	<p>Local Plan Publication Stage Representation Form</p>	<p>Ref:</p> <p>(For official use only)</p>
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Name of the Local Plan to which this representation relates:

**South Staffordshire Council
Local Plan 2023 - 2041**

Please return to South Staffordshire Council BY 12 noon Friday 31 May 2024

This form has two parts –
 Part A – Personal Details: need only be completed once.
 Part B – Your representation(s). Please fill in a separate sheet for each representation you wish to make.

Part A

1. Personal Details*

**If an agent is appointed, please complete only the Title, Name and Organisation (if applicable) boxes below but complete the full contact details of the agent in 2.*

2. Agent's Details (if applicable)

Title	<input type="text" value="Mr"/>	<input type="text" value="Mr"/>
First Name	<input type="text" value="Ian"/>	<input type="text" value="Paul"/>
Last Name	<input type="text" value="Deverell"/>	<input type="text" value="Hill"/>
Job Title (where relevant)	<input type="text" value="Senior Planning Manager"/>	<input type="text" value="Senior Planning Director"/>
Organisation (where relevant)	<input type="text" value="IM Land"/>	<input type="text" value="RPS"/>
Address Line 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="1 Newhall Street"/>
Line 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Birmingham"/>
Line 3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Line 4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Post Code	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="B3 3NH"/>
Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="0121 622 8520"/>
E-mail Address (where relevant)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="Paul.hill@rps.tetrattech.com"/>



Part B – Please use a separate sheet for each representation

Name or Organisation:

3. To which part of the Local Plan does this representation relate?

Paragraph Policy **DS1** Policies Map

4. Do you consider the Local Plan is :

(1) Legally compliant	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
(2) Sound	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(3) Complies with the Duty to co-operate	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tick as appropriate

5. Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible.

If you wish to support the legal compliance or soundness of the Local Plan or its compliance with the duty to co-operate, please also use this box to set out your comments.

Policy DS1 (Green Belt) sets out the policy position that is intended to guide development proposals within the District’s Green Belt. The revised policy now proposes a reduced number of Green Belt releases and, notably, does not propose any additional safeguarded land to replace those sites safeguarded for development in the Site Allocations DPD (2018). Yet, despite the pull-back on Green Belt release in the second Reg 19 Plan, the Council asserts that the spatial strategy is ‘positively prepared’ (Exceptional Circumstances Topic Paper 2024, para 3.10). RPS strongly disputes this assertion.

Exceptional Circumstances

Paragraph 145 of the NPPF makes clear that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances must be ‘fully evidenced and justified’, which should be established through strategic policies of the development plan. The Council contends that exceptional circumstances do exist to justify the release of Green Belt land in the second Reg 19 Plan. Their position is set out in the Exceptional Circumstances Topic Paper 2024.

RPS agrees that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of green belt land for housing. This is because, as stated at paragraph 5.3 of the second Reg 19 Plan, opportunities to locate development on brownfield sites is ‘*very limited*’ due to the largely rural nature of the District. Consequently, in defining the revised preferred strategy, the Council is right to look for green belt sites in sustainable locations to meet local needs, as well as the wider housing needs of the HMA. This is a reasonable approach given that approximately 80% of the District is currently



designated as Green Belt as stated in paragraph 5.1 of the first Reg 19 Plan), which represents a significant strategic constraint on growth.

However, the revised EC topic paper only considers exceptional circumstances as being justified in respect of Tier 1 settlements. This excludes consideration of Tier 2 settlements, including Huntington, despite Tier 2 settlements being identified under the Council's preferred capacity-led strategy (Option I) which underpins the second Reg 19 Plan (SHSTP 2024, page 37 and Appendix 2¹). The revised EC topic paper is incorrect and exceptional circumstances should extend to Tier 2 settlements.

In this context, RPS suggest that exceptional circumstances exist to justify additional land should be considered for release from the Green Belt in the District through a main modification to Policy DS1. As explained below, RPS contend that Land north of Limepit Lane, Huntington (site 591) is an appropriate site to be released for this purpose.

