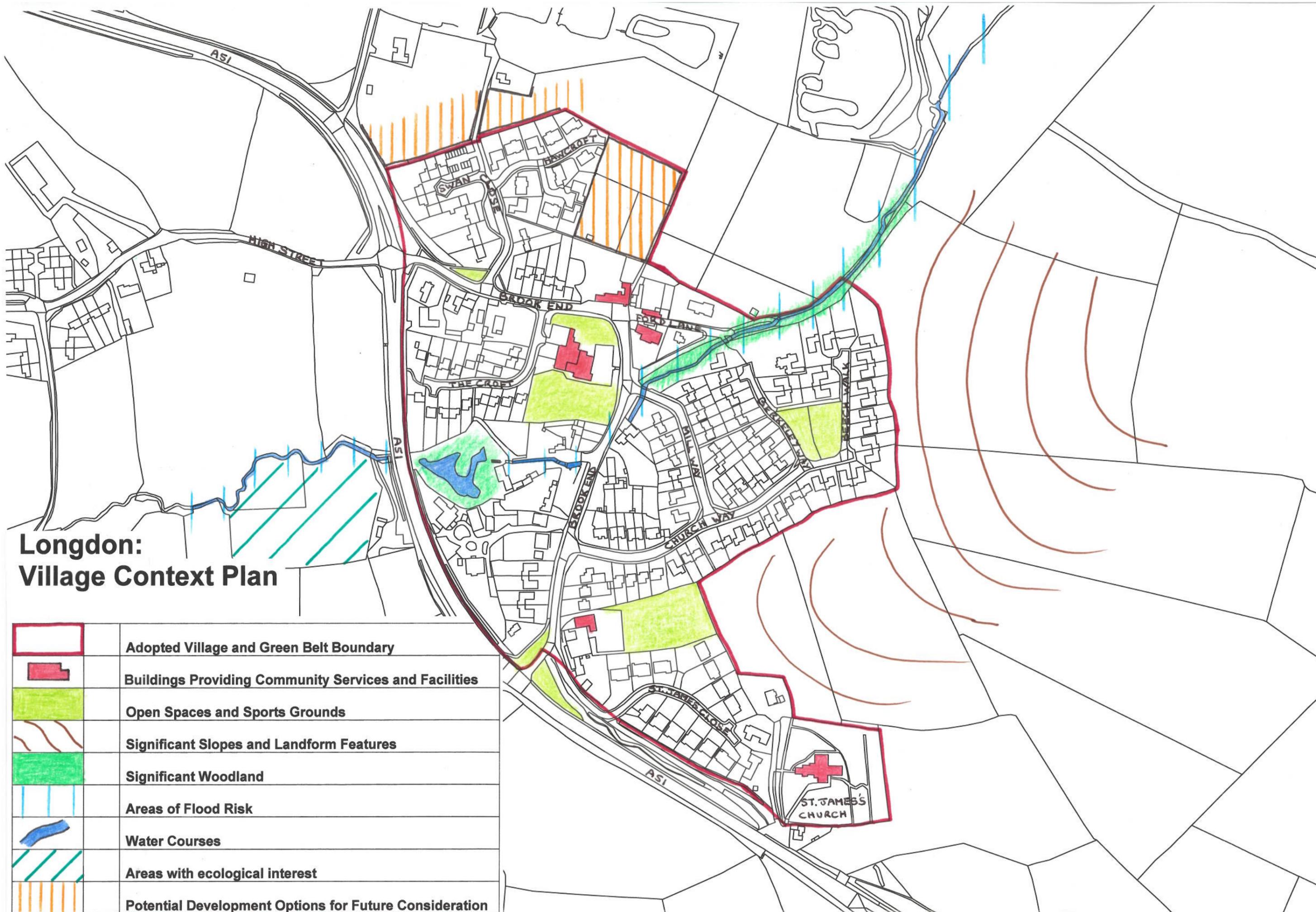
Hammerwich: Village Context Plan

	Adopted Village and Green Belt Boundary
	Buildings Providing Community Services and Facilities
	Open Spaces and Sports Grounds
	Significant Woodlands
	Significant Slopes and Landform Features
	Areas of Flood Risk
	Water Courses
	Areas with ecological interest
	Potential Development Options for Future Consideration



Hopwas: Village Context Plan

	Adopted Village and Green Belt Boundary
	Conservation Area Boundary
	Buildings Providing Community Services and Facilities
	Open Spaces and Sports Grounds
	Significant Woodlands
	Areas of Flood Risk
	Water Courses
	Areas with ecological interest
	Potential Development Options for Future Consideration

