

South Staffordshire Local Plan Review Publication Plan (Regulation 19) Consultation

Dunston Garden Village

Representations on behalf of Rigby Estates LLP

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Pegasus Group are promoting the land holdings of Rigby Estates LLP at Dunston, South Staffordshire. These representations, alongside previous representations by FWP and a supporting Masterplan, have demonstrated that the land at Dunston is an available, suitable and developable site which forms a logical location for a new settlement given its large single ownership, location outside the Green Belt, connections with the national road and rail networks and relative lack of other environmental constraints.
- 1.2. These representations are made in light of current national policy and guidance, based on the 2021 NPPF (and associated PPG guidance), with only limited weight given to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill (as amended) and associated Written Ministerial Statement dated 5th December 2022, as these suggested amendments have not yet been formalised or consulted on; whilst this Publication Plan was signed off for consultation and subsequent submission to the SoS at a Full Council meeting on 8th November 2022.
- 1.3. Dunston is the only new settlement option within South Staffordshire, which is not located within the Green Belt, and was identified within the GBHMA Strategic Growth Study as a location for the development of a new settlement. As far as we are aware it is the only new settlement option where a Masterplan and technical work has been progressed, as evidence in the attached Promotional Document (**Appendix 1**), earlier Vision Document (**Appendix 2**), and Rail Feasibility Evidence that confirms that the site could accommodate a new station.
- 1.4. Furthermore, Rigby Estates has now agreed terms with one of the UK's foremost PLC developers. This development partner has an unparalleled track record in delivering in the types of master development, residential development and commercial development work streams that will be necessary in successfully bringing forward a site of this scale in a fully comprehensive manner. Once appointed, the financial covenant strength and market leading capabilities of this development partner will provide much needed assurance that a new Garden Village at Dunston will be delivered. We will be in a position to name this partner by the time of the public examination – at which point the partner will take over stewardship of all planning promotion activities for the site.
- 1.5. The latest proposals suggest that the site is capable of accommodating between 3,000 and 6,000 homes, dependent on densities and whether adjacent land is allocated; along with 7.8 hectares of employment floorspace, 4 hectares of retail, leisure and community uses, a new school and a new railway station; within an attractive, walkable setting which generates real health and environmental benefits.
- 1.6. In respect of housing need, whilst not unsound, the baseline housing requirement should be increased, above and beyond the standard methodology figure, given that several of the circumstances that support elevated growth, as set out in the NPPG, are present in South Staffordshire, including wider economic growth strategies, committed infrastructure improvement projects, and significant unmet need in the wider area.
- 1.7. Furthermore, whilst the additional dwellings proposed to meet unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area are welcomed, the 4,000 figure itself is lacking in justification and does not go far enough given the acute and chronic level of unmet need combined with the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities.



- 1.8. Finally, we reiterate that the proposed development at this site fully aligns with paragraph 73 of the NPPF and the latest government guidance on Garden Communities in that it:
- Is a purpose built new settlement;
 - Provides a community with a clear identity and attractive environment;
 - Provides a mix of homes, including affordable, and the potential for self-build; and
 - Has the opportunity to be planned over a long period by the local authority and Rigby Estates in genuine collaboration with the local community.
- 1.9. In addition to housing it will also provide:
- Job opportunities within a large employment area and local centre;
 - Attractive green space and public realm areas throughout the site;
 - Transport infrastructure, including roads, buses and cycle routes, and a potential train station;
 - Community infrastructure, a school, with potential for other community, healthcare and energy uses; and
 - A plan for long-term stewardship of community assets, and renewable energy generation, to be developed in consultation with the Council.
- 1.10. Rigby Estates LLP (and our selected development partner) is committed to working collaboratively with the Council and Key Stakeholders to help the Borough deliver its housing and employment needs in a sensitive and sustainable manner, both within the existing Local Plan Review and any future review or additional DPD/SPD process required to deliver a new settlement.
- 1.11. We therefore respectfully request that the Council formally identify the Dunston site within the current plan for delivery beyond the plan period as required, with supporting investment from the landowner and their selected delivery partner, in line with paragraph 22 of the NPPF.
- 1.12. Whilst we support the plan as a whole and do not contest its overall soundness, Rigby Estates LLP wish to make specific comments on relevant policies through these representations and the upcoming process.
- 1.13. Set out below is a summary of the relevant planning policies we comment on in terms of their legal compliance, soundness, and duty to cooperate implications; and whether we wish to participate in the associated hearing sessions. This replicates the Council's own representation form and is intended to assist the Council and Inspector in succinctly identifying where we support or challenge the plan:

Figure 1.1 – Local Plan Policy Comments/ Hearing Attendance Summary

Local Plan Policy/ Paragraph	Nature of comment (legal compliance, soundness, duty to cooperate)	Suggested Modification	Intention to participate in relevant hearing session / reason
DS4: Development Needs	Policy is not positively prepared, justified and consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	That overall housing requirements and buffers within the policy are reconsidered to ensure it is positively prepared, as per comments in section 5.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss latest evidence on housing need at time of EIP
DS6: Spatial Strategy to 2039	Policy is not fully justified or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	That Dunston Garden Village should be identified now as the preferred location for a new settlement, as per comments in sections 3, 4 and 6.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss strategy in light of latest supply and delivery evidence at time of EIP.
HC1: Housing Mix	Policy is not justified or effective as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Increased flexibility and removal of 70% threshold for 3 bedrooms or less as per comments in paras 7.2–7.8.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EIP.
HC2: Housing Density	Policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Increased flexibility and removal of single density target as per comments in paras 7.9 – 7.12.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EIP
HC3: Affordable Housing	Policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested	Increased flexibility on % requirement and tenure type, and more detail on any related SPD requirements, as per comments in paras 7.13 – 7.18.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EIP.
HC4: Homes for Older People and Others with Special Housing Requirements	Policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and requires further evidence, otherwise it should be amended as suggested.	Removal of 100% M4(2) requirement as per comments in paras 7.19 – 7.23.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EIP.
HC8: Self-build and Custom Housebuilding	Policy is not justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.	Increased flexibility and removal of blanket self-build requirement on all large sites as per comments in paras 7.24 – 7.28	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EIP.
HC10: Design Requirements	Policy is not effective or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Additional detail added to criteria a and c, and criteria l can be removed, as per comments in paras 7.29–7.30.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest Design Guidance at time of EIP.
HC11: Protecting Amenity	Support policy.		No.



HC12: Space about Dwellings and Internal Space	Policy is neither justified nor consistent with national policy, and should be amended as suggested unless further evidence is provided.	Increased flexibility and removal of both NDSS internal standard requirement and external standards; as per comments in Paras 7.33 – 7.43.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC13: Parking Provision	Policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Amend EV charging point requirement in line with Building Regs standard as per comments in paras 7.44 – 7.48.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest viability evidence at time of EiP,
HC14: Health Infrastructure	Policy is not justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested unless further evidence provided.	Increased acknowledgment of need for any contributions to comply with CIL Reg 122, as per comments in paras 7.49 – 7.51.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC15: Education	Policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.	Removal of blanket requirement for contributions and acknowledgment that these must comply with CIL Reg 122, as per comments in paras 7.52 – 7.53.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC17: Open Space	Policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Increased flexibility to allow open space and play equipment provision to be considered on a site-by-site basis, as per comments in paras 7.54–7.56.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
HC19: Green Infrastructure	Policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested.	Additional detail on tree lined streets to align with NPPF footnote 50 as per our comments in paras 7.57 – 7.59.	Yes – to speak to representations.
EC1: Sustainable Economic Growth	Policy is not unsound but could be improved with the amendments suggested.	Additional text to recognize locational requirements of logistics operators, as per comments in paras 7.60 – 7.63.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
EC8: Retail	Policy is not unsound but could be improved with the amendments suggested.	Include reference that retail provision will be required within any new settlement and reviewed for potential inclusion as part of Retail Hierarchy, as per comments in paras 7.64–7.66,	No.
EC11: Infrastructure	Policy is considered sound subject to our comments.	As per comments in section 3 and 4 and paras 7.67 – 7.70.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
EC12: Sustainable Transport	No issues of soundness with this policy.		Yes – to discuss sustainable transport opportunities in respect of Dunston.

NB1: Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets	Support policy.		No.
NB2: Biodiversity	Policy is not unsound but could be improved with the amendments suggested.	Increased flexibility around delivery of BNG in conjunction with open space as per comments in paras 7.75 – 7.78	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
NB3: Cannock Chase SAC	Support policy.		No.
NB4: Landscape Character	Support policy.		No.
NB6: Sustainable Construction	Policy is not justified or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested unless further evidence is provided.	Further evidence required to justify optional standards in line with NPPF & NPPG otherwise they should be removed, as per comments in paras 7.86- 7.100.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss in light of latest evidence at time of EiP.
NB8: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment and Heritage Assets	Support policy.		No.
Chapter 15: Monitoring	Generally supportive of the proposed framework but additional clarity requested.	Confirmation which policies are subject to monitoring and which are not, as per comments in paras 7.103 – 7.105.	Yes – to speak to representations and discuss monitoring issues.



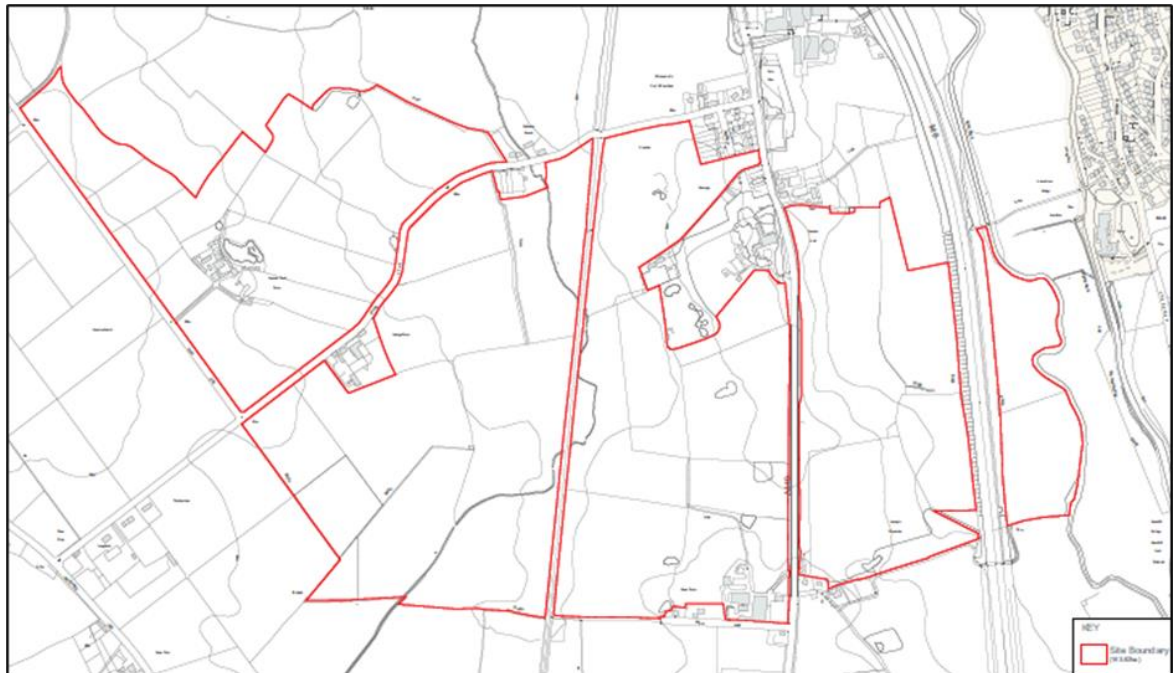
2. Introduction

- 2.1. Pegasus Group are instructed by Rigby Estates LLP to make representations to the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review Publication Plan consultation in relation to their land interests in Dunston. The consultation on the Publication Plan (Regulation 19) is taking place between 11th November until 23rd December 2022.
- 2.2. These should be read alongside previous submissions by FWP to the 'Preferred Options' consultation in December 2021 and 'Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure' consultation in December 2019.
- 2.3. It is also pertinent that Rigby Estates LLP have now agreed terms with a large PLC developer who will deliver an integrated package of planning promotion, master development, residential development and commercial development services over the site – which will further boost the developability and deliverability of the site, guaranteeing both an end user and experienced delivery partner to ensure the supporting infrastructure is implemented in a timely fashion. We will be in a position to name the developer by the time of the examination.

Rigby Estates Land Interests

- 2.4. Rigby Estates is a large private landowner with control of over 810 hectares of land across the UK, which is being used and promoted for a variety of uses including renewable energy generation, agriculture, residential and mixed use development.
- 2.5. Indeed, sustainable stewardship is a critical and defining value of the Estate, who have a significant history in optimising the land for the generation of clean, renewable energy including the delivery of solar farms, bio-mass plants and with a general focus on ensuring wider environmental benefits from all developments.
- 2.6. Rigby Estates are currently promoting the land known as the Dunston Estate Staffordshire – and will pass stewardship of this work over to their selected development partner once they are formally appointed in early 2023. The subject site comprises 160 hectares of agricultural fields set across two parcels, split by a railway line.
- 2.7. Further detail is set out in the Promotional Document attached at **Appendix 1** which suggests the site is capable of accommodating between 3,000 and 6,000 homes, dependant on densities and whether adjacent land is allocated alongside this site. This Promotional Document was also included as part of the previous representations submitted by FWP in 2021, but has been updated and reattached for consideration within the EiP process.
- 2.8. This follows a more detailed Vision Document submitted to the Spatial Growth Strategy consultation in December 2019 which we attach again at **Appendix 2**.

Figure 2.1 – Rigby Estates Ownership



Historic Submissions

2.9. Details of this site have also been submitted previously to the following consultation processes through Pegasus Group and FWP:

- **Site Allocations Document Issues and Options (Reg 18) (May 2014)** – Pegasus Group made representations on behalf of the landowner and proposed a range of development options from small scale infill up to a new settlement across the full 160 hectare site, but the site was not taken forward for allocation, as overall development needs were lower at this point in time, with Dunston not proposed for any growth.
- **SHELAA 2018 (Site ref: O29)** – The previous 2014 submission for a new settlement was recorded in the 2018 SHELAA, with an amber score – ‘potentially suitable but subject to policy constraints – Open Countryside & Core Policy 1’, with an indicative capacity of 2,358 dwellings. The comments confirmed the basis for the assessment:

“Agents submitted amended area to include a much larger tract of land which forms the Dunston Estate. Parts of site within Flood Zone 3 have been excluded from gross site area, as has the small parcel of the site to the east of the M6, as this is effectively severed from the rest of the site suggestion with no form of access across the M6 likely to be achievable. This leaves a remaining gross site area of approximately 123ha. The West Coast Mainline and Flood Zone 3 run through the centre of the parcel, which may affect future capacity further. Site considered potentially suitable as there is the potential capacity to realise a new settlement on the land. Site modelled at 32 dwellings per hectare.”

- **Local Plan Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery (October 2019)** – FWP made representations to this consultation to highlight the suitability of this site to deliver a new settlement, owing to its large single ownership, location outside the

Green Belt, connections with the national road and rail networks and relative lack of other environmental constraints. This submission included a comprehensive Vision Document (dated December 2019) which we attach again at Appendix 2 for clarity, and an illustrative Masterplan (at page 40) showing approximately 3,000 homes within Rigby Estates ownership. These representations also highlighted that the baseline OAN figure should be increased over and above the standard housing calculation figure.

- **Local Plan Review – Preferred Options (December 2021)** – Representations were submitted by FWP on behalf of the landowner, suggesting the site is capable of accommodating between 3,000–6,000 homes. Neither the Spatial Housing Strategy consultation (2019) nor the Preferred Options consultation (2021) identified a specific site within this area of search to deliver a new settlement. Instead, the Housing Topic Paper noted that a site to deliver a new settlement would be likely to come forward through future Local Plan Reviews. This was set out in draft policy DS4 (now DS6) which set out a longer-term aspiration for the Council to explore potential options for a sustainable independent settlement, which has the capacity to accommodate the future housing and economic needs of the district.

National Policy Context

- 2.10. These representations are made in light of current national policy and guidance, based on the 2021 NPPF (and associated PPG guidance), with only limited weight given to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill (as amended) and associated Written Ministerial Statement dated 5th December 2022, as these suggested amendments have not yet been formalised or consulted on; whilst this Publication Plan was signed off for consultation and subsequent submission to the SoS at a Full Council meeting on 8th November 2022.

Report Format

- 2.11. The remainder of this representation is set out as follows:
- In **Section 3** we introduce the Dunston Garden Village proposals;
 - In **Section 4** we critique the Council’s evidence base where it assesses the Dunston site (with reference to various supporting documents);
 - In **Section 5** we review the proposed housing requirement and needs within South Staffordshire and the wider Greater Birmingham Region (as per Policy DS4 and supporting paragraphs 5.8–5.17 in Chapter 5 of the plan);
 - In **Section 6** we consider the longer term aspirations for a new settlement beyond 2039, with Dunston Garden Village being within the area of search (as per Policy DS6 and supporting paragraph 5.66 in Chapter 5 of the plan);
 - In **Section 7** we consider the relevant Development Management policies (in Chapters 6–14 of the plan); and
 - In **Section 8** we provide a summary of our overall conclusions.