Justification for releasing Land north of Limepit Lane (591)

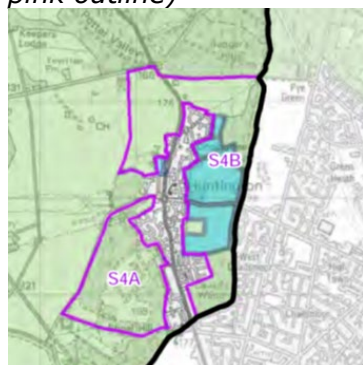
An updated Vision Document and Illustrative Concept Plan has been prepared in support of Land north of Limepit Lane relating to the portion of site 591 previously identified as a proposed housing allocation site at the preferred options stage and is appended to these submissions (**Appendix 1**).

Council's assessment with respect to parcel 591

The Council continues to rely on the Green Belt Study (GBS) 2019, prepared by LUC, but which is now dated 2022. The evidence is split into two parts; Stage 1 and Stage 2. In Stage 1 of the GBS, the site forms part of 'Parcel S4' which is a large tract of land to the west of Cannock town that stretches into the South Staffordshire countryside and wraps around Huntington settlement, comprising 1,110.4 hectares. Parcels assessed in the study vary greatly in size, with several under 4 hectares in size i.e. smaller than the site. In this scenario, given the size disparity between parcel S4 and the site, the assessment of Parcel S4 against the Green Belt Purposes has limited value for these sites in terms of its contribution to the Green Belt.

Stage 2 of the GBS therefore sub-divides parcel S4 into smaller units and the sites are located within 'Parcel S4B' (see figure below). The GBS assigns a 'high' harm rating were land to be released for development from this sub-parcel. An extract from the Council's GBS is included below, showing the extent of parcel S4B

South Staffordshire Green Belt Study 2019 – extract showing Parcel S4B (shown pink outline)



¹ Referred to as 'Spatial Option I: Distribution of planned housing growth to Tier 1 and 2 villages'

The first point of note here is that whilst smaller in size, the assessment parcel still comprises an area covering 180.3 hectares, representing a significant disparity in the Council’s assessment. For example, the previously preferred allocation site measures c. 1.89 hectares (based on measurements set out in the vision document). This area is significantly smaller than parcel S4B, some 90 times smaller to be precise. This parcel remains only a very small fraction of the overall parcel S4 that has been assessed.

And secondly, none these land parcels extend eastwards beyond the existing extent of the built edge and are contained on the lower-lying slopes contiguous with Huntington built-up area. The parcels therefore make a lower contribution to the Green Belt than the larger S4B parcel considered by the Council and therefore their loss would not be as harmful as suggested in the GBA Stage 2 report.

On this basis, RPS does not consider the evidence in the GBS to be adequate or proportionate and so is not soundly-based in respect of parcel 391.

Site-Specific Green Belt Assessment – contribution to Green Belt purposes

In response to the Council’s GBS, and in support of IM Land’s interest at Huntington, a separate Landscape and Green Belt Review (LGBR) was prepared by Barton Willmore (BW) and which is appended to this submission (**Appendix 2**). The analysis of the contribution that these parcels make to the Green Belt purposes and harm to wider Green Belt was assessed through a combination of desktop and on-site assessment, as well as the ability of the remaining Green Belt to perform its purpose should the site be developed.

A summary of these parcel’s contribution to the Green Belt purposes in this location is presented in Table 1 of the BW technical report. In summary, the assessment found the following contributions towards the purposes to be:

Purpose	Contribution
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Limited
Prevent neighbouring towns from merging	Limited
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Moderate
Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	None

According to BW, in overall terms the contribution made by these parcels to the Green Belt differs from that of the wider more open Parcel S4B. In terms of openness the Site currently contains no development, however, the level of containment currently provided by Limepit Lane and the mature field boundary vegetation alongside the combination of local landform and settlement edge reduces the relationship between the Site and higher more open landscape to the east. The Illustrative Concept Plan set out in the updated vision document demonstrates that development on the site would allow for the existing boundary vegetation structure to be retained and enhanced with additional landscape planting to create a clear strong Green Belt boundary. BW therefore consider that



the release of the Site would result in no significant impacts on the integrity of the Green Belt or the more open land to the east or the perceived gap between Cannock and Huntington (**Appendix 2, para 3.7**).