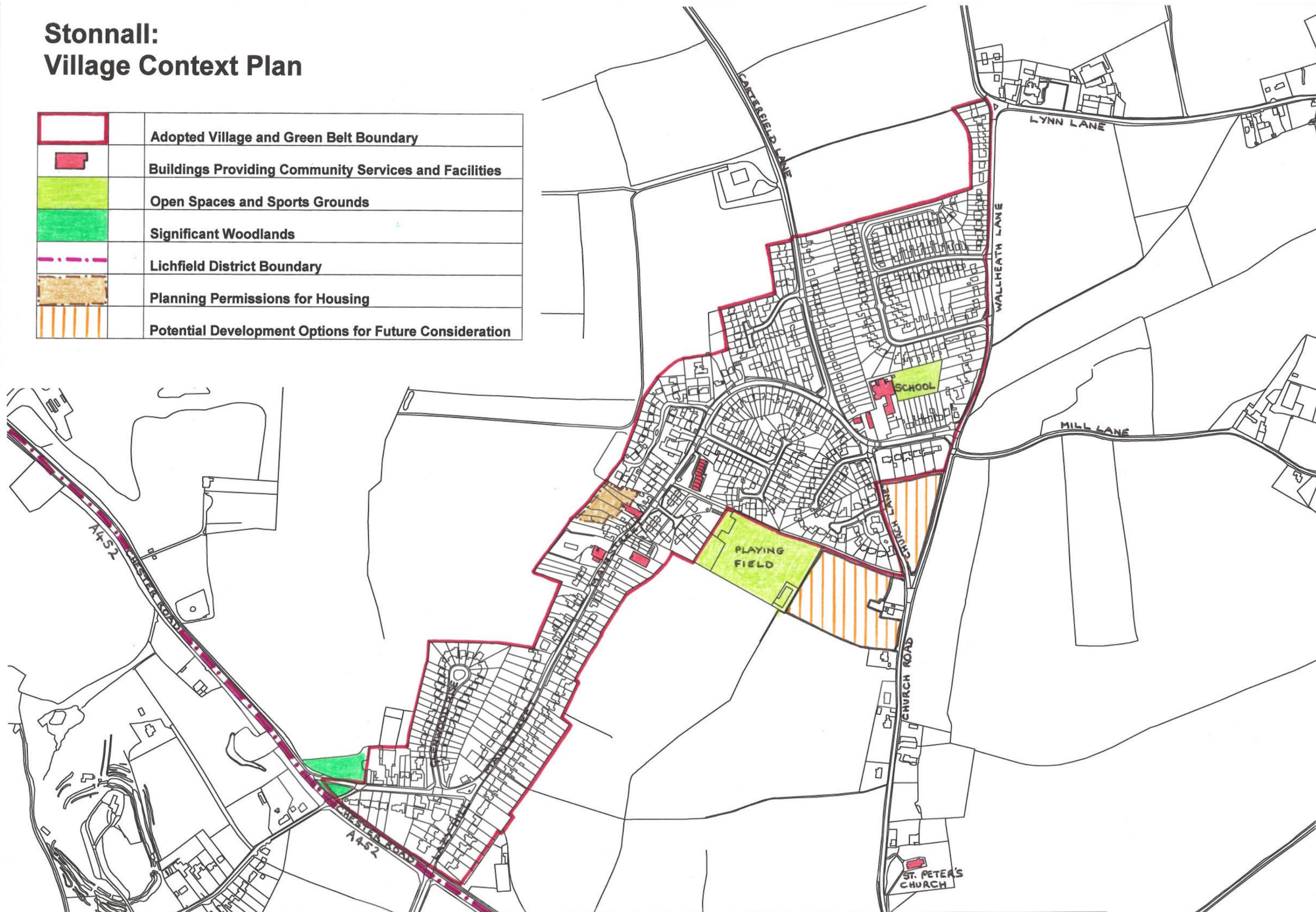


Longdon: Village Context Plan

	Adopted Village and Green Belt Boundary
	Buildings Providing Community Services and Facilities
	Open Spaces and Sports Grounds
	Significant Slopes and Landform Features
	Significant Woodland
	Areas of Flood Risk
	Water Courses
	Areas with ecological interest
	Potential Development Options for Future Consideration

Stonnall: Village Context Plan

	Adopted Village and Green Belt Boundary
	Buildings Providing Community Services and Facilities
	Open Spaces and Sports Grounds
	Significant Woodlands
	Lichfield District Boundary
	Planning Permissions for Housing
	Potential Development Options for Future Consideration



Upper Longdon: Village Context Plan

	Adopted Village and Green Belt Boundary
	Buildings Providing Community Services and Facilities
	Significant Woodlands
	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Boundary
	Water Courses
	Planning Permissions for Housing