3. Introducing Dunston Garden Village

The Site

- 3.1. The site comprises over 160 hectares of open countryside which abuts the southern and western edge of the settlement of Dunston. The site is surrounded by open countryside to the north, west and south. To the east of the site is the River Penk and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. Beyond the eastern boundary is the settlement of Acton Trussell. The south western boundary is comprised of Long Lane and the southern boundary is made up of agricultural field boundaries, Swan Lane and a minor access road. The northern boundary is made up of School Lane and agricultural field boundaries.
- 3.2. This site is made up of undeveloped agricultural land which contains a number of farm buildings located both within the red line boundary of the site and on the edge of the site boundary. The existing development located along School Lane (ribbon residential development and farm buildings), Swan Lane (agricultural buildings) and the A449 (Bovis Homes offices) will be retained and incorporated into the proposed development of the site.
- 3.3. Pothooks Brook runs through the site, starting on the western side of the site and crossing under the West Coast Mainline to the eastern part of the site. There are a small number of existing ponds within the site boundary.
- 3.4. This land holding is dissected by a number of key infrastructure assets, including; the West Coast Mainline, the A449 and the M6 motorway. The West Coast Mainline runs north to south through the site and divides the Garden Village in half. School Lane forms part of the northern boundary of the site with a bridge crossing over the railway line. School Lane then runs in a south westerly direction and runs through the proposed Garden Village area. School Lane is the only existing made road within the site.
- 3.5. The A449 runs parallel with the West Coast Mainline but is located towards the eastern section of the site. The M6 also runs north to south through the eastern section of the site, resulting in a parcel which is bound by the River Penk and the M6 and somewhat isolated from the rest of the development.
- 3.6. The site comprises a mixture of Flood Zone 1, 2 and 3 land. The majority of the land holding is located within Flood Zone 1, with the Flood Zone 2 and 3 land located along the West Coast Mainline and to the south of School Lane. There are no Listed Buildings located within the red line boundary.
- 3.7. The site is not located within a Conservation Area or SSSI, but Cannock Chase (a Special Area of Conservation) is located 8km from Dunston Heath Farm, and therefore the landholding falls within the 15 km zone of influence. Having said that, this applies to the vast majority of land proposed for development within South Staffordshire.
- 3.8. In respect of agricultural land the majority of the site is Grade 3 dairy land, with 47% is Grade 3b, and 33% is within Grade 3a, with much of the remainder in Grade 4 (poor). As such the majority of the site is not best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV).
- 3.9. The entirety of the proposed Garden Village is within a single landholding, namely Rigby Estates LLP, and is being promoted by Pegasus Group and other supporting consultants to meet the future development needs of South Staffordshire.

Surroundings

- 3.10. The land in the Dunston estate is located to the south of the existing village of Dunston. Dunston is a small village comprising of 271 inhabitants according to the latest estimate from the 2021 census, and 91 dwellings. The village comprises of a primary school (St Leonard's Church of England First School), Dunston Village Hall, Dunston St Leonard Church, Dunston House and the Bovis Regional Office.
- 3.11. The land is currently designated as open countryside **and is not located within the Green Belt**. This is a significant benefit of the site, considering that **approximately 80% of the district is made up of Green Belt land**, including the other sites proposed for a new settlement.
- 3.12. The existing settlement of Dunston is characterised by a mix of semi-detached and detached properties, including some single storey dwellings.
- 3.13. There are a several Grade II Listed Buildings in the settlement of Dunston including the Grade II Dunston Farmhouse, Grade II Dunston House, Grade II Church of St Leonard, Grade II Former Stable Block, albeit no higher grade buildings. There are also Scheduled Ancient Monuments at Moat House Farm Moated Site, just east of the site beyond the river Penk, and the Hay House Moated site approximately 750m west of the site.

Accessibility

- 3.14. Dunston is located on the western side of the A449 trunk road, in close proximity to Junction 13 of the M6 motorway, and approximately 3km south of the urban area of Stafford and 5 km south of Stafford Town Centre.
- 3.15. The site is closer to the market town of Penkridge, approximately 3.5 km to the south, which has a wider retail and employment offer. Penkridge offers a range of services and facilities, including; cafés, pubs, restaurants, take-aways, market, library, sports centre, dentist, doctors' surgery, hotel etc. Penkridge also is well connected in terms of access to rail services. Penkridge rail station is on the Birmingham branch of the West Coast Mainline, with links to Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Stafford, Crewe, Liverpool Lime Street and London Euston. On weekdays, there are two trains per hour southbound and one northbound, with some additional services during the peak hours and an hourly service each way on Sundays.
- 3.16. Stafford has a population of over 70,000 residents as per the 2021 census (up from just over 68,000 in 2011) and is the County Town, with a higher level of services and facilities to those offered in Penkridge, including: leisure centres, hotels, casinos, hospitals, colleges as well as a larger range of national supermarkets and other multiple retailers. Stafford Railway Station is approximately 4.5km to the north which offers additional services to London, Manchester, Bristol, Reading and other destinations.
- 3.17. The majority of bus stops that are within the site are located along the A449, which cuts through the site parcels. Dunston Hall bus stop is served by the National Express no 54 which has hourly services to Wolverhampton and Stafford, whilst the Arriva no 75 provides hourly services to Cannock and Stafford.
- 3.18. In respect of the road network the site is directly adjacent to Junction 13 of the M6 and therefore has strong links with the national road network, whilst the A449 is one of the key

north/south routes through the district linking to Wolverhampton. As such, in strategic terms, the site has excellent accessibility to the national road network, with realistic opportunities to improve public transport infrastructure, as addressed later in this representation.

The Vision

3.19. As set out in the Promotional document, **Rigby Estates are seeking to create a highly sustainable new community that delivers:**

- A vibrant and accessible community heart with a new train station, alongside retail, entertainment and community uses that create an immediate sense of place;
- 3,000 – 6000 new homes within walkable neighbourhoods that make best use of renewable energy and sustainable forms of construction;
- Around 8 Ha of complementary employment uses reducing travel to work distances and taking advantage of proximity to the M6;
- Significant enhanced green infrastructure through the heart of the settlement to provide an attractive setting that provides health and wellbeing benefits and bio-diversity net gain;
- The site is eminently deliverable, with multiple road frontages and direct access to the national rail network within one ownership; and
- Additional land ownerships to extend the settlement up to 6,000 homes to aid the delivery of key infrastructure should this be deemed beneficial.

3.20. As noted, the quantum of housing and employment provision is dependent on the level of density that can be achieved on site and whether adjacent land parcels are brought in and allocated alongside this site, with the majority of the surrounding land also considered suitable for allocation, particularly to the north and west towards the M6 junction, given this is also outside the Green Belt and has similar accessibility credentials and physical characteristics.

The Proposed Development

3.21. The Masterplan shown in Figure 3.1 below (from page 4 of the Promotional Document at **Appendix 1**) represents the latest scheme for the Rigby Estates site, to demonstrate what can be achieved within this single, unique, ownership; notwithstanding the fact that there is potential for further expansion as noted above should this be required to meet the region's needs, or to deliver the required level of supporting infrastructure.

Figure 3.1 – Illustrative Masterplan



- Residential:** developable area of 64.25 hectares, which could deliver up to 3,000 dwellings at varied densities, with higher density towards the train station and local centre and other facilities, and lower densities near the landscape sensitive areas at the rural fringe. A mix of densities will allow for different types of dwellings in term of size and tenure, which in turn will accommodate a variety of households. This will provide a hierarchy of dwellings from large, detached properties with big plots through to smaller terraced forms allowing for a variety in the proposed streetscape as seen within the local area. The homes will prioritise the use of localised district heating, renewable energy and sustainable construction opportunities.
- Employment:** area of 7.8 hectares in the south east corner, separate from the main residential area and with direct connection to the A449. This will assist the sustainability of the settlement by offering employment opportunities within the development itself to reduce out commuting. Demand for such uses is expected to be particularly high within the Warehousing and Distribution sectors (Use Classes B2 and B8) due to its direct connection to the M6 and national road network.
- New railway station:** with 2 platforms, a shelter and associated parking (measuring 1.5 hectares). This is proposed at the centre of the site connecting to the West Coast Mainline, between the existing stations at Stafford and Penkrigde. This will further enhance the sustainability of the settlement by increasing access for job opportunities for the existing and future residents via sustainable modes of transport. This is one of the Council's key aspirations for any new settlement in the borough, and there is a longer-term aspiration for the West Coast Mainline to support more localised rail services when HS2 is complete. An alternative park and ride facility could also be



provided for Stafford station, if Network Rail or other key stakeholders determine that a station here is not practicable.

- **Local Centre:** measuring 2 hectares is at the heart of the scheme, to serve both the new development and to provide additional community facilities for the area. The Local Centre will provide a range of local services and facilities, which could include shops, restaurants, public house, hairdressers etc., and potentially a GP surgery. A diverse mix of uses will contribute towards making this area an active and vibrant place throughout the day. It will also ensure that the Garden Village is self-sufficient and reduce residents need to travel to access day to day facilities. The Local Centre is positioned adjacent to the proposed primary school to maximise the use and accessibility of the Local Centre. It has also been positioned along a strategic cycle route, footpath corridor and public transport corridor giving the option for journeys to be made using sustainable modes of transport (walking/cycling) as opposed to by car.
- **Primary School:** Land for a one form entry primary school (measuring 1.5 hectares) is provided adjacent to the Local Centre at the heart of the site. The location of the Primary School, alongside the public transport routes and strategic cycle routes, will ensure there are sustainable transport options for future users. This location also integrates into the northern end of the green wedge that runs through the centre of the site. The school is located within 500m of a large proportion of the proposed residential housing, and directly adjacent to the higher density local centre residential area where it is envisaged there will be a higher proportion of homes suitable for young families.
- **Neighbourhood Centres:** Two further neighbourhood centres (measuring 2 hectares combined) are shown to the west of the site at the existing Dunston Heath Farm and to the south along the edge of the A449. The provision of smaller local centres will ensure there are local services and facilities within a walkable distance available to all residents within the Garden Village. The southern centre is proposed for roadside type retail and leisure uses (convenience store, coffee shop, public house); whilst the western centre is proposed as a small Business Village type development with Class E uses mixed uses.
- **Access:** The Garden Village has been designed to create a number of key internal access routes through the village. The access routes have been designed to be tree-lined boulevards with concentric design to maximise connectivity/ permeability through the site, which uphold key garden village principles, creating fully walkable neighbourhoods. The principal access routes will be via the existing School Lane which will be upgraded and a new east west route further south connecting both east and west parts of the development of the A449.
- **Open Space:** The masterplan shows the provision of generous areas of open space (over 35 hectares), which will be mainly located in the centre and east of the site. These areas of public open space will not only serve the development itself, but also the wider community, which would also reduce visitor pressure on the nearby Cannock Chase SAC. As shown in the masterplan, there are areas within the development (to the east of the M6 and to the west of the train line) which could also be used for ecological enhancement or mitigation to ensure significant biodiversity net gain, or for district heating/ renewable energy generation.

3.22. A full consultant team has been appointed to investigate a range of environmental and technical matters, with the following listed documents submitted alongside representations to the 2019 Spatial Growth Strategy Consultation, and reattached her for clarity:

- Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Pegasus Environment – **Appendix 3;**
- Flood Risk Appraisal – Weetwood – **Appendix 4;**
- Ecology Report – TEP – **Appendix 5;** and
- Rail Capacity Review – MDS Transmodal – **Appendix 6.**

National Policy on New Settlements

3.23. Whilst it does not refer to Garden Villages specifically, paragraph 22 of the NPPF was expanded in July 2021 and represents a clear progression in how national government expect local authorities to consider and plan for new settlements and other larger scale developments across multiple plan periods. It states **(with recently added text in bold)**:

*‘Strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities, such as those arising from major improvements in infrastructure. **Where larger scale developments such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take into account the likely timescale for delivery.***

3.24. Paragraph 73 of the NPPF goes further to state:

*‘The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as **new settlements...** provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes). Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way.’*

3.25. It then sets out five criteria for large scale developments which we address in turn:

- a) **Consider existing or planned infrastructure, the area’s economic potential and the scope for net environmental gains** – Dunston Garden Village proposes a new train station which is a key aspiration within this area of search, harnesses the economic potential of this area which already has a high level of self-containment in terms of travel to work patterns. Significant areas of open space and blue/green corridors are proposed throughout the site which offer real opportunities for environmental gain; whilst Rigby Estates track record in renewable energy projects and sustainable stewardship will ensure wider environmental benefits arise from the development.
- b) **Ensure that their size and location will support a sustainable community, with sufficient access to services and employment opportunities within the development itself** – Dunston Garden Village proposes a self-sufficient community

with residential, employment, commercial and community and recreation uses all within walking distance of each other and interlinked.

- c) **Set clear expectations for quality development and how this can be maintained (such as by following Garden City principles), and ensure that appropriate tools such as masterplans and design guides** – these representations along with the attached Promotional Document (and previous detailed Vision Document) fully uphold Garden Village principles.
- d) **Make a realistic assessment of likely rates of delivery (which could extend beyond the plan period)** – there is no expectation or reliance on delivery from this site within the emerging plan period, although this could well be accelerated given the single willing landowner, non-Green Belt status, relative lack of constraints, and the involvement of a national house/ master developer with a track record of driving delivery on large schemes such as this. As such the site could make a significant contribution to development needs within this plan period and beyond.
- e) **Consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining new developments of significant size** – not applicable given site's location outside the Green Belt.

3.26. The Local Plan Review 'Publication Plan' consultation addresses this issue in Policy DS6 'Longer Term Growth Aspirations for a New Settlement,' within Part A: Context and development strategy, and we cover this in section 6 of this report.

3.27. However, the draft policy should be strengthened. As currently drafted, it proposes a wide area of search for a new settlement. It should make a bolder commitment from the Council to allocate a specific site to deliver the NPPFs aspiration to make this policy effective. Indeed, it follows that a site should be identified at the earliest opportunity to give both the developer and the council confidence that the site will be delivered and the developer confidence to invest in the delivery in the site. The land at Dunston is the only credible candidate site that:

- Meets all the criteria of NPPF paragraph 73 as noted above;
- Is the only new settlement option site that is located outside the Green Belt;
- Has a single willing landowner; and
- Is the only option where a full consultant team has been appointed, and where a detailed Masterplan and technical work have been submitted.

Garden Village Principles

3.28. The Government's commitment to Garden Settlements has been demonstrated through the investment of significant sums of money in recent years, with 14 pilot Garden Village schemes announced in 2017, backed by £6 million of government funding. These schemes form part of a £69 million programme to deliver up to 16,000 homes per year from 2025, creating almost 200,000 jobs and boosting the economy.

3.29. This has been supported by various guidance setting out criteria for different sized Garden Settlements, with those over 10,000+ considered Garden Towns and those between 1,500 and 10,000 home considered Garden Villages, with the initial eligibility criteria noting that

such villages should be freestanding, rather than extensions to existing towns (albeit this document has now been archived).

3.30. To date the Garden Communities programme has total funding of £69 million, including £15 million of funding announced by the Housing Minister in May 2022. Further investment in recent years including £9 million to support 21 Garden Villages and Towns in February 2019, £3.7 million for 5 new Garden Towns announced on 25th March 2019, with a further £2.85 million pledged for a further 19 Garden Villages on 28th June 2019. The Garden Communities programme supports house building in 43 towns and villages from Cornwall to Carlisle and will deliver over 300,000 homes, up to 90,000 of which will be affordable

3.31. MCHLG published a Garden Village Prospectus in August 2018 setting out their concept, and this has been supplemented with a toolkit dated 27th September 2019, which includes the following checklist. Whilst this scheme has now close, we respond to the checklist below:

Garden Community Toolkit Criteria	Dunston Garden Village Response
1. Making a case for a garden community: To deliver a successful garden community you'll need long-term support, local leadership, partnership and financial backing.	These representations and associated Promotional Document make a strong case for a Garden Village at Dunston, confirming its feasibility and presenting a clear vision for the site.
2. Site feasibility: How to test if there are suitable, available and deliverable locations and sites for a garden community.	
3. Developing a vision: How to successfully guide the development by creating a clear vision for your garden community.	
4. Engagement: Engaging the local community and stakeholders can create a garden community plan with roots in the local context.	Rigby Estates have already engaged with the Local Authority and various Infrastructure stakeholders in working up the initial proposals, and will involve the local community as the plans develop.
5. Planning policy: Local Plan policies provide an important framework to guide development proposals and aid decision-making for garden communities.	Rigby Estates is fully engaged with the Local Plan process.
6. Planning permission: Information about how to develop a planning permission strategy for your garden community.	A planning application strategy will be developed if and when the site is identified in the Local Plan, with revised para 22 of the 2021 NPPF requiring Local Plans to provide firmer policy support for such developments,
7. Masterplanning and design: Masterplanning is integral to creating well-planned and designed garden communities.	The Promotional Document clearly sets out the design concept and vision behind the current masterplan, and this will evolve as the proposals develop further and as more detailed technical work is undertaken.
8. Innovative and integrated communities: How smart communities connect people to technology.	Rigby Estates will embrace any new technologies that can help connect and integrate the existing and future community in Dunston.