In addition, BW acknowledge that there would be a degree of harm to the Green Belt in terms of encroachment to the countryside. However, given the nature of the locality and the Illustrative Concept Plans, it is considered that the release of the land parcels as a whole would allow for the creation of a more robust and clearer Green Belt boundary, than at present, and would not result in unrestricted sprawl. Overall, the release and development of this land would result in no significant impacts on the wider Green Belt or the more open landscape to the east (**Appendix 2, para 3.8**).

In light of the findings of the site-specific assessment, RPS does not consider the Council's GBS to be sufficiently robust or adequate and so, on that basis, the Council's assessment of parcel's 591 is not soundly-based (not justified). Consequently, RPS contend that exceptional circumstances exist to justify releasing these parcels from the Green Belt and to allocate them for housing in the SSLP.

Site-specific assessment – Green Belt harm

In terms of potential harm, the LGBR provides a response (**Appendix 2, paras 4.4-4.6**) which demonstrates that *'the visual envelope of the Site was shown to be very localised and where visible would be seen in the context of existing development'* and therefore the release of the land north of Limepit Lane would *'cause limited visual or perceptual encroachment into the countryside'*.

Based on the analysis in the LGBR, the Council's assertions that the harm caused to the Green Belt would be 'high' is considered to be justified and so is not soundly-based.

Potential for safeguarding of the Site

Policy SA3 of the second Reg 19 Plan identifies just one site for allocation at Huntington (Land at Pear Tree Farm) for 39 dwellings (site 016). This site was identified as a 'Safeguarded Allocated Site' in the adopted Site Allocations Document under Policy SAD3 of that plan. The site was therefore previously part of the Green Belt before it was safeguarded in the adopted Site Allocations Document.

However, once this site is allocated in the new local plan, there will be no other safeguarded residential sites identified at Huntington. RPS contend that, in the context of an ever decreasing supply of non-Green Belt brownfield land, and a very tightly-drawn boundary around the village, in order to provide for an orderly release of land to meet future needs beyond the new plan period (to 2041) the Council should take the opportunity to identify safeguarded land at Huntington to replace site 016. The evidence presented in this submission shows that land parcel 591 would cause the limited harm to the wider Green Belt compared to other Green Belt site option considered at Huntington through the plan-making process, as demonstrated in the BW technical note.

On this basis, RPS contend that identifying site 591 for safeguarding in this local plan is a logical and soundly-based approach informed by the evidence presented in this response.

(Continue on a separate sheet /expand box if necessary)



6. Please set out the modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant and sound, in respect of any legal compliance or soundness matters you have identified at 5 above. (Please note that non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination). You will need to say why each modification will make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

In response to the evidence presented in this submission, the Council should at the very least remove from the Green Belt the Land north of Limepit Lane (portion of site 591) that was previously proposed for allocation at the preferred options stage in 2021.

In addition, in response to the evidence presented in this submission, the remaining extent of site 591 should also be released from the Green Belt and allocated for housing in the SSLP

Alternatively, site 591 should be safeguarded for future release from the Green Belt as part of the next local plan review process to address future housing needs at Huntington.

(Continue on a separate sheet /expand box if necessary)

Please note: In your representation you should provide succinctly all the evidence and supporting information necessary to support your representation and your suggested modification(s). You should not assume that you will have a further opportunity to make submissions.

After this stage, further submissions may only be made if invited by the Inspector, based on the matters and issues he or she identifies for examination.

7. If your representation is seeking a modification to the plan, do you consider it necessary to participate in examination hearing session(s)?

No, I do not wish to participate in hearing session(s)

Yes, I wish to participate in hearing session(s)

Please note that while this will provide an initial indication of your wish to participate in hearing session(s), you may be asked at a later point to confirm your request to participate.

8. If you wish to participate in the hearing session(s), please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

To properly represent the views of our client and to respond to matters raised through the discussion at the hearing session.

Please note the Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate in hearing session(s). You may be asked to confirm your wish to participate when the Inspector has identified the matters and issues for examination.

Representations cannot be kept confidential and will be available for public scrutiny, including your name and/or organisation (if applicable). However, your contact details will not be published.

Data Protection

Your details will be added to our Local Plans Consultation database so that we can contact you as the review progresses. South Staffordshire Council will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Our Privacy Notice can be viewed at <https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/planning/strategic-planning--data-protection.cfm>

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