<p>9. Infrastructure; Delivering infrastructure can unlock development of a garden community and provide some of the building blocks for a successful new community.</p>	<p>The proposals include a new train station, primary school and other supporting infrastructure which will create a self-sufficient and sustainable community in Dunston, which could require additional adjacent land to be allocated.</p>
<p>10. Legacy: Information about creating long-term maintenance and management arrangements for your garden community.</p>	<p>Rigby Estates are a committed long term landowner, with a genuine commitment to sustainable stewardship to deliver a lasting positive legacy and environmental benefits for the site and local area.</p>
<p>11. Assessing the viability of your garden community. Find out about government guidance on viability and how to manage it in your planning process.</p>	<p>Initial assessments have not flagged up any viability concerns, as this is a strong market area, with high demand for a range of uses, but this will be continually monitored as the scheme evolves.</p>
<p>12. Land value capture and funding delivery: The process of capturing some of the increase in land value which comes from policy decisions, the granting of planning permission by local authorities, or as a consequence of new or improved, publicly funded infrastructure projects.</p>	<p>Rigby Estates will work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that land value uplift is distributed in an equitable way and fund the required infrastructure; whilst the fact that the site is in one large ownership should eliminate any equalisation issues.</p>
<p>13. Delivery mechanisms: At an early stage in your project, you should explore the mechanisms and options available for delivery of your garden community.</p>	<p>Rigby Estates will work with their Housebuilder/ Master Developer partner and engage with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that suitable delivery mechanisms, governance and project management process are put in place as these proposals develop.</p>
<p>14. Governance: Governance creates good collaborative working and effective decision-making among public and private sector partners and stakeholders.</p>	
<p>15. Project management: Strong project management is needed to deliver a complex garden community on time and to ensure it delivers on expectations.</p>	

3.32. This demonstrates that Rigby Estates have already satisfied many of the steps set out in this toolkit with a commitment to work through the remaining, more detailed and delivery focused elements, as the plans evolve; whether this is through the Local Plan Review, any future review or additional DPD/SPD process required to deliver a new settlement.

4. Local Plan Evidence Base

- 4.1. Within this section of the representations, we review the evidence base documents which have been published in support of the Local Plan Review. We provide comments on each of the documents of relevance to the Rigby Estates landholdings in the Dunston area.

Sustainability Appraisal October 2022

- 4.2. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) presents an assessment of the likely sustainability impacts of proposals set out in the Local Plan Review. It also provides a summary of the alternatives considered during the preparation of the plan.

Reasonable Alternatives: Residential Distribution Options

- 4.3. The SA summarises the six options for residential distribution which were assessed within the Regulation 18 (I) SA. This included the option of a new freestanding settlement, which performed relatively well against the SA objectives¹.

Reasonable Alternatives: Spatial Options

- 4.4. The SA summarises the seven spatial options for the broad distribution of new housing growth, which were assessed within the Regulation 18 (II) SA. This included the option of infrastructure-led development with a garden village area of search beyond the plan period. This was identified as the best performing option as the proposed development would be likely to result in the greatest positive impacts in terms of sustainability, in particular regarding access to education and employment².

Reasonable Alternatives: Development Sites

- 4.5. The Regulation 18 (III) SA Report included an assessment of 317 reasonable alternative sites, identified by the Council against 12 criteria, including this site (O29a/O29)³. Below, we provide commentary on each of the scores for the site. It should be noted that the commentary refers to the post-mitigation assessment in the SA.

SA Objective 1 – Climate Change Mitigation

- 4.6. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'uncertain'. It is worth noting that all sites within the SA have been scored the same as with all sites, it is entirely uncertain whether impacts would be positive or adverse.

SA Objective 2 – Climate Change Adaptation

- 4.7. Site O29, which refers to the majority of the land holding, is assessed as being 'neutral'. Of course, Dunston Garden Village has been designed to take into account the areas which are at risk of flooding. As shown in the masterplan, development has been directed away from the areas at highest risk of flooding and no development is proposed within Flood Zone 3.

¹ Table N.5, SA Volume 1

² Para N42 – N44 and Table N.7, SA Volume 1

³ Appendix G, SA Volume 3

With the inclusion of SUDS and flood risk measures, the site could be developed without causing an increase to the risk of flooding elsewhere and ensure that forthcoming development on site is not at risk of flooding.

- 4.8. Site O29a, which forms a small parcel within the land holding, is assessed as 'minor positive'.

SA Objective 3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 4.9. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'neutral', as are all sites which have been assessed. Indeed, it will be a requirement of any development to provide ecological enhancement and biodiversity net gain in compliance with national policy and the policies in the plan.

- 4.10. This site could however be upgraded to 'minor or major positive', given that Dunston Garden Village will bring forward significant biodiversity benefits and new habitats. An ecological appraisal has been prepared in support of the site, which is reflected and accounted for in the masterplan. The masterplan highlights the opportunities to enhance biodiversity across the site through the additional planting and woodland management of key wildlife areas and corridors. The site will also create large recreational areas on site, along with pond and swales, other SUDS features woodland planting, scrub and grasslands to enhance wildlife. The site will also provide habitats and wildlife corridors through features such as native hedgerows and wildflower meadows.

- 4.11. The development of the site presents a significant opportunity to enhance the biodiversity within the site and provide a greater variety and quality of habitats and wildlife features than is currently present. As such, although there would be a loss of greenfield land, the improvement to biodiversity and habitats can only be seen as a positive to the development of the site.

SA Objective 4 – Landscape and Townscape

- 4.12. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'minor negative'. Indeed, only a small number of sites perform any better and a large proportion perform worse.

- 4.13. It is also worth noting that a new settlement, such as that at Dunston Garden Village, will undoubtedly have some impact on existing settlements and this will be the case irrespective of the site chosen. To accommodate the housing numbers and growth required in South Staffordshire this cannot be entirely avoided.

- 4.14. It should therefore be noted that in terms of this site, it is not located within the Cannock Chase AONB which is a particularly sensitive location in landscape terms. Sites located to the north east of the district would be located within this area and therefore new development is less appropriate in this location.

- 4.15. This site is not Green Belt and therefore Green Belt boundaries would not need to be revised to accommodate the development of this site. The Green Belt covers over 80% of the district and therefore there are few places which are not Green Belt and which could accommodate a large scale development of this nature. This location is the most suitable location to accommodate a new settlement in South Staffordshire in Green Belt terms.

- 4.16. In terms of landscape, a landscape and visual statement has been prepared in support of the site. It concludes that although a development of this scale will inevitably have an impact on views, it is not within the Cannock Chase AONB or Green Belt. With the proposed mitigation

measures in place, in terms of setting the scheme within a framework of mature trees and woodland, the potential impact on the surrounding landscape character and visual receptors would be reduced. Visually, the site is relatively well contained, with views to the east and south limited.

- 4.17. In terms of mitigation, a strong buffer of planting around the site boundaries will limit the effect of the development on the character of the immediate surroundings and on the range of visual receptors. Development is proposed to be set back from boundaries to allow space for a strong tree buffer, that in time will create a good visual screen.
- 4.18. In conclusion, all large development will have some impact in landscape terms. In terms of this site, although there would be an initial impact, this would reduce over the lifespan of the development with the proposed mitigation measures in place.

SA Objective 5 – Pollution and Waste

- 4.19. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'minor negative', as are most of the sites which have been assessed.
- 4.20. However, given the size, connectivity and level of services proposed at Dunston Garden Village it is likely that a large proportion of journeys will be undertaken on foot. The scheme also proposes a train station which offers another credible alternative to the car. As such, this development will be a self-sufficient community of walkable neighbourhoods, thus reducing the need to travel by car, whilst electric vehicle charging points will be a priority. This will reduce the potential air pollution resulting from the future development of the site.
- 4.21. As such, although some air pollution and waste will be created, the development will create a sustainable self-sufficient community which will reduce levels of pollution and waste.

SA Objective 6 – Natural Resources

- 4.22. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'minor negative', as are most of the sites which have been assessed.
- 4.23. It is also worth noting that to address the housing needs of the borough, large scale development is required, which cannot be accommodated solely on brownfield land.

SA Objective 7 – Housing

- 4.24. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'minor positive', as are all the sites which have been assessed.
- 4.25. We would however like to reiterate that Dunston Garden Village can deliver a very large housing scheme which would make a significant contribution to the housing supply within South Staffordshire and maintain a healthy housing land supply for a significant number of years, more so than other smaller scale housing sites, and as such should potentially be given a 'major positive' score to reflect this/ differentiate the site.

SA Objective 8 – Health and Wellbeing

- 4.26. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'minor negative', as are all the sites which have been assessed.

4.28. We would however like to highlight that Dunston Garden Village would create a self-sufficient community, which prioritises health and well-being, where future residents can walk/cycle to work, home, local services and facilities. The scheme also proposed over 35 hectares of open space, providing an abundance of open space to facilitate healthy and active lifestyles. This will be to the benefit of future residents and promote health and well-being.

SA Objective 9 – Cultural Heritage

4.29. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'neutral', as are all the sites which have been assessed.

4.30. Indeed, at Dunston Garden Village, any heritage concerns can be appropriately addressed through the design of the proposed development. The masterplan has been designed with heritage in mind and ensures that there is a sufficient stand-off from the development to the closest heritage assets, with key views and vistas maintained.

4.31. A heritage assessment has been prepared in support of the site which confirms that there are no Conservation Areas within or adjacent to the site, which will impact upon the proposed development. There are a number of Listed Buildings in close proximity to the site along with two Scheduled Ancient Monuments however these have been considered as part of the design of this scheme. The location of the proposed residential/ employment/ commercial elements have been carefully planned and designed so that they do not impact on the setting of the nearby heritage assets. To prevent any impact arising, landscape buffers have been proposed to provide screening.

4.32. As such, the scheme will ensure that all historical assets are protected.

SA Objective 10 – Transport and Accessibility

4.33. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'minor negative', as are most of the sites which have been assessed.

4.34. This rating for Dunston Garden Village is entirely incorrect as it would be extremely accessible with good links to a variety of modes of transport.

4.35. The site benefits from existing transport links, including; bus stops along the A449, which provide hourly services to Wolverhampton, Stafford and Cannock. The site is located adjacent to junction 13 of the M6 and has strong links with the national road network. The A449 is one of the key north/south routes through the district linking to Wolverhampton. Furthermore, the site is located approx. 3.5km to the north of Penkridge, which has a rail station. Penkridge Rail Station is on the Birmingham branch of the West Coast Mainline, which links to Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Stafford, Crewe, Liverpool Lime Street and London Euston.

4.36. The proposed development will improve the sustainability of the site and access to sustainable modes of transport. As noted earlier, Dunston Garden Village will bring forward a range of services and facilities which will mean the settlement is self-sufficient. This development proposes to deliver; residential, employment, primary schools, a local centre and a neighbourhood centre. As such, future residents will not need to travel to access key services and facilities.

4.37. The development proposes extensive pedestrian and cycle links, bus services and a new railway station. The development will improve the accessibility of this site/location and

provide better access to transport infrastructure and services and therefore once the development is in place, the site would be extremely accessible, which would be a 'major positive'.

SA Objective 11 – Education

- 4.38. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'minor negative'. This rating is incorrect.
- 4.39. There is an existing primary school located within the village of Dunston, which is in walking distance, and Dunston Garden Village proposes to deliver a one form entry primary school which will further increase the accessibility of education facilities to new and existing residents.
- 4.40. The nearest high school is located 3.6km to the north of the site (Stafford Manor High School). Specific guidance on the distances that children will walk to school is found in the July 2014 document, published by the Department for Education (DfE) entitled 'Home to School Travel and Transport'. This suggests that the maximum walking distance to schools is 4.8 km for children over the age of 8. On this basis, the proximity of the nearest High School is well within guideline distances.

SA Objective 12 – Economy and Employment

- 4.41. The site (O29a/O29) is assessed as 'minor negative', as are most of the sites which have been assessed. This rating is entirely incorrect.
- 4.42. The residents of Dunston Garden Village would have access to three small employment sites to the east, south and north of the site. Furthermore, and more importantly, Dunston Garden Village proposes to deliver 7.8 hectares of employment land in the south east corner of the site, with a direct connection to the A449. This employment area will have a major positive impact on the local economy and result in a net gain in employment floorspace across South Staffordshire.
- 4.43. Furthermore still, additional land to the north of the site could be brought forward for employment. This land has been assessed within the Employment Sites: Site Assessment Topic Paper (September 2021) and is found to perform relatively well for employment and has a clear advantage for distribution / logistics being close to Junction 13 of the M6 motorway. This land is also identified as being potentially suitable for employment in the SHELAA 2021.
- 4.44. Also, and unlike other sites, Dunston Garden Village would not result in the loss of employment floorspace. The proposed development will result in a net gain in employment floorspace within the district and therefore the site should be considered to have a positive impact for this objective.
- 4.45. Furthermore, Dunston is located on the western side of the A449 trunk road, in close proximity to Junction 13 of the M6 motorway. This provides links both north and south and therefore the site is well placed to become a new employment hub, with excellent access to existing employment sites.

The Preferred Approach

- 4.46. The SA summarises the evaluation of development sites which were assessed within the Regulation 18 (III) SA. What is clear from the assessment of this site (O29a/O29) is that the reason for excluding this site from the plan at this current time is simply because the delivery of a new settlement within the current plan period is not preferable to the proposed approach⁴.
- 4.47. However, the settlement has not been identified at this stage. While we take no issue with this *per se*, the new settlement should be allowed to come forward during the current plan period, if evidence demonstrates that it is needed.
- 4.48. This site (O29a/O29) has been assessed in the SA, and whilst we do take issue with the assessment in part as set out above, clearly Dunston Garden Village can deliver a sustainable new settlement.

SHELLA 2021 – Assessment of Housing Land

- 4.49. The site (Ref: O29) has been assessed as a freestanding new settlement. It has been recorded in the SHELLA 2021, with an amber score – ‘potentially suitable but subject to policy constraints – Open Countryside & Core Policy 1’, with an indicative capacity of 2,315 dwellings. The comments confirmed the basis for the assessment:

‘Agents submitted amended area to include a much larger tract of land which forms the Dunston Estate. Parts of site within Flood Zone 3 have been excluded from gross site area, as has the small parcel of the site to the east of the M6, as this is effectively severed from the rest of the site suggestion with no form of access across the M6 likely to be achievable. This leaves a remaining gross site area of approximately 120ha. The West Coast Mainline and Flood Zone 3 run through the centre of the parcel, which may affect future capacity further. Site considered potentially suitable as there is the potential capacity to realise a new settlement on the land. Landowner also indicates that the site could accommodate a small site suggestion off School Lane, Dunston. Site modelled at 32 dwellings per hectare.’

- 4.50. Five other sites were also considered as a freestanding new settlement in the SHELLA 2021, with one being discounted as unsuitable at this stage.

Housing Site Selection Topic Paper (November 2022)

- 4.51. The Topic Paper considers four sites within the broad location of search for the new settlement. Of the four options considered this is the only site which **does not have major negative effects** due to Green Belt harm, being out with the Green Belt. Furthermore, this is the only site that we are aware of which has progressed with a Masterplan and technical work.
- 4.52. Whilst a new settlement has been dismissed as an alternative spatial strategy to the one taken in the plan, there are simply no reasons to dismiss Dunston Garden Village as the new

⁴ Appendix H, Page H80, SA

settlement, which could be named in the plan for delivery after the plan period, unless monitoring indicates that it is needed to come forward before then.

- 4.53. Given the reasons for dismissing a new settlement, as set out in the Topic Paper, we provide specific comments below in relation to this site.

Highways Issues

- 4.54. The Topic Paper identifies that the Highways Authority have concerns with all sites considered for the new settlement, due to the feasibility of establishing multiple accesses and potential impacts on junctions in the surrounding highways network.
- 4.55. However, a Transport Strategy has been prepared which confirms that Dunston Garden Village can be delivered from a highway's perspective. The scheme provides the opportunity to serve the development via improving the existing School Lane junction with the A449. At this stage, it is considered that the form of the improved junction would be a right turn lane ghost island junction. A second primary access would also be provided to serve the proposed new Garden Village at the A449 located circa 700 metres to the south. At this stage, it is considered that the form of this junction would be a four-arm roundabout.
- 4.56. Options will be explored to provide a new spine road and railway bridge that crosses the West Coast Mainline leading from the new roundabout junction to improve the permeability of the site. The Transport Strategy concludes that Dunston Garden Village can be accommodated in highways terms and therefore highways should not be reason to disregard this site as a location for future growth.

Access to Services

- 4.1. The Topic Paper identifies that all of the potential sites are either not directly adjacent to an existing settlement's higher order services and facilities or have poor access to them.
- 4.2. However, the proximity of the existing site to existing services and facilities is irrelevant when considering that Dunston Garden Village will deliver a range of new services and facilities on site to create a self-sufficient community. Dunston Garden Village will deliver; employment land, a potential new railway station, a local centre, two neighbourhood centres and a primary school.

Rail Opportunity

- 4.3. Despite their proximity to the West Coast Main Line, the Topic Paper identifies that none of the submitted site suggestions are in a location with a recognised rail opportunity, nor have any of the proposals submitted evidence to demonstrate that a new rail link would be feasible within their land control.
- 4.4. However, the technical review of rail capacity, prepared by MDS Transmodal (and enclosed at Appendix 6), confirms that this site does provide the opportunity to deliver a new railway station and Rigby Estates will work with Network Rail and other relevant stakeholders to explore the feasibility further.
- 4.5. The review concludes that a new station, with two platforms and a shelter could be located anywhere along the section of track within the Rigby Estates landholding, as it is a straight section of track with sufficient stopping distances in both direction in relation to nearby

stations at Stafford and Penkridge. There is spare capacity and the revenue that could be achieved from the additional station would be sufficient to justify its construction and to fund the incremental additional rolling stock.

Scale

- 4.6. The Topic Paper suggests that none of the potential site options are of sufficient size to deliver the scale of growth envisaged by the GBHMA Strategic Growth Study in this corridor, which also means that no site is likely to accommodate significant on-site facilities beyond local retail centres and primary/first education facilities.
- 4.7. It should therefore be noted that whilst these representations relate to the promotion of land within the ownership of Rigby Estates, with an indicative capacity of 3,000 dwellings, there is additional and potentially suitable land around the site (particularly to the north and west) which, when combined with increased densities could deliver up to 6,000 homes and additional infrastructure in this location, to help deliver the level of growth envisaged by the GBHMA Strategic Growth Study. Rigby Estates would like to work proactively with the Council and surrounding landowners to investigate the potential of assembling a larger site at Dunston.

Duty to Cooperate Paper 2022

- 4.8. The paper sets out the duty to co-operate requirements, including the strategic issues to be addressed. This includes matters related to housing, employment, and the Cannock Chase SAC. We welcome a co-operative approach on cross boundary strategic issues.
- 4.9. It is set out in the paper that the GBHMA authorities are now in the process of agreeing a Statement of Common ground (SoCG) across the entire geography and related authorities to deliver a review of the GBHMA Strategic Growth Study to support the changing position on housing shortfalls across the housing market area.
- 4.10. It is our understanding that the SoCG has been drafted and is in the process of being signed off across the GBHMA. It will therefore be important to review this document as the Local Plan Review progresses, and any implications it may have on the housing requirement in South Staffordshire. We reserve the right to comment further on the SoCG as matters progress.

Historic Environment Site Assessment (Updated 2022)

- 4.11. An initial Historic Environment Site Assessment II was prepared in December 2019, which included an assessment of site O29. This was followed by two further updates, which included an assessment of both sites: O29 and O29a. This assessment of the sites is reflected in the latest 2022 Historic Environment Site Assessment, which considers several additional sites unrelated to the land discussed within these representations. The report confirms that the development of both sites would not result in substantial harm.
- 4.12. The assessment rates the risk of harm in terms of Red, Amber and Green and assesses the direct impact and the indirect impacts on the nearby heritage assets. If a site is rated 'green', this means that no concerns have been identified, on current evidence, although archaeological mitigation measures may be required. If the site is rated 'amber', this means there are no significant effects which cannot be mitigated against.

- 4.13. Sites O29 and O29a are rated amber both for direct and indirect impacts. As noted in the earlier sections of these representations, there are a number of Listed Buildings in close proximity to the site along with 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments however as noted within the Historic Environment Site Assessment and within the Heritage Assessment prepared in support of this site, any impact can be mitigated against through sensitive design and landscape screening.

South Staffordshire Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Addendum (August 2022)

- 4.14. The Addendum includes a landscape sensitivity assessment for an additional site at Gailey Lea Farm. There are no updates to this assessment in relation to the land holdings of Rigby Estates.
- 4.15. FWP provided comments on the assessment as part of their representations to the Local Plan Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Document (October 2019). As such, we ask that the Council refers back to these representations for comments on this document and the Landscape and Visual Assessment which was prepared and submitted.

Cannock Chase SAC Mitigation Guidance 2022

- 4.16. This guidance details how developments which produce a net increase in the number of homes within 15km of Cannock Chase SAC will be required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) or make a financial contribution before development takes place. The land holdings of Rigby Estates at Dunston lie within this identified 15km boundary.
- 4.17. Pegasus welcome confirmation that the previously suggested approach of offsite Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs), is not being pursued at this time. This is detailed within section 1.4 of the guidance.
- 4.18. In terms of the contributions required, South Staffordshire Council will require a payment of £290.58 for each net new home created through development within 15km of Cannock Chase SAC to be secured via a S106 Agreement. This is based upon a percentage of housing numbers proposed within 15km of the SAC from April 2022 in conjunction with other authorities to meet the total cost of £6,297,104. We wish to emphasise this level of contribution should be monitored in line with proposed housing numbers going forward to ensure contributions accurately reflect the housing levels proposed within South Staffordshire and other Local Authorities within the 15km zone.

SAC Partnership Memorandum of Understanding 2022

- 4.19. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets out how the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership will take responsibility for a programme of measures to mitigate for the impact residential development has upon the Cannock Chase SAC, including the review, preparation and implement common plans and policies to protect the Cannock Chase SAC.
- 4.20. The MOU mirrors the contributions required within the Cannock Chase SAC Mitigation Guidance 2022. We do not seek to make further comments other than those noted on the above guidance document.

Sustainable Construction and Renewable Energy 2022

- 4.21. The Topic Paper sets out a number of recommendations for sustainable construction measures above building regulations. These include Require 19% reduction in emissions vs 2013 Building Regulations Part L, with a note added that this recommendation has now been superseded by more recent 2022 changes to Building Regulations.
- 4.22. This approach is unnecessary and repetitious of 2021 Part L Interim Uplift and the Future Homes Standard. It is the Government's intention to set standards for energy efficiency through the Building Regulations. The key to success is standardisation and avoidance of individual Council's specifying their own policy approach to energy efficiency, which undermines economies of scale for product manufacturers, suppliers and developers. The Council does not need to set local energy efficiency standards to achieve the shared net zero goal because of the higher levels of energy efficiency standards for new homes set out in the 2021 Part L Interim Uplift and proposals for the 2025 Future Homes Standard.
- 4.23. The Topic Paper also sets out a target of 110 litres per day person water target within new developments. Whilst we support efforts to reduce water usage, the Building Regulations require all new dwellings to achieve a mandatory level of water efficiency of 125 litres per day per person, which is a higher standard than that achieved by much of the existing housing stock. This mandatory standard represents an effective demand management measure. The Optional Technical Housing Standard is 110 litres per day per person. As set out in details under the assessment of Policy NB6, a policy requirement for the optional water efficiency standard must be justified by credible and robust evidence as per the NPPF. This evidence has not been provided as part of Topic Paper.

5. Housing Needs (Policy DS4 – Chapter 5)

- 5.1. Policy DS4 and supporting paragraphs 5.8–5.17 consider the districts housing needs. The total housing requirement is now **9,089** over the 21 year period from 2018 to 2039 which equates to **433 dwellings per annum**. This total requirement has increased slightly since the 2021 Preferred Options requirement of 8,881, however it covers an additional year, with the annual requirement reducing from 444 dpa.
- 5.2. Within this figure, the underlying Standard Method requirement has reduced slightly from 243 dpa in 2021 to **241 dpa** in 2022⁵, whilst completions totalling 992 across the period 2018–2022 have been deducted. The total still includes a 4,000 dwelling apportionment to support the delivery of unmet need in the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (GBHMA).

Figure 5.1 – Overall Housing Requirements

South Staffordshire’s own housing need using the government’s standard method (2022-2039)	4,097
Completions in the district since the start of the plan period (2018-2022)	992
Additional housing to contribute towards the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA	4,000
Total number of dwellings to be planned for	9,089

- 5.3. Whilst the proposed figure exceeds the minimum starting point of the standard method, and may therefore not be technically unsound; there are a number of factors at play in South Staffordshire, and the wider Greater Birmingham Region that would justify an increase to this figure, to ensure a positively prepared plan in line with paragraph 35 of the 2021 NPPF. We outline these factors below, with reference to the current national guidance. These representations build upon those submitted to the Preferred Options in November 2021, providing additional evidence from the Council’s evidence base and other relevant documentation.

National Guidance on Housing Need

- 5.4. In terms of national policy, NPPF Paragraph 61 states that (our emphasis):

‘To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.’

⁵ As of March 2022, using the 2014 SNHP over the period 2022 – 2032 with 2021 affordability ratios.

- 5.5. Paragraph 11 also notes that for plan-making, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means that *'all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure...'*
- 5.6. As such, the Standard Methodology figure must be treated as the minimum starting point for housing delivery. This is supplemented with additional detail in the NPPG⁶, which states that the Local Housing Need (LHN) provides a minimum starting point in determining the number of homes needed, it also states that government is committed to ensuring that more homes are built and that government support ambitious authorities who want to plan for growth.
- 5.7. This paragraph then sets out the circumstances when it might be appropriate to plan for a higher housing need than the Standard Method indicates, including:
- Where there are deliverable growth strategies for the area (e.g. Housing Deals);
 - Where there are strategic infrastructure improvements that are likely to drive an increase in the homes needed locally,
 - Where an authority has agreed to take on unmet need from neighbouring authorities, or
 - Where previous levels of housing delivery or assessments of need are significantly greater than the Standard Method.
- 5.8. In addition, paragraph 2a-015-20190220 confirms that:
- 'Where a strategic policy-making authority can show that an alternative approach identifies a need higher than using the Standard Method, and that it adequately reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals, the approach can be considered sound as it will have exceeded the minimum starting point.'*
- 5.9. Whilst South Staffordshire are proposing an approach that exceeds the minimum requirement, this doesn't reflect the circumstances in South Staffordshire and the wider Greater Birmingham area (as referenced in paragraph 10 of the PPG), or the demographic trends or market signals (as referenced in paragraph 15 of the PPG). As such, a far greater uplift is required.

Meeting South Staffordshire Needs

- 5.10. In line with the guidance above, we set out the relevant circumstances that would support an uplift to the standard methodology for meeting South Staffordshire's own needs (before moving on to meeting unmet need in the wider region, other market signals, and supply side considerations). While the current housing figures and need may not be unsound, there is scope to deliver further housing in South Staffordshire to meet its own need and unmet need in the wider region.

⁶ Paragraph 2a-010-20201216

Growth Strategies

- 5.11. PPG guidance notes how there may be justification to exceed the standard method figure if there are growth strategies in the area, for example where funding is in place to promote and facilitate additional growth. As summarised below, there are economic growth strategies in the South Staffordshire area which justify the standard housing method being exceeded in the district. These findings reflect our 2021 preferred options representations.
- 5.12. Firstly, South Staffordshire is part of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Deal, which was agreed by Government in March 2014. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has secured £121m to support economic growth in the area from 3 Growth Deals (2014, 2015 and 2016), with £14.1m of funding committed between 2016 and 2021. Furthermore, the substantial investment from Government is expected to generate at least £19m of additional investment from local partners and the private sector, creating a total new investment package of £101.3m for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire area.
- 5.13. In addition, the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Strategic Economic Plan (April 2018) outlines strategic employment sites that are identified as priorities in the LEP area, which includes the Bericote Four Ashes and Featherstone sites which are both located in South Staffordshire District. Both sites will clearly generate significant jobs in South Staffordshire, which will in turn increase housing demand in the area. Indeed, the Four Ashes site will provide 900,000 sq ft of industrial floor space and accommodate over 1,000 jobs, and has outline planning consent in place. Since then the West Midlands Interchange has gained consent through the DCO process, which will generate further jobs growth, which we discuss below.
- 5.14. Finally, the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP now has a Local Industrial Strategy in place, which was adopted in March 2020 (so since the last draft of the local plan). This aims to boost investment in the area by focussing on the following strengths, and needs to be taken into consideration when establishing the housing need requirement for the District:
- Manufacturing and materials innovation;
 - Energy innovation and low carbon adoption;
 - Connectivity; and
 - A strong and growing visitor economy.
- 5.15. To conclude, the aforementioned economic growth strategies provide justification for exceeding the minimum standard method housing figure in the South Staffordshire context.

Strategic Infrastructure Improvements

- 5.16. PPG Guidance also outlines how strategic infrastructure improvements that are likely to drive an increase in the homes needed locally provide justification for exceeding the standard housing method figure. Our previous representations (see Appendix 6) set out the infrastructure improvements and projects which need to be taken into consideration when establishing South Staffordshire's housing requirement, and these are still considered of relevance here.

- 5.17. As part of the Publication Plan consultation, the Council have published an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2022). Whilst a number of the infrastructure projects in the plan relate to education, additional car parking provision etc, others are transport related such as road infrastructure improvements to help deliver the ROF Featherstone Strategic Employment site, and upgrades to Gailey Island associated with WMI. We have already outlined the economic growth benefits that will arise from the strategic employment sites, with the planned highways infrastructure helping to unlock their potential.
- 5.18. Table 6.1 of the South Staffordshire District Integrated Transport Strategy (October 2017) outlines potential and planned infrastructure projects in the District. Notably, Landywood Railway Station features in the Plan, including the 'Landywood rail station gateway project' and the aim to provide earlier and later trains and a half-hourly off-peak service from Landywood (which has now been achieved).
- 5.19. At a more strategic level, HS2 is clearly a key infrastructure project with a proposed new station in Stafford to the north. Phase 2a of HS2 was approved by Parliament in 2021, connecting Birmingham with Crewe. South Staffordshire District borders Stafford District to the north, therefore there will be evident economic growth benefits for South Staffordshire arising from the proposals⁷. For example, spurred on by HS2 connectivity at Stafford, Stoke and Macclesfield, the 'Cheshire & Staffordshire HS2 Growth Strategy' aims to deliver 100,000 new homes and 120,000 new jobs by 2040.
- 5.20. South Staffordshire is also likely to see significant benefits arising from the development of the West Midlands Interchange (WMI) which represents a strategic infrastructure project that achieved consent through the DCO process in May 2020. Once complete, the Interchange is expected to deliver up to 8 million sq ft of logistics floorspace and support around 8,500 jobs and given its location, it is reasonable to expected a good proportion of these to be taken by South Staffordshire residents – either existing or new people attracted to the area by new employment opportunities.
- 5.21. Finally, Highways England granted a DCO in April 2022 for a new Link Road between the M6 and M54, to reduce pressure on the A460, at an estimated cost of £779m, and this clearly represents a significant piece of strategic infrastructure that will support additional growth in the future. Work on this scheme is set to commence in 2023.
- 5.22. Therefore, the above infrastructure improvements and projects need to be taken into consideration when establishing South Staffordshire's housing requirement.

Previous Delivery

- 5.23. Previous delivery had been broadly in line with the Standard Method figure of 241 for the majority of the last 20 years, however the year 2021/2022 saw elevated delivery of 530 dwellings which has increased the average delivery to 265 dpa since 2001 and 284 over the Core Strategy period (2014/15–2021/22)⁸, which is 10–18% higher than the requirement. What's more the Council's latest 'Housing Monitoring and Five Year Housing Land Supply' document, dated April 2021, projects delivery at an average 363 dpa from 2021 – 2026,

⁷ <https://www.hs2.org.uk/why/connectivity/>

⁸ According to government live table 122.

indicating that the 2021/2022 figure was not an anomaly and that delivery is trending upwards, which might support an uplift in the requirement in the coming years.

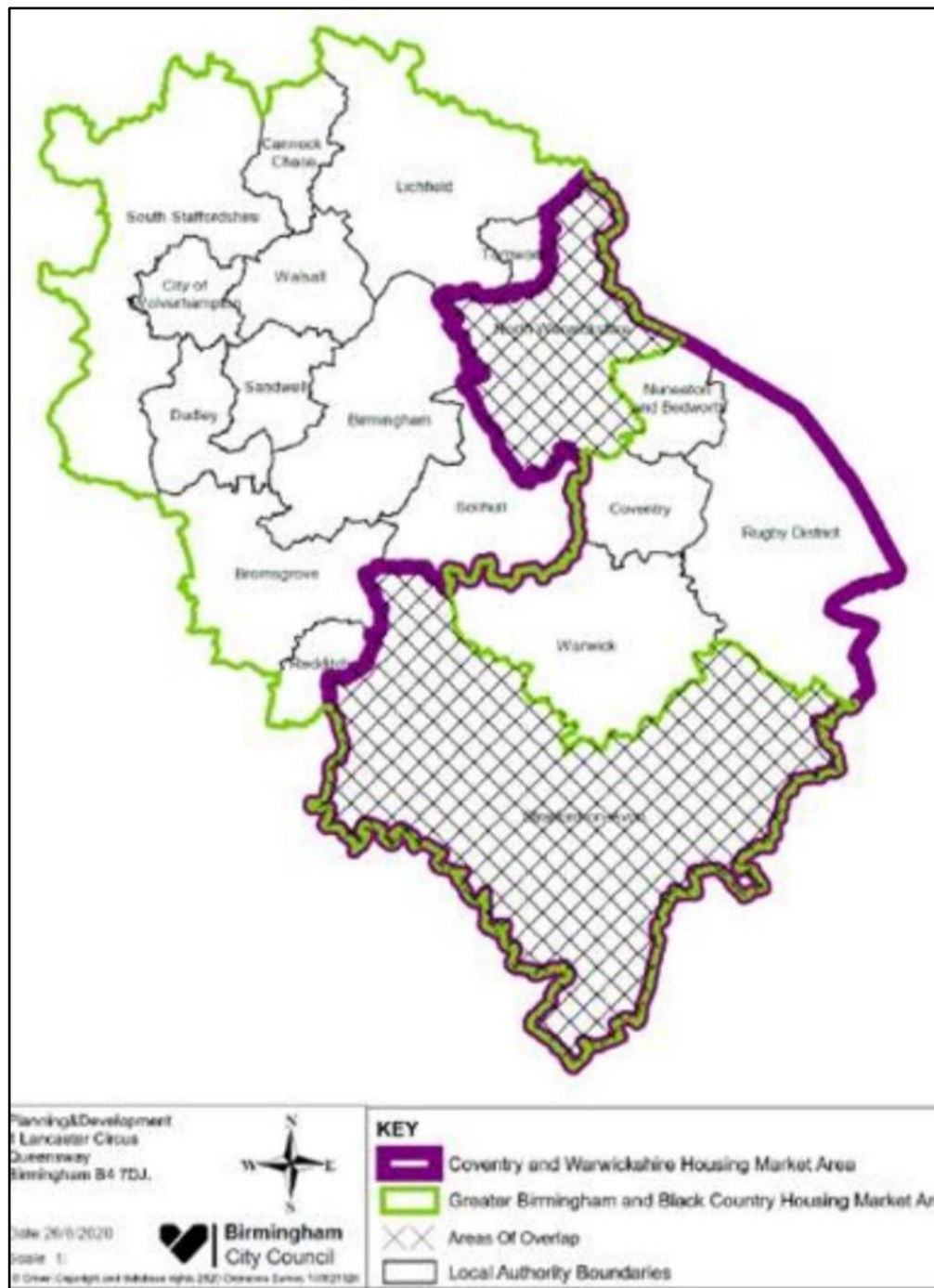
Previous Assessments/SHMAs

- 5.24. Whilst there is an October 2022 Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (SHMA), prepared by HDH Planning & Development, this does not seek to establish an objectively assessed housing need (OAN) figure instead it simply applies the standard method.
- 5.25. The last assessment to fully consider need, beyond the standard method, was the March 2017 Black Country and South Staffordshire SHMA, prepared by Peter Brett Associates. Table 7.1 of the report states that the OAN requirement for South Staffordshire is 270 dpa. This OAN figure covers the time period 2014 to 2036, and was calculated taking into account market signal adjustments, economic growth etc. Paragraph 7.30 confirms that the OAN figure does not include meeting unmet housing needs from elsewhere in the Housing Market Area (HMA).
- 5.26. However, paragraph 7.31 of the 2017 SHMA notes how there is scope for South Staffordshire to offset some of the wider unmet cross-boundary need, because demand for new homes in this area is higher than other parts of the HMA. This seems to be a reasonable assertion.

Meeting Wider Unmet Needs within Greater Birmingham

- 5.27. Paragraph 5.12/ Table 7 of the Publication Plan document confirms that South Staffordshire will accommodate up to 4,000 dwellings towards the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA, which is unchanged from all the previous consultations dating back to 2018.
- 5.28. Concerns remain on this matter, namely that the 4,000-unit uplift goes far enough to meet the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area, given the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities who are unable to sufficiently contribute to the wider Greater Birmingham needs. Whilst it is welcomed that South Staffordshire District Council is looking to contribute towards the delivery of unmet needs from the wider GBHMA, the 4,000 figure does not appear to be based on robust evidence of site capacity and constraints within the relevant local authorities.
- 5.29. The latest GBHMA Position Statement Addendum is from December 2021 provides a detailed update to the housing supply position up to 2031 (with a base date of 31st March 2020) which is largely based on the trajectories and committed supplies of adopted local plans. It confirms a total supply of 201,677 against a requirement of 207,979, generating a shortfall of 6,302. Whilst this shortfall is just 2% of the overall requirement the total supply/ shortfall has deteriorated by 3,705 dwellings since 2019 showing a negative direction of travel.
- 5.30. However it is the unmet need and supply position beyond 2031 which is of real concern, as much of this supply is not yet committed and reliant on emerging plans to cover the extended period to 2039/2040.

Figure 5.2 – Map of Authorities in Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area



5.31. Whilst the December 2021 Position Statement does not provide detailed supply estimates beyond 2031 it does give an indication of the latest estimates of unmet need beyond that and which authorities are proposing to contribute (at Appendix 2 of the statement), and, combined with the latest evidence from the relevant authorities, it is worth noting the following:

- The appendix 2 table confirms an unmet need from Birmingham of 37,900 from 2011 to 2031 and an unmet need from Black Country of 28,329 from 2018 to 2039. So a total unmet need of 66,139 from 2011–2039.
- It then confirms adopted/ proposed contributions to unmet need from the remaining authorities⁹, which total 13,935. This leaves a potential shortfall of as much as 52,204.
- Now this doesn't specify the exact periods over which these shortfalls/ contributions cover so we cross reference this with the committed supply to 2031 and wider evidence. The main position statement confirms a residual shortfall of 6,302 to 2031; whilst the Black Country Regulation 18 evidence suggested a shortfall of 11,888 over the period 2031–2039, suggesting an overall residual shortfall of at least 18,190 beyond 2031.
- Of the 13,935 of proposed contributions to meeting unmet need, not all are applicable to the period 2031 to 2039, with Stratford on Avon's adopted plan expiring in 2031 and North Warwickshire's only running until 2033 (and therefore only making a pro rata contribution of 464 between 2031 and 2033). If these are accounted for the proposed contributions total no more than 9,724.
- This suggests a minimum residual shortfall of 8,466 beyond 2031.

5.32. So the December 2021 Position Statement suggests a shortfall between **8,500 and 52,000**. The real figure is likely to be towards the upper end, given the housing requirement figures used in the GBHMA Statement are now out of date and likely to be an underestimate, given they are taken from the 2016 Strategic Growth Study baseline and don't take account of the latest national housing requirements, which include 35% 'city' uplifts for Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

5.33. Indeed, other third party consultant assessments that have looked at this issue and factored in the 35% 'city uplifts' suggest significantly higher levels of unmet need to 2040. These include:

- Barton Willmore's 'Mind the Gap' Report published in March 2021 – which indicated unmet need across the GBHMA could be as high as 122,828 to 2040.
- Turley's 'Falling Short – Taking stock of unmet needs across the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area' Report published in August 2021, – which indicated the shortfall could be as high as 78,000 to 2040.

5.34. This position is likely to have deteriorated further since 2021, due to the following changes in circumstances over the last year.

- The emerging Black Country Local Plan, which was at Regulation 18 stage, was abandoned in October 2022, with the four authorities unable to reach agreement on an approach to meeting future development needs. Each of the four authorities will now have to prepare their own Local Plans, which is likely to lead to significant delays

⁹ South Staffordshire (4,000); Lichfield (2,655); Cannock Chase (500); Solihull (2,105); North Warwickshire (3,790 + 620); Stratford on Avon (2,720 + 265)

in allocating sites to meet the housing need in 4 of the 14 authorities in the wider HMA, which will impact the supply position to 2039.

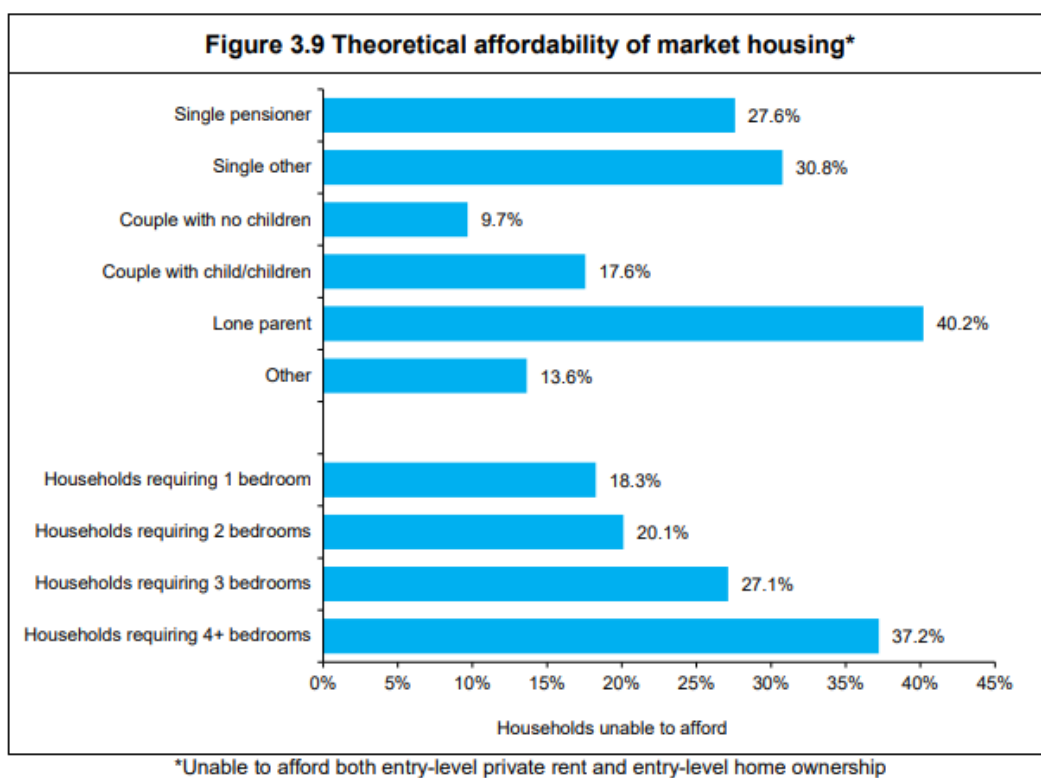
- The recent Written Ministerial Statement dated 5th December 2022, amendments to the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) and potential upcoming changes to the NPPF in respect of the Local Plan process, housing requirements and Green Belt release are also likely to delay Local Plans further and have a significant negative effect on supply in GBHMA.

- 5.35. In terms of how this shortfall may be met, the higher range shortfall figure of 120,000 would require the 14 authorities in the GBMHA to take over 8,500 dwellings each, although it is unclear whether adopted or proposed contributions to unmet from the 14 constituent authorities are included in this or how realistic this would be to achieve under the current duty to cooperate regime and without some form of wider strategic plan for the region.
- 5.36. The lower range shortfall figure of 8,500 does already account for all the adopted and proposed contributions from the constituent authorities (including 4,000 from South Staffordshire), with the remaining authorities largely those that aren't able to meet their own needs in full (Birmingham, Redditch, Tamworth and Black Country).
- 5.37. Therefore, either way, the only logical way this shortfall will be met is by existing authorities like South Staffordshire, who can meet their needs, and are already taking or offering to take unmet need, accommodating more.
- 5.38. Furthermore, even with the evident uncertainty around the extent of housing shortfall, the 4,000 unmet need figure suggested by South Staffordshire is not clearly justified and there is significant scope to increase the proportion that South Staffordshire takes of the unmet GBBCHMA housing need. The District covers a significant geographical area that wraps around the Major Urban Area along the western and north western boundaries of the Black Country. The District is also free of significant physical and environmental constraints and has strong functional links with the Black Country and Birmingham. These opportunities for increasing housing growth are less prevalent in the majority of other LPAs across the HMA, including the Black Country Authorities, Birmingham City, Tamworth Borough and Redditch as noted above.
- 5.39. Therefore, there is a compelling case to increase the proportion that South Staffordshire takes of the unmet housing need above 4,000 dwellings. The apportionment of unmet need across the relevant LPAs should be based on a robust capacity study, as opposed to figures which do not appear to be justified or based on demonstrable evidence. It is a matter of strategic, cross-boundary importance that the housing needs of the GBBCHMA are met, based on robust capacity evidence.
- 5.40. On a final note, the strong economic and geographic links that South Staffordshire shares with the Black Country and Birmingham is crucial to meeting the housing needs of the wider HMA. As identified throughout these representations, Dunston Garden Village and its proposed train station is well placed to meet these housing needs, benefiting from an excellent location in relation to the adjoining Black Country conurbation, and with direct rail connections to Birmingham City Centre.

Housing Affordability

- 5.41. Whilst affordability is factored into the standard method calculation, the Housing Market Assessment Update 2022 (HMAU) contains new data on affordability, including initial findings from the 2021 census which has not yet been picked up by the standard method and demonstrates worsening affordability in recent years which is acknowledged to be one of the principle indicators that housing needs are not being met.
- 5.42. Indeed, the 2022 SHMA confirms that the average housing price in South Staffordshire rose by 19.0% between 2019 and 2021, above the national average. The affordability ratio in South Staffordshire has risen from 7.39 to 8.43 between 2018 and 2022. Figure 5.3 below illustrates the affordability challenges for within South Staffordshire, with the challenges particularly acute for larger family homes and lone parents.

Figure 5.3 – Theoretical affordability of market housing

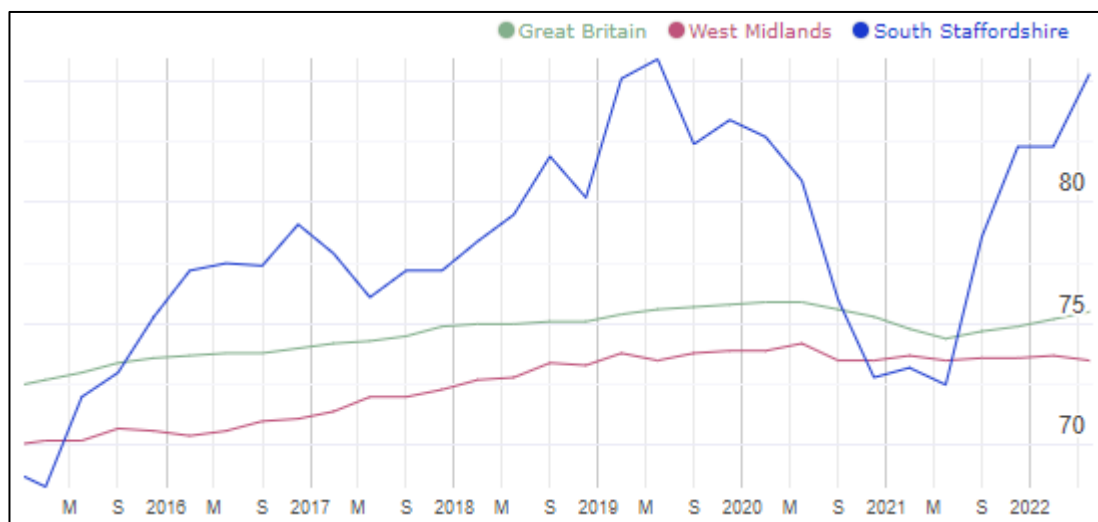


- 5.43. This significant rise in house prices and the corresponding affordability of housing in South Staffordshire provides a compelling case for the need for additional market housing to alleviate cost pressures, and this would also assist in delivering additional affordable housing.
- 5.44. The HMAU identifies the north east sub area as having the lowest median house prices in South Staffordshire which includes the settlement of Great Wyrley. The allocation of additional sites within the north east sub area represents the most appropriate location for housing which is affordable and meets the household requirements set out within the HMAU.
- 5.45. Therefore, the significant housing affordability increases since 2019 need to be taken into consideration when determining the level and location of any additional housing, should this is required through the examination and Main Mods process.

Market Signals and Employment Trends

- 5.46. The previous 2021 representations to the Preferred Options considered the level of new housing provision required in South Staffordshire. It is helpful to look at past employment trends in the area, which are a relevant market signal in line with para 2a-015-20190220 of the PPG, as housing need will be driven to a large extent by changes in the labour market.
- 5.47. Whilst the latest Housing Market Assessment Update 2022 points to low unemployment and higher levels of skilled rolls than the national average, we present further recent evidence demonstrating the strong employment growth in South Staffordshire and the impacts this will have on future housing requirement.
- 5.48. Utilising Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, the previous representations highlighted strong employment and job growth from 1998 to 2019, outperforming West Midlands and national growth.
- The district saw total employment increase by around 3,000 from 1998-2008, equating to annual growth of 1.1%. This was above the annual increases in West Midlands and Great Britain of 0.3% and 0.9% per annum respectively.
 - The district experienced jobs growth of 2% p.a. from 2009-2015, equating to around 4,000 more jobs. This was higher than the increases of 0.8% p.a. in the West Midlands and 1% p.a. in Great Britain over the same timeframe.
- 5.49. The 2021 representations detailed how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on job numbers in South Staffordshire in 2020, with a reduction in job growth in line with trends seen nationally. The latest ONS figures to June 2022 show strong employment growth in South Staffordshire following a dip during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Figure 5.3 below illustrates this growth, with 85.3% economically active residents, a growth from 72.5% in June 2021. This far outstrips the average figures for the West Midlands (73.5%) and nationally (75.5%). This rapid employment growth in South Staffordshire coming out of the pandemic indicates the strength of the labour market and wider economy.

Figure 5.4 – Percentage of those in employment



- 5.50. The ABI and BRES data indicate that South Staffordshire’s labour market performed strongly between 1998 and 2019, and again since 2021, following a dip during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.51. As it stands, South Staffordshire is planning for delivery of 241 dwellings per annum, which is based on housing need derived from the standard method, which is still based on the 2014 household projections and does not take account of recent economic growth aspirations. Indeed the benefits associated with HS2 and the West Midlands Freight Interchange (WMFI) will not have been factored in, and it does not seem unreasonable to expect the District to continue to experience strong jobs growth over the next 10–15 years in line with the wider trend since 1998. This is likely to place further pressure on the housing market and lead to increased demand for homes in South Staffordshire to support the associated jobs, with more sites required to meet this increased demand, and a new settlement at Dunston would be ideally placed to support employment and housing growth.

Providing a Buffer to Overall Supply

- 5.52. In addition to the housing requirement issues set out above, the Local Plan Review must also consider the total supply figure required to ensure that this overall requirement is met, and surpassed (in line with the requirement to significantly boost the supply of homes in paragraph 60 of the NPPF).
- 5.53. As noted, the housing target suggested in the Publication Plan is **9,089** over the 20 year period from 2018 to 2039.
- 5.54. Table 8 suggests a total supply of 9,588 dwellings. A windfall allowance of 600 dwellings has been added on top of this, which is an increase from the 450 dwellings presented at the Preferred Options stage. This brings the overall land supply figure within the Publication Plan to **10,188**.
- 5.55. Therefore, the total proposed supply exceeds the target by 1,099 dwellings or **10.7%**. There remain concerns with this level of headroom (which has reduced from 12.9% in the Preferred Options) as it does not allow sufficient flexibility to provide a choice and range of sites and to allow for under delivery of allocated/ committed sites, particularly given the number of strategic sites and level green belt release proposed.
- 5.56. The text of policy DS4 needs to be updated to reflect this as it still says that it provides *“approximately 13% additional homes to ensure plan flexibility”*.
- 5.57. In addition, the increased level of windfall sites (600 or 5.8%) as optimistic, as sources of windfall supply will inevitably dry up once the plan is in place and as more sites are allocated. Given table 8 already picks up a large number of single dwelling consents in the smaller settlements, so this could be considered double counting.
- 5.58. Paragraph 60 of the 2021 NPPF is clear that the Government have a continued commitment to significantly boost the supply of homes. Paragraph 23 of the NPPF also notes how strategic policies should provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed needs over the plan period, in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For this reason, the previous position, that a higher land supply buffer is used in order to provide greater certainty that development requirements will be met, has to be maintained.

- 5.59. Indeed, the HBF commonly recommend a 20% buffer is added to housing land supply. The inclusion of such a buffer would provide much greater flexibility for delivery slippage or elongated delivery timescales, and it is important to note that the housing requirement should be viewed as a minimum, which Council's should be seeking to surpass in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Furthermore, the 20% buffer would provide greater choice and competition in the land market and greater flexibility to respond to changing circumstances.
- 5.60. Providing a 20% buffer on the proposed requirement equates to **1,818 dwellings** which would generate a total supply of **10,907** and require allocations for a further 719 dwellings and this would increase further should a higher requirement/ unmet need figure be progressed.

Associated Employment Needs in Policy DS4

- 5.61. We do not provide any detailed commentary or analysis on the employment needs and land requirements set out in policy DS4, other than to highlight and support the fact that the plan makes significant provision to accommodate unmet employment needs from the Black Country authorities and wider functional economic market area (FEMA).
- 5.62. That said, if the housing needs are to be reconsidered in line with our recommendations in this section then employment needs will need to be reconsidered at the same time to ensure that these needs are fully aligned and to avoid any associated negative impacts such as unsustainable commuting patterns.

Conclusions on Housing Need/ Policy DS4

- 5.63. To conclude, all of the reasons outlined above provide justification for a higher housing requirement which exceeds the minimum starting point provided by the standard method (241 dpa), with a further uplift to deal with wider unmet need, in addition to what South Staffordshire have already agreed to accommodate (4,000 dwellings); with Dunston Garden Village offering an obvious location to meet this strategic need, given its scale, relative lack of constraints and connectivity with the national rail and road networks.
- 5.64. Accordingly, whilst not challenging the soundness of the plan, we ask that the overall housing requirements and buffers within policy DS4 are reconsidered to ensure it is positively prepared (along with employment land requirements to ensure that they are aligned).
- 5.65. If the Council continue with the proposed requirements, then the wording should be amended to confirm that the headroom is approximately 11% not 13% as suggested.
- 5.66. As such the policy is not positively prepared, justified and consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

Duty to Cooperate Implications

- 5.67. Finally we stress that in suggesting that South Staffordshire should consider accommodating a higher level of unmet need from the wider GBHMA, we are not suggesting they have failed the duty to cooperate (DtC).
- 5.68. In fact, it is clear from the Duty to Cooperate Paper 2022 that South Staffordshire have undertaken extensive engagement with adjacent authorities and have committed to helping

meet unmet needs since early versions of the plan, which is as much as the DtC can realistically achieve in its current format, which deals with each authority on an individual, ad hoc basis.

- 5.69. Indeed, it is clear that a wider strategic plan for the region, with proper Development Plan status (similar to Places for Everyone in Greater Manchester), is needed to properly tackle the acute unmet need issue across Greater Birmingham.

It is also worth noting that the abandonment of the Black Country Local Plan does not affect the DtC in South Staffordshire. This is because they have never had a SoCG or agreement with Black Country as a whole, and have instead sought individual SoCGs with 15 adjacent authorities (including all 4 of the individual Black Country ones), along with group ones for the Greater Birmingham HMA and the FEMA. Furthermore, the 4,000 dwellings of unmet need they are proposing to take comes from the wider HMAs overall/ 'global' unmet need figure, so doesn't specifically include an element for Black Country, and therefore the progress of the Black Country plan doesn't affect this and the evidence/ justification behind it.

6. Longer Term Growth Aspirations for a New Settlement (Policy DS6 – Chapter 5)

- 6.1. This section considers the Council’s longer term aspirations and associated area of search for a new settlement beyond 2039, as set out in Policy DS6 and supporting paragraph 5.66, with a supporting plan provided at Appendix G (page 247).

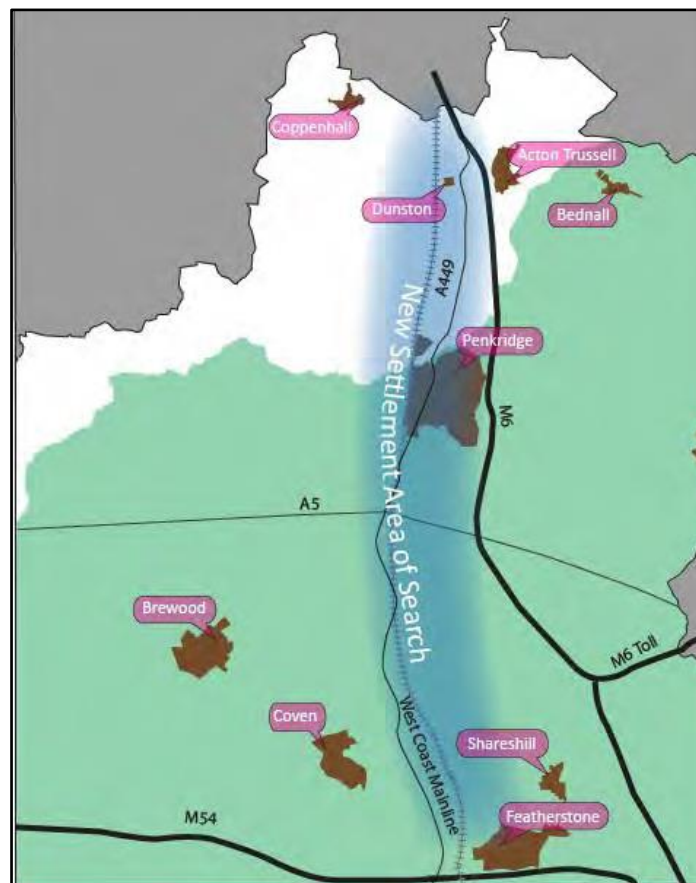
DS6 – Longer Term Growth Aspirations for New Settlements

- 6.2. The policy makes a commitment for the Council to explore potential options within the district for a sustainable independent new settlement. The recognition that the long-term growth aspirations of the district need to be considered within this plan period is appropriate, particularly in light of paragraph 22 of the NPPF which sets out that where large scale developments such as new settlements form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead.
- 6.3. At this moment in time, the Council do not anticipate that the new settlement would need to contribute to housing growth during the current plan period. However, whether the new settlement would be needed or not within this plan period may depend on the outcome of any monitoring on the delivery of the development strategy, strategic sites and allocated sites identified in the plan. As such, it would be appropriate to include modifications to the supporting text and policy which clarify that the new settlement would not be prevented from coming forward within the plan period, if the relevant monitoring indicators/ triggers suggest that it is needed to come forward before 2039.
- 6.4. Such triggers may include, for example, the under-delivery of net housing completions against the annual housing requirement and slow progress on the delivery of the strategic sites and allocated sites. Rather than a change to the overall strategy this modification will simply provide additional flexibility within the current plan period. Furthermore, such a modification may negate the risk of ad-hoc, unplanned development in the longer term which would not capture all the benefits that a new settlement would.
- 6.5. It is set out in the policy that the new settlement will form a key option that the Council will want to consider "alongside alternatives in future plan-making". At this moment in time, it is not clear what spatial alternatives there are to a new settlement. This plan exhausts all existing allocations and safeguarded land and has already identified strategic sites in locations with access to existing infrastructure and services or where new development could facilitate new infrastructure delivery. As such, clarity should be provided on what alternatives to a new settlement the Council anticipate at this stage.
- 6.6. The policy says that the transport corridor formed by the A449 and West Coast Mainline between Wolverhampton and Stafford has been identified as a potential area of search for such proposals. The logic of the rationale for the chosen area of search is obvious as this is the most sustainable location in the district for a new settlement (benefitting both from existing transport connections and the potential for a new station). Indeed, this is the sole area of opportunity identified in the district in the GBHMA Strategic Growth Study, as also

recognised in the supporting text in the plan¹⁰. As such it is appropriate to modify the policy wording to clarify that this is the only area of search for the new settlement, as no other potential areas of search have been identified.

- 6.7. The policy goes on to say that the exact location of such a settlement should be considered through the plan-making process as part of a subsequent review of the Local Plan. As such, the exact location of the settlement is not identified in the plan. However, the underlying evidence base of the plan, namely the Housing Site Selection Topic Paper 2022 and the SA, points only in the direction of the site at Dunston as a credible option and fully justifies the identification of this site as the new settlement at this stage.
- 6.8. Of the four options considered for the new settlement (Land at Gailey Island 1 – 585, land at Gailey Island 2 – 585a, Deanery Estate – 665, and Dunston Estate – 029¹¹), the Dunston Estate only site which does not have major negative effects due to Green Belt harm, being out with the Green Belt, as clearly shown on the plan at Appendix G – which is reproduced below, and with the relevant pro formas from the Site Selection Paper enclosed at **Appendix 7** and associated plan of the four sites shown over the page.

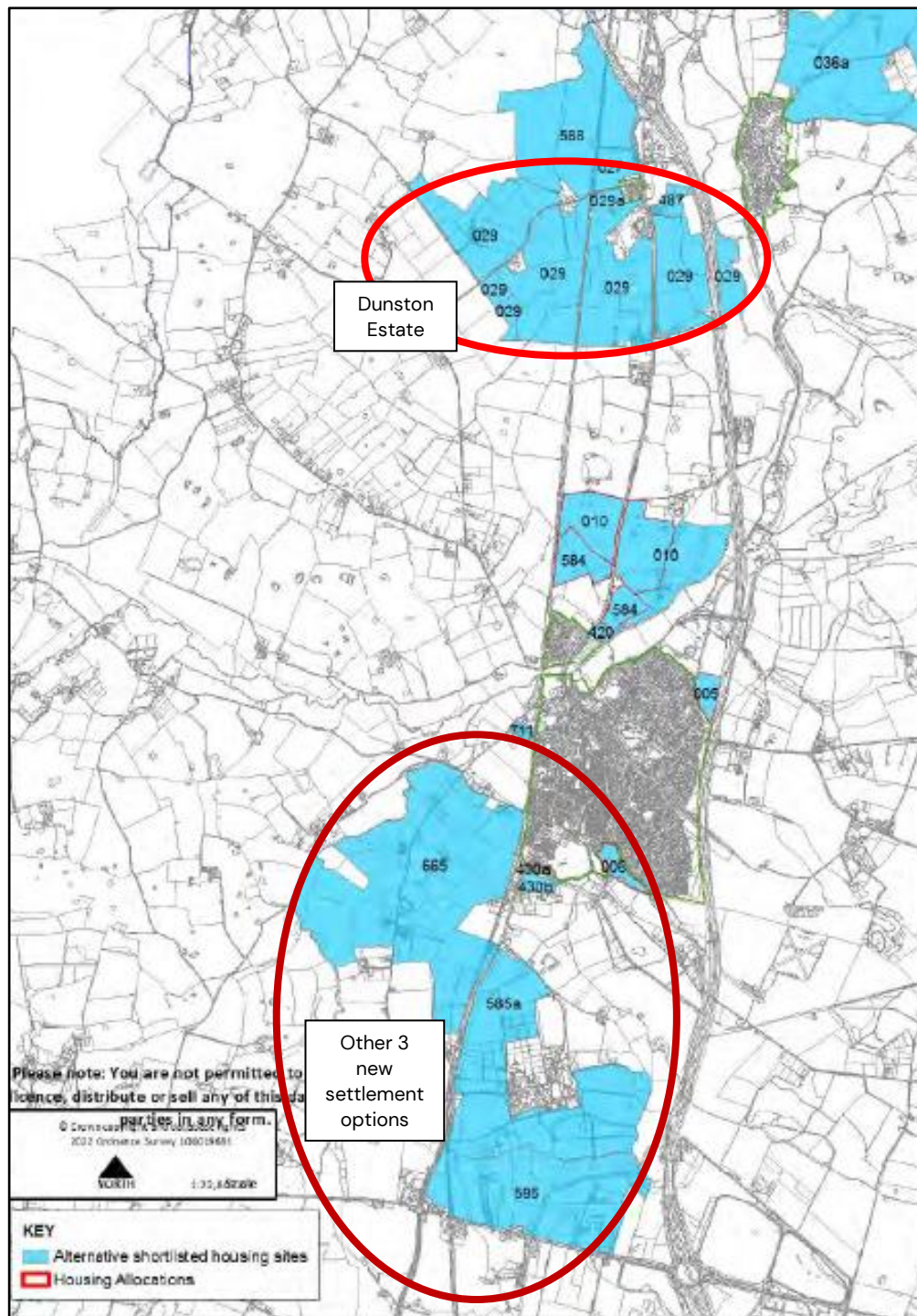
Figure 6.1 – Appendix G of Plan: Area of search for new settlement (with Green Belt area in green)



¹⁰ Para 5.66, Publication Plan

¹¹ within Appendix H of the October 2022 SA (pages H79–H80) and section 5.28 of the Housing Site Selection Topic Paper 2022 (pages 95–97) and Appendix C (pages 540–547)

Figure 6.2 – 4 New Settlement Options (page 97 of Site Selection Topic Paper 2022)



6.9. Considering recent announcements by the SoS for the DLUHC (within the 5th December Written Ministerial Statement), that local planning authorities are not expected to review 'precious' Green Belt to deliver housing, therefore this site to be the only feasible option for the new settlement.

- 6.10. Notwithstanding any future changes to the NPPF, the long term protection of the Green Belt is already a fundamental part of national policy which has simply not been accounted for within the current policy wording and area of search.
- 6.11. Indeed, the policy should include an objective that recognises the role that any new settlement should play in protecting the Green Belt over the longer term (i.e. beyond the next plan period which this policy seeks to cover). It follows that the siting of any new settlement within any future Local Plan Review or site selection process would have to consider all reasonable, non-Green Belt options (such as the Dunston Estate) before it could even establish exceptional circumstances for reviewing the Green Belt.
- 6.12. Furthermore, this site has a single willing landowner, and is the only option where a masterplan and technical work has been progressed that we are aware of.
- 6.13. In respect of this technical work we would also reiterate our above comments in section 4, that this includes a review of rail capacity by MDS Transmodal (attached at Appendix 6), which confirms that this site does provide the opportunity to deliver a new railway station, as there is both the physical capacity to accommodate it within the site, and capacity within the wider network to integrate it with existing schedules. This evidence was submitted to the Council back in 2019 but we have never received any formal response or comment on it, and the Site Selection Paper erroneously suggests that no such evidence has been submitted. This is another key point that weighs in favour of the Dunston site over the other new settlement options.
- 6.14. As such, the Council would be justified in modifying the plan to clarify that the Dunston Estate site is the location of the new settlement. Rather than a change to the overall strategy this will simply provide certainty and give the landowner and delivery partner the confidence to make the requisite investment needed to deliver Dunston Garden Village. It would also allow the Council to formally shape the development through the preparation of a supporting SPD/DPD.
- 6.15. It is set out in the policy, that key to the exact location of the new settlement being defined is evidence supporting any future proposal's sustainability, infrastructure requirements, viability considerations, delivery mechanisms and stewardship arrangements. You will be aware of the position of this site in relation to each of these matters, having seen the Promotional Document, and we welcome an open and transparent dialogue with the Council moving forwards.
- 6.16. Dunston Garden Village demonstrably achieves the anticipated vision for the new settlement insofar as it is of a scale that is self-sustaining and enables a genuine mix of vibrant mixed communities that support a range of local employment types and premises, education, retail opportunities, recreational and community facilities with a wide range of housing to meet the needs of the community.
- 6.17. The policy goes on to list a series of objectives that any new settlement would have to satisfy. Again, we point you in the direction of the Promotional Document which demonstrates that Dunston Garden Village:
- Is beautifully designed;
 - Provides mixed communities;

- Is of a sustainable size and location;
- Delivers a variety of transport modes;
- Provides green infrastructure and the ability to live a healthy life;
- Is future proofed and sustains our environment; and
- Is infrastructure led.

6.18. It would also protect the Green Belt over the longer term which, in terms of identifying new settlements should be a key objective that should be added to the policy.

6.19. So in summary, by identifying Dunston Garden Village as its preferred location South Staffordshire Council would:

- Satisfy the requirements of national planning policy tests that are required to be met when preparing a Local Plan;
- Demonstrate that the Council are positively planning for the future of its residents and workforce;
- Protect South Staffordshire's Green Belt in the long term and assist in stemming urban sprawl from the Greater Birmingham area;
- Reduce the future burden and pressures placed on existing settlements within South Staffordshire that will be subject to planned growth over the next 15 years; and
- Secure significant levels of future investment for the Borough in a strategic location that has very few environmental constraints.

6.20. To not do so could result in the proliferation of ad-hoc, unplanned development in the longer term which would not capture all of the benefits that the Dunston Garden Village proposals are able to achieve.

6.21. Finally, we provide an indicative delivery timeline to demonstrate the lead-in times for such a development and why it is so important to provide clarity and confidence now so the landowner can make the requisite investment:

1. **2022-24:** Local Plan Allocation or sufficient status to progress an application.
2. **2025/26:** Community engagement through the preparation of a new settlement SPD/Development Framework to guide any forthcoming planning application.
3. **2024 – 2026:** Collation of application documents through to Outline Planning Submission supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment.
4. **2027:** Outline Planning Granted with S106.
5. **2028:** 1st Infrastructure Reserved Matters Planning Application submission.



6. **2029:** Infrastructure Reserved Matters Planning Application Approval / Technical approvals (S278, S38, S104, S98) achieved. 7.
7. **2030/31:** 1st planning permissions gained for initial residential phases.
8. **2030–2033:** Initial phases of onsite physical infrastructure work, including earthworks, spine roads and drainage areas.
9. **2033 Onwards:** Residential sales/completions with first residents moving into the development, rising up to circa 250 homes occupied per year.
10. **2033–2036:** Focused on early delivery of social infrastructure such as local centre, transport improvements and schools. 11. 2033–2045: Subsequent reserved matters applications for new homes. 12. Circa 2050/55: Completion of the Dunston Garden Village development.

6.22. Accordingly Policy DS6 is not fully justified or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

7. Relevant Development Management Policies & Monitoring (Chapters 7–15)

7.1. This section comments on the relevant development management policies detailed within Chapters 6–14 of the Publication Plan and builds upon comments made to the Preferred Options in 2021.

Delivering the Right Homes (Chapter 7)

HC1 – Housing Mix

7.2. The policy states that all developments should provide a mixture of property sizes, types and tenures to meet the needs of different groups in the community, and goes on to set the following stipulations:

- For major residential developments, in terms of market housing 70% of properties are to have 3 bedrooms or less, with specific breakdown to be determined on a sit by site basis with reference to the latest HMA.
- For major residential developments, in terms of affordable housing, a specific breakdown will be determined with reference to the latest HMA and other affordable housing needs evidence.
- Developments that fail to make an efficient use of land by providing a disproportionate amount of large, 4+ bedroom homes will be refused.

7.3. This policy is inappropriate as currently drafted. Housing mix is best determined on a site-by-site basis, taking account of site-specific characteristics and local demand in the area. The requirement for 70% of properties to be 3 bedroom or less is overly prescriptive in nature and does not allow for a flexible approach.

7.4. Whilst it is understood that the crux of this policy is to maximise densities and the efficient use of land, there will be instances where sites are looking to provide an executive housing offer which requires larger properties. The policy effectively precludes such developments, by stating proposals will be refused that have a disproportionate amount of 4+ bedroom homes. There needs to be a balance.

7.5. The most suitable and appropriate manner to assess housing mix requirements is by determination of the market at the time of submission of a planning application, rather than at the point of adoption of the local plan; this is particularly relevant for larger long term sites like Dunston. Overly prescriptive housing mix standards can often lead to deliverability and viability issues.

7.6. A flexible approach needs to be taken regarding housing mix, which recognises that needs and demand will vary from area to area and site to site. A flexible approach will also help to ensure that housing schemes are viable and appropriate for the local market.

7.7. A more flexible housing mix policy would be more appropriate. The reference to the 70% threshold for 3 bedrooms or less needs to be removed as should the reference to disproportionate amount of large homes.

- 7.8. The policy is not justified or effective as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

HC2 – Housing Density

- 7.9. This policy seeks the efficient use of land, and a minimum net density of 35 dwellings per net developable hectare on developments within or adjoining Tier 1 settlement, in infill locations with the development boundaries of other settlements, or in urban extensions to neighbouring towns and cities.
- 7.10. It also supports lower densities in certain circumstances and on a site-by-site basis in areas not covered by the 35dph standard.
- 7.11. The efficient use of land as per paragraph 125 of the NPPF is entirely appropriate as is some flexibility in the standards in certain locations; however it still sets a single housing density target across the majority of the district, which needs to be relaxed to allow greater flexibility to allow developers to take account of the evidence in relation to market aspirations, deliverability, viability and accessibility.
- 7.12. The policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

HC3 – Affordable Housing

- 7.13. This policy requires major residential developments to provide 30% affordable housing, broken down using the ratio of 50% social rent, 25% shared ownership and 25% first homes.
- 7.14. The HBF's comments on this policy note how the Council's Viability Study (2022) clearly highlights the challenges in delivering the 30% affordable housing requirement, and that without higher sales values many sites may not be viable.
- 7.15. Paragraph 34 of the NPPF is clear that development of affordable housing policies must take account viability and deliverability as well as need; as it is unrealistic to negotiate every site on a one-by-one basis because the base-line policy aspiration is set too high, as this will lead to delays in delivery. Such delays and issues could be reduced by taking a variable approach to affordable provision based on the evidence provided in their Viability Study.
- 7.16. The breakdown in terms of tenure broadly aligns with national policy, although should include flexibility to adapt to the latest evidence of need and any future changes to the tenure definitions and requirements of national policy (noting change from Starter Homes to First Homes in recent years). It may also be beneficial for the Shared Ownership definition to be broadened out into other forms of affordable home ownership in line with the NPPF to provide further flexibility.
- 7.17. Finally, the frequent reference to further guidance being provided by the Affordable Housing SPD is noted. The SPD should do no more than clarify the Local Plan policy, and it is suggested that if the requirements for implementing the policy are known to need explanation now, then these should either be included within the Plan now or set out within the explanatory text. The SPD is not the appropriate vehicle for setting new policy and or burdens on delivery which may not have been included in the Plan's Viability Study, and the Plan should provide clarity at the point of adoption as to what it requires.

7.18. This policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

HC4 – Homes for Older People

7.19. This policy requires developments to contribute to meeting the needs of older people and other groups with specialist requirements, through the provision of bungalows, other age restricted single storey accommodation, sheltered / retirement living, and extra care / housing with care and other supported living to be provided as part of the wider mix on site, within both the market and affordable sectors, with the specific mix further guided by the council's latest Housing Market Assessment, local housing need surveys and the Housing Register.

7.20. It also states that all (so 100%) of market and affordable homes will be required to meet the Building Regulations Standard Part M4(2), which has increased from 30% in the 2021 Preferred Options.

7.21. It is important to note that these technical standards are optional and need to be justified as per the PPG¹², which outlines the range of factors which local planning authorities need to take into account when considering whether to apply such standards:

- The likely future need for housing for older and disabled people (including wheelchair user dwellings).
- Size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed to meet specifically evidenced needs (for example retirement homes, sheltered homes or care homes).
- The accessibility and adaptability of existing housing stock.
- How needs vary across different housing tenures.
- The overall impact on viability.

7.22. Whilst we note the October 2021 Viability Assessment (prepared by Dixon Searle Partnership) has factored in 30% provision into site viability costings, we have not assessed the methodology or conclusions in detail and no further calculations provided within the 2022 Viability Study. Furthermore, the evidence base has not yet been provided to demonstrate a clear and demonstrable need for 100% provision of these optional technical standards.

7.23. This policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and requires further evidence, otherwise it should be amended as suggested.

HC8 – Self & Custom Build Housing

7.24. We welcome this policies overall aspiration to support self-build and custom housing schemes, and to work positively with developers, Registered Providers, self and custom build associations and other community groups to meet the demand from the self-build register.

¹² Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 56-007-20150327

- 7.25. However the second and third paragraphs suggest that major developments will be required to provide for self-builders, and may also be required to provide design codes to support delivery of these plots, and to market such plots for a 12 month period before they can be brought forward as standard homes.
- 7.26. We do not consider a blanket approach to all large sites with the associated restrictions noted above to be appropriate, as this is likely to have significant negative impacts on delivery and viability for both regular housing and self-builds; particularly for volume housebuilders who will be bringing the majority of large sites forward, as their approach is not always compatible with self-building. We would therefore ask that this requirement is removed.
- 7.27. Instead, the Council should look to allocate sites specifically for self and custom-build housing, in and negotiation with landowners; supported by a more flexible policy that supports self-build on a site by site basis where there is a demand and appetite for it, and in line with relevant design parameters and other policies.
- 7.28. This policy is not justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

Design and Space Standards (Chapter 8)

HC10 – Design Requirements

- 7.29. The policy sets out a range of design requirements which largely reflect the sentiments of the 2021 NPPF and its renewed emphasis on design, although we do raise comments on the following criteria:
- Criteria a – this criteria and wider policy largely relies on detail within latest South Staffordshire Design Guide SPD and relevant national and local design guides etc.; however these documents cannot be given full weight as they have not been subject to examination and are not part of the Local Plan. As such any detail from these documents which is intended to guide the determination of applications for planning permission should be set clearly within this Local Plan policy, to ensure that it is effective in line with the NPPF test.
 - Criteria c – tree lined streets – this should be refined to reflect footnote 50 of the NPPF which states streets should be tree-lined: ‘unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate’, and to note that such an approach is subject to highway authority agreement.
 - Criteria l – simply duplicates policy HC1 and is therefore unnecessary and could be removed.
- 7.30. The policy is not effective or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

HC11 – Protecting Amenity

- 7.31. This policy requires all developments to account for the amenity of nearby residents in respect of to privacy, security, noise and disturbance, pollution (including light pollution), odours and daylight.

7.32. We are supportive of this policy and have no specific comments, other than to highlight that a new settlement proposal such as Dunston Garden Village provides an opportunity to factor in amenity at the outset to minimise any impacts, rather than having to work around existing constraints and issues in existing communities.

HC12 – Space about Dwellings and Internal Space Standards

7.33. The policy requires all new residential developments to meet or exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS), and also provides prescriptive external space requirements. In general terms, it is our view that this policy should be more flexible on both internal and external standards to account for specific circumstances on sites that might support smaller units; and to acknowledge that well-designed dwellings below NDSS can still provide good, functional homes.

7.34. In terms of NDSS specifically, The PPG is clear that these are optional, not mandatory, standards and that their application needs to be justified with evidence of need, viability and timing.

7.35. At this stage, the Council have not prepared the evidence base necessary to support the introduction of these standards. Indeed, the Council's Viability Study 2022 only tests five average house type sizes, rather than testing the 16 NDSS compliant house typologies. There is no evidence to demonstrate that testing only a limited number of average sized dwellings would meet all the technical requirements of the NDSS. This is not a robust approach to assessing the impact of NDSS on viability. This issue was flagged by the HBF at the Preferred Options stage in 2021 but has not yet been addressed, and should be accounted for within the process.

7.36. We also highlight the HBFs confirmation that there is a direct link between unit size, cost per sqm and affordability. The policy approach needs to recognise that customers have different budgets and aspirations. An inflexible policy approach to NDSS for all new dwellings will impact on affordability and affect customer choice. An inflexible approach which imposes NDSS on all housing removes the most affordable homes and denies lower income households being able to afford homeownership.

7.37. In terms of external space standards, these are broadly aligned with those adopted 2012 Core Strategy (Appendix 6), with a 3 square metre increase for dwellings with 2 bedrooms or less:

- 45 square metres for dwellings with 2 or less bedrooms;
- 65 square metres for dwellings with 3 and 4 bedrooms;
- 100 square metres for dwellings with 5 or more bedrooms;
- 10 square metres per unit for flats/apartments provided in shared amenity areas.

7.38. We object to this prescriptive approach, which does not allow for flexibility in design on a site-by-site basis, where creative design solutions may be required to address other issues such as privacy, lighting etc, which fall short in achieving such prescriptive standards.

7.39. Indeed, there has been an evident move in recent years away from blanket, prescriptive standards towards innovative, design-led solutions (as seen in the Manual for Streets guidance). A greater emphasis has also been placed on design in the 2021 NPPF. Paragraph

128 of the NPPF notes how authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.

- 7.40. Notably, the National Design Code outlines how in more urban areas there may be a need for more lighting and shorter privacy distances might be acceptable, while in suburban areas lighting might be more minimal and privacy distance might be greater¹³. This clearly emphasises a more localised, nuanced site-by-site approach to design and residential standards, as opposed to a standardised, district-wide approach currently suggested. Such flexibility, as advocated in the National Design Code, also allows for a suitable degree of variety and in turn the delivery of beautiful places.
- 7.41. Therefore the current approach to maintain prescriptive, top-down standards is not appropriate and at a minimum should include amendments to the wording noting 'where possible' and 'where feasible' should be added into the policy.
- 7.42. To conclude, the blanket introduction of space standards has the potential to generate viability, delivery and affordability issue; which is why the PPG requires a strong evidence base to justify their application. This evidence base has not been provided at this stage.
- 7.43. As such, the policy is neither justified nor consistent with national policy, and should be amended as suggested unless further evidence is provided.

HC13 – Parking Standards

- 7.44. The policy sets out parking standards and recognises that these are 'recommended' rather than maximum standards in line with the NPPF, which we support.
- 7.45. In respect of electric vehicle charging, this requires one 7kW (or better) charging point per dwelling. The Council should note that this requirement is already enshrined within Part S of the Building Regulations which took effect in June 2022; so does not need to be duplicated in the Local Plan.
- 7.46. If the policy is to be retained, it should accurately reflect the national Building Regulations standard which states that the total number of charging points must be equal to the number of parking spaces if there are fewer parking spaces than dwellings, or equal to the number of dwellings where there are more parking spaces.
- 7.47. The Council will also need to keep monitoring viability implications here, as the 2022 Viability Study recognises that the cost of providing charging points has increased significantly since 2021, with costs of £895 per dwelling (houses) and £1,961 per dwelling (flats) factored in (previously the 2021 plan had assumed £500 per dwelling, representing an 80% increase in a year). These are based on findings from a government impact assessment, but it is unclear when this was published, and the situation will need to be reviewed again through the to accurately reflect EV charging costs and any associated costs of upgrading the network.
- 7.48. The policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

¹³ Page 28, Part 1 the Coding Process National Model Design Code (June 2021)

Promoting Successful and Sustainable Communities (Chapter 9)

HC14 – Health Infrastructure

- 7.49. This policy refers to proposed developments causing ‘unacceptable impact’ on existing healthcare facilities but fails to define what level of impact is deemed unacceptable or how that is to be measured. The policy should acknowledge that not all residents of a development will be new to a catchment area of the relevant NHS Trust and that many will indeed be registered with local health care providers, thereby not creating any additional impacts.
- 7.50. Careful analysis is required in respect of the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate new patients, before reaching a conclusion as to what any CIL compliant financial contribution might be, and the requirement for CIL compliance of any request should be specified within the policy for clarity.
- 7.51. The policy is not justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above unless further evidence provided.

HC15 – Education

- 7.52. The policy makes a blanket assumption that new education infrastructure will be required from all new development. However, any such provision to be delivered via S106 legal agreement, must have regard to the tests within CIL Regulation 122 and the policy should make this explicit. Furthermore, the policy should also recognise that new infrastructure will only be required from new development where it can be demonstrated that existing capacity to accommodate growth does not currently exist.
- 7.53. The policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

HC17 – Open Space

- 7.54. This policy sets out open space standards for new residential development, requiring 0.006 Ha of multi-functional publicly accessible open space per dwelling, excluding smaller incidental areas that do not have a clear recreational purpose. We raise no issue with this overall approach, and welcome the recognition that open space can serve multiple functions, however the policy then notes that on-site open space should also include equipped high quality play provision as a default unless an alternative play provision strategy is agreed with the council.
- 7.55. The policy should acknowledge that the type of open space provision, including formal play equipment, should be considered on a site by site basis and take account of on-site constraints and existing provision in the wider area (for example, play equipment may not work within the wider open space strategy on an individual site and may not be necessary if there is an existing play area nearby).
- 7.56. The policy is not fully justified as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

HC19 – Green Infrastructure

- 7.57. This policy seeks to maximise on-site green infrastructure. Where suitable opportunities exist, taking into account local circumstances and priorities, development must demonstrate it has sought to strengthen and promote connectivity with the existing green infrastructure network by:
- Providing interlinked multifunctional publicly accessible open space within new development schemes including public open spaces, attractive cycle and walkways, street trees, green roofs and walls, pocket parks, allotments, play areas and new wetland habitats.
 - Identifying and strengthening potential linkages with green and blue spaces within adjoining developed areas to promote interconnected urban green infrastructure.
 - Connecting together and enriching biodiversity and wildlife habitats.
 - Strengthening green linkages with the wider countryside and major areas of open space such as country parks.
- 7.58. Rigby Estates are supporting the development of high-quality green infrastructure as per the spirit of the garden village approach to development. The only point we wish to reiterate from the comments on Policy HC10 above is that the reference to a requirement for all developments to incorporate tree lined street should be refined to reflect the NPPF.
- 7.59. As such, the policy is not consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

Building a strong local economy (Chapter 10)

EC1 – Sustainable Economic Growth

- 7.60. This policy sets out the Council’s overarching approach to economic growth and the delivery of employment land to meet the district’s needs to 2039. We welcome the acknowledgement that the Council will work in partnership with the Staffordshire and Stoke Local Enterprise Partnership and other stakeholders, and that the Council is meeting both local needs and those of the wider functional economic market area (FEMA) as noted in policy DS4.
- 7.61. The policy goes on to set out criteria and requirements for different types of employment provision, including B8 logistics/ warehousing, where it would benefit from additional wording recognising that proximity to the national road network is a critical locational requirement for such uses.
- 7.62. Indeed, the proposed employment development within the Dunston Garden Village is such a location, with direct access to the A449 and Junction 13 of the M6.
- 7.63. The policy is not unsound but could be improved with the amendments suggested above.

Community services, facilities and infrastructure (Chapter 11)

Policy EC8 – Retail

- 7.64. We welcome the acknowledgment in this policy, that retail provision will be required within the proposed strategic sites (SUEs), and that these will be reviewed for inclusion in the Retail Centres Hierarchy as part of the next Local Plan review process.
- 7.65. Taken alongside our comments on policy DS6 we would ask that this is applied to the new settlement as well as the SUEs.
- 7.66. The policy is not unsound but could be improved with the amendments suggested above.

Policy EC11 – Infrastructure

- 7.67. This policy confirms that all developments will be required to deliver or contribute towards necessary supporting infrastructure with reference to the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- 7.68. We fully support this aspiration, and note the significant opportunities that Dunston offers to provide infrastructure improvements due to its scale and location, including potential provision of a new station.
- 7.69. We would also stress the importance that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan is up to date at the time of examination to ensure that the viability implications of the proposed strategic infrastructure have been fully accounted for in the plan, given current rates of inflation, particularly in respect of construction costs.
- 7.70. We raise no issues of soundness with this policy subject to comments above.

Policy EC12 – Sustainable Transport

- 7.71. This policy states that the Council will maximise sustainable transport measures within all development. We welcome this policy and raise no specific issues, other than to reiterate that the Dunston Garden Village proposals offer significant sustainable transport opportunities including a potential new railway station and improvements to bus routes.
- 7.72. We raise no issues of soundness with this policy.

The Natural and Built Environment (Chapter 12)

NB1 – Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets

- 7.73. The policy seeks to support proposals which protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment. When determining planning applications, the council will apply the principles relevant to habitats and species protection as set out in national legislation and policy. This includes impacts on internationally, nationally and locally designated sites.
- 7.74. We have no comments to make on this policy.

NB2 – Biodiversity

- 7.75. It is stated that all new development will contribute a measurable net biodiversity gain, with a threshold of 10% for major developments. It is also stated that Applicants will be expected to submit a Biodiversity Baseline Assessment with the calculation to be based on Defra’s biodiversity metric.
- 7.76. Following the passing of the 2021 Environmental Bill, BNG is expected to become a mandatory requirement in an as yet unconfirmed date in late 2023. As such, we wish to emphasise the importance of the policy requirements being drafted in line with the requirements of the Environmental Bill in respect of net gain.
- 7.77. There should be a flexible approach to the delivery of the BNG within sites. In a comparable manner to open space discussed above, a pragmatic approach to BNG should be taken where improvements to biodiversity can be delivered in conjunction with open space provision, so as not to put unreasonable pressure on developable area and associated viability on sites.
- 7.78. The policy is not unsound but could be improved with the amendments suggested above.

NB3 – Cannock Chase SAC

- 7.79. The policy states development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal, either directly or in combination with other plans or projects, will not be likely to lead to an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The effective avoidance of, and/or mitigation for, any identified adverse effects on the Cannock Chase SAC must be demonstrated to the council and Natural England and secured prior to the council giving approval for development.
- 7.80. It is noted that the principal legislative framework surrounding SAC’s remains unaltered. The principle of requiring mitigation to address the likely adverse effects of residential development remains valid, and therefore this policy largely duplicates national policy in this regard.
- 7.81. We welcome confirmation that the previously suggested approach of offsite Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs), is not being pursued at this time.
- 7.82. We raise no issues of soundness with this policy.

NB4 – Landscape Character

- 7.83. The policy seeks to maintain/enhance the rural character and local distinctiveness of the landscape. This includes considerations of the County Council Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Characterisation in assessing their impacts upon landscape character. Trees, woodland, and hedgerows should be protected and retained, with any new/replacement planting maximising biodiversity. Guidance is also offered in relation to proposals impacts on Historic Landscape Areas and the Cannock Chase Area AONB.
- 7.84. In respect of the Dunston site, we refer back to the Landscape and Visual Assessment provided at Appendix 3 (and originally submitted to Local Plan Spatial Housing Strategy

consultation in 2019), which thoroughly assessed the proposed development's impact on surrounding landscape character and found it to be acceptable.

7.85. We raise no issues of soundness with this policy.

Climate Change and Sustainable Development (Chapter 13)

NB6 – Energy and Water Efficiency, Energy and Heat Hierarchies and Renewable Energy in New Development

7.86. Our comments on this policy include detailed input from our selected development partner, as it relates to detailed Building Regulation requirements which are critically important to future housing delivery.

Part 1 – Residential development carbon reduction and water efficiency standards

7.87. Our selected development partner is concerned with the requirements for carbon emission reductions in Part 1 of NB6, which go beyond the Government's Future Homes Standard roadmap that most developers are working to and on which they have based their future plans, and indeed our selected development partners own zero carbon homes roadmap – which aims for all their house types to be zero carbon (regulated energy only) by 2030.

7.88. The policy stipulates that all new developments must achieve net zero regulated carbon emissions, but then states that a minimum of 63% reduction should be applied on 2021 Part L. These are different standards, and it is not clear from the consultation how the 63% requirement would be implemented. The policy wording goes on to state that a 10% improvement on the Part L 2021 Target for Fabric Energy Efficiency and that homes should not be gas free. It is unclear whether South Staffordshire have considered the implications of these standards on deliverability as it could significantly impact the typology of homes provided – hence the need for changes like this to introduced gradually and applied equally across UK.

7.89. In any case, it is important to state that we agree with the need for advancing carbon reduction standards, but believe that these targets are not the most appropriate way to achieve the desired outcomes. Whilst the Future Homes Standard should set the overall framework and timeframes for the wide scale deliverability of carbon reductions, where opportunities arise our selected development partner would be open to explore advancing standards on select sites, which can contribute to increasing industry readiness for when Future Homes Standard is introduced.

7.90. They are currently on track to move all their house types across to updated Building Regulations Part L which will deliver a 31–35% reduction and will uplift their standards again in 2025 to a 75–80% reduction – in line with the Future Homes Standard. There are a number of reasons why building ahead of the Future Homes Standard now may not actually be the best solution. Principally, because of the potentially detrimental local impact on delivery through a lack of sufficiently skilled labour available to implement these new technologies at scale.

7.91. Our selected development partners approach, which is based on the Future Homes target roadmap, takes a more gradual approach which they think is the right one. This roadmap, which they suggest South Staffordshire follow, allows time for the government to clarify their

policy position on key issues such as whole life carbon where at present there is considerable uncertainty as to how this should be consistently measured. The 2025 implementation date allows time to unpick challenges, carry out appropriate research & development to test low carbon solutions, as well as monitor smaller scale Future Homes Standard projects and how products and the associated supply chain performs.

7.92. Regarding Part (b), our selected development partner agrees in principle that additional onsite renewable energy should be provided to assist in meeting net zero regulated energy targets. However, they would urge South Staffordshire to be flexible in the application of this policy to take account of site-specific constraints which may constrain the onsite provision of, or offsite connection to, renewable/low carbon energy generation.

7.93. Concluding on Part 1, our selected development partner would like to express their support for the requirement for all developments to demonstrate a water efficiency standard of 110 litres/person/day. Nationally, they currently achieve 105 litres/person/day across all their developments and house types and are fully set up to continue our delivery of this.

Part 3 - Embodied carbon and closing the performance gap

7.94. Our selected development partner recognises that understanding the embodied carbon of all proposed materials on a development is an important aspect of driving the use of more sustainable practices. Whilst in principle they do not object to a Whole Life Carbon Assessment (WLCA) being required, having discussed with their in-house technical experts, they consider there are issues surrounding data collection to be able to undertake a proper WLCA. Principally, many manufacturers are still lacking the creation and verification of data for Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs).

7.95. Most EPDs are from France or Belgium, as both countries require EPDs for construction products. Though there are UK based EPDs, these are often generic values which will not accurately reflect a completed property, so it is important that South Staffordshire allow some tolerance when assessing any submitted WLCA. There are also a few reasons to why in the UK we do not have enough of what is needed to carry out WLC assessments:

- EPDs are currently taking around 3 years to be created and verified (leading to potential disruption to the supply of homes if a WLCA cannot be provided due to lack of EPDs)
- Manufacturers often have not calculated the Life Cycle Assessment of their product/doesn't have any carbon data (impacting the robustness of any submitted WLCA)
- There is no mandatory requirement for construction products to generate EPDs (again impacting the robustness of any submitted WLCA)

7.96. Without the full provision of robust EPDs, the assessment process becomes a lot more difficult / time consuming and the WCLA overall becomes somewhat compromised.

7.97. Also, given the extent of information required to provide a meaningful WLCA, careful consideration would be required around the timing of submission to the Council. Our selected development partner suggests that if a WLCA is to be submitted, then it should be required as part of the planning conditions attached to a grant of detailed planning permission. This certainty on what is being built would avoid abortive resource and cost, for

both applicants and the LPA, as it would prove difficult for applicants to submit a robust WLCA based on Outline application parameters. They would strongly advise the Council to talk with the development industry about the timing of submitting WLCAs should they pursue this via Policy NB6.

7.98. Regarding the Part 3 requirement for all major residential and non-residential developments to implement a recognised quality regime that ensures as built performance (energy use, carbon emissions, indoor air quality, and overheating risk) matches calculated design performance. Our selected development partner have trialled as built assessments across a small proportion of our sites nationally and would like to make South Staffordshire aware of some important issues that should be considered through this Local Plan consultation:

- There are registered inconsistencies between the currently available as built testing methodologies which could undermine the robustness of any assessment submitted. Testing methodologies need to undergo more rigorous testing and application before they are rolled out at scale.
- There are a limited number of companies offering as built testing and many, if not all, are still principally in the Research & Development stage. It is unlikely that upon Local Plan adoption, the current sector will be able to cope with the demand of development assessment – with a potential consequent delay to housing delivery arising.
- Key elements of the current as built assessment methodology can only be undertaken in Winter. This would effectively preclude large sections of a development from being tested and undermine the robustness of any submitted assessment.

7.99. Considering these issues that our selected development partner have experienced first-hand, they would ask:

- that South Staffordshire reconsider the requirement for immediate implementation of as built assessments in the Local Plan and instead consider rolling out this requirement at a later date, once the Government undertake further national scale research projects into their implementation.
- If the policy is carried through to EiP stage, that South Staffordshire adequately demonstrate as part of their evidence base that the current as built assessment sector will be able to meet the resultant demand should all allocations in the Local Plan come forward for delivery on expected timescales.

7.100. Accordingly, the policy is not justified or consistent with national policy as currently drafted and should be amended as suggested above.

Enhancing the Historic Environment (Chapter 14)

NB8 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment and Heritage Assets

7.101. The policy details how the historic environment will be conserved and enhanced, and heritage assets will be protected in a manner appropriate to their significance. Proposals are expected to preserve or enhance the character, appearance and function of heritage assets and their settings and respect the significance of the historic environment. Development proposals

which would cause harm to the significance of a heritage asset, or its setting, will not be permitted without a clear justification in accordance with legislation and national policy.

- 7.102. We have no specific comments on Policy NB8, as it largely reflects and duplicates national heritage policy and legislation.

Monitoring the plan (Chapter 15)

- 7.103. We agree that the principle mechanism for monitoring the plan should be the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and would stress that these are updated in a timely and consistent format each year to allow effective monitoring and the ability to notice trends in certain areas, such as housing delivery (as if the format changes each year it is difficult to track if delivery is improving or deteriorating etc).
- 7.104. We do not make any detailed comments on the proposed monitoring framework in Appendix J other than to note it only addresses the strategic objectives of the plan and their associated key policies. We presume this covers all strategic policies, but this is not made clear, and therefore it would be useful to confirm in this section (or the list of policies at the beginning) those which are subject to monitoring and those which aren't.
- 7.105. We reserve the right to make further comments on this at the EiP.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1. Pegasus Group are promoting the land holdings of Rigby Estates LLP at Dunston, South Staffordshire. These representations, alongside previous representations by FWP and supporting Masterplan, have demonstrated that the land at Dunston is an available, suitable and developable site which forms **a logical location for a new settlement given its large single ownership, location outside the Green Belt, connections with the national road and rail networks and relative lack of other environmental constraints.**
- 8.2. **Dunston is the only new settlement option within South Staffordshire, which is not located within the Green Belt,** and was identified within the GBHMA SGS as a location for the development of a new settlement. As far as we are aware it is the only new settlement option where a Masterplan and technical work has been progressed, as evidence in the attached Promotional Document (Appendix 1), earlier Vision Document (Appendix 2), and Rail Feasibility Evidence that confirms that the site could accommodate a new station.
- 8.3. Furthermore, Rigby Estates LLP have now agreed terms with a major PLC development partner. This partner has unparalleled experience of developing large and complex developments – and will use their integrated planning promotion, master development, residential development and commercial development expertise to ensure Dunston Garden Village comes forward in a timely and fully comprehensive way. We will be in a position to name the developer by the time of the examination.
- 8.4. The latest proposals suggest that the site is capable of accommodating between 3,000 and 6,000 homes, dependent on densities and whether adjacent land is allocated; along with 7.8 hectares of employment floorspace, 4 hectares of retail, leisure and community uses, a new school and a new railway station; within an attractive, walkable setting which generates real health and environmental benefits.
- 8.5. In respect of housing need, the baseline OAN figure should be increased, above and beyond the standard housing calculation figure which should be viewed as a minimum. Furthermore, the additional 4,000 dwellings proposed is lacking in justification and does not go far enough to meet the unmet needs in the wider GBHMA area, given the local plan position and land constraints in neighbouring authorities. We also note that the proposed supply identified within the plan should surpass the housing target to provide a choice of sites, and flexibility to account for any under delivery over the plan period.
- 8.6. In overall terms, these representations have identified several factors that inform the case for a higher housing land requirement e.g. economic growth and infrastructure improvement strategies; an insufficient land buffer on the proposed requirement; and an insufficient level of unmet need from the wider GBHMA. On the matter of unmet need, it is clear that there is yet to be agreement on the full extent of the shortfall, albeit there is a residual shortfall of at least 30,000 to be met by between 6 and 10 GBHMA authorities (including South Staffordshire), which would require South Staffordshire to take a further 3,000 – 5,000 homes, above the 4,000 already agreed, which would increase their total required supply by 30 – 50%.
- 8.7. Finally, we reiterate that the proposed development fully aligns with paragraph 73 of the NPPF and the latest government guidance on Garden Communities in that it:
- Is a purpose built new settlement;

- Provides a community with a clear identity and attractive environment;
- Provides a mix of homes, including affordable, and the potential for self-build; and
- Has the opportunity to be planned over a long period by the local authority and Rigby Estates in genuine collaboration with the local community.

8.8. In addition to housing it will also provide:

- Job opportunities within a large employment area and local centre;
- Attractive green space and public realm areas throughout the site;
- Transport infrastructure, including roads, buses and cycle routes, and the potential train station;
- Community infrastructure, a school, with potential for other community, healthcare and energy uses; and
- A plan for long-term stewardship of community assets, and renewable energy generation, to be developed in consultation with the Council.

8.9. Rigby Estates LLP is committed to working collaboratively with the Council and Key Stakeholders to ensure that the Borough's housing and employment needs are met in a sensitive and sustainable manner, both within the existing Local Plan Review, any future review or additional DPD/SPD process required to deliver a new settlement.

8.10. We therefore respectfully request that the Council formally identify the Dunston site within the current plan, with supporting investment from the landowner, and delivered beyond in line with paragraph 22 of the NPPF.



Appendix 1 – Promotional Document incorporating Site Masterplan (2022 Update)



Appendix 2 – Vision Document (December 2019)



Appendix 3 – Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Pegasus Environment



Appendix 4 – Flood Risk Appraisal – Weetwood



Appendix 5 – Ecology Report – TEP



Appendix 6 – Rail Capacity Review – MDS Transmodal



Appendix 7 – New Settlement Option Pro Formas

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Manchester

Queens House, Queen Street,
Manchester, M2 5HT
T 0161 3933399
E Manchester@pegasusgroup.co.uk
Offices throughout the UK.

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