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8.1 The purpose of the Stone town policy is to help shape the future of the second key settlement, the market town of Stone, within the Borough's Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy, which will play a significant role in delivering new growth aspirations and benefits intended by the Local Plan. It will provide guidance for new development at Stone in accordance with Spatial Principle SP3, and to ensure delivering sustainable development in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. A significant level of development will be concentrated in the town as it is a sustainable location with services and facilities, job opportunities and transport links, as well as Stone supporting the surrounding rural hinterland.

POLICY STONE 1 – STONE TOWN

Reflecting its role as the key market town in the Borough and the second settlement of the Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy set by Spatial Principle SP3, the strategy for Stone town will seek to enhance its role by increasing both its range and quality of services and facilities. The strategy will comprise the following elements:

Housing

Continue to meet the housing requirements for Stone Town by:

- i. Increasing the range and type of housing available including a greater number of semi-detached and terraced properties and a greater number of affordable housing;
- ii. Providing a range of development locations for new homes over the Plan period to 2031 including for affordable housing. This will include new housing development at the Strategic Development Location west of Stone identified on the Proposals Map, to be delivered after 2021;
- iii. Sites within the urban area of Stone town will have good accessibility to public transport, services and facilities;
- iv. The Strategic Development Location adjacent to Stone's urban area will minimise the impact on surrounding landscapes, be fully accessible by public transport with facilities to encourage walking and cycling;

Employment

Create employment growth and promote economic diversification in Stone by:

- i. Supporting the continued retention and growth of existing public and private sector businesses as well as targeting new businesses through the provision of a range of business premises, support and advice;
- ii. Providing opportunities for new enterprises and businesses by allocating new employment sites with good transport links as well as support and facilities for new start-up businesses. The Strategic Development Location for a new employment site is south of Stone Business Park, identified on the Proposals Map, to be delivered after 2021

Development or conversions must not result in the loss of employment land to non employment generating uses unless either:

1. There is overriding evidence to demonstrate that the current use is presently causing
and has consistently caused significant nuisance or environmental problems that could not have been mitigated; or
2. The loss of jobs would not result in a reduction in the range and diversity of jobs available within Stafford Borough; and
3. Applicants will need to provide substantial evidence to show the premises or site has been marketed both for its present use and for potential modernisation or regeneration for alternative employment-generating uses; and
4. The development outweighs the retention of the sites in its existing use.

Where it is established that existing employment sites have no realistic prospect of development under current market conditions within the plan period, careful consideration should be given in priority order to:

- 1a. What remedial action / infrastructure works will be required to justify the retention of the site;
 - 2a. Identification / re-allocation of the site for mixed uses; and
 - 3a. Identification / re-allocation of the site for an alternative use
3. Stone Town Centre

Strengthen Stone town centre's role as a Market Town within the Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy (Spatial Principle SP3) by:

- i. Encouraging the development and expansion of the town centre to provide a vibrant place where people can meet, shop, eat and spend leisure time in a safe and pleasant environment including provision of mixed use development at Westbridge Park;
- ii. Provide for 1,400 square metres of new convenience (food) retailing and 2,200 square metres of new comparison (non-food) retailing at Stone town centre;
- iii. Increase the levels of office space and commercial premises within Stone town centre;
- iv. Enhancing different uses in the primary shopping area as well as protecting and enhancing its distinctiveness, vitality and viability through a greater diversity of independent specialist and niche retailers;
- v. Improving and strengthening both the range and diversity of educational, health, cultural and community services and facilities in the town;
- vi. Facilitating improvements to the streetscape and the public realm through the enhancement of public spaces that are locally distinctive and strengthen local identity;
- vii. Ensuring that new development around the railway station is reserved for employment uses.

The use of employment sites for employment purposes other than B1 (b & c) excluding offices, B2 and B8 will not be permitted unless it can be proven to the Council that the proposed use cannot be located within Stone town centre.

Infrastructure

Strengthen Stone's role as a key transport hub in Stafford Borough by:

- i. Improving accessibility to Stone town centre, particularly by public transport, from the surrounding villages through better bus services with increased service levels, frequency and punctuality of services;
- ii. Reducing the levels of traffic congestion on A34 at Walton and the A520 road through the town centre including improvements in traffic management and public transport;
- iii. Extending the existing and creating new cycle and walking paths, as an integral part of new developments;
- iv. Improving access to the rail station and secure appropriate levels of parking for both cars and bicycles;
- v. Ensuring there is adequate provision for taxis through extending existing or creating new appropriately placed taxi ranks
- vi. Ensuring that new developments are capable of providing safe and convenient access by foot, cycle, public and private transport addressing the access needs of all, including those with disabilities.

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Provision of new Green Infrastructure (GI) for Stone Town through the River Trent area as well as local area schemes for improved GI provision and biodiversity assets within and around the Town. Facilitate upgrades to Pirehill wastewater treatment works.

Ensure that there is adequate provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities by addressing the following requirements identified in the local evidence base through the PPG17 Assessment with reference to Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator. New development will provide high quality facilities by ensuring:

- o Increased and high quality of allotment provision in the town;**
- o A floodlit Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) is provided;**
- o Improved quality of play areas;**
- o Increased size of green spaces;**
- o High quality multi- use indoor sports facilities in association with community and educational establishments;**
- o Adequate range of facilities for teenagers.**

Tourism

Promote Stone as a tourist destination with its unique architectural character and heritage by:

- i. Conserving and enhancing the character of Stone town centre, its historic buildings, street patterns and rich heritage;**
- ii. Supporting canal based regeneration initiatives in Stone town centre that enhance the context and character of the canal as a focal point and tourist attraction;**
- iii. Increasing tourist opportunities for visitors through additional high quality accommodation, promoting links with the surrounding countryside via the Trent and Mersey canal, the River Trent and by facilitating the development of innovative tourist attractions;**
- iv. Improving access to the surrounding countryside by means other than the private car such as public transport, walking and cycling.**

Environment

- i. Ensure that new developments adopt sustainable drainage techniques (SUDS) in order to reduce surface water flooding;**
- ii. Development is sympathetic to the natural landscape.**

8.2 Evidence prepared through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for Stone town shows that there is insufficient land within the existing town to deliver the housing provision identified. Therefore major new housing will be required on greenfield land on the edge of Stone, to be delivered through a Strategic Development Location and associated infrastructure requirements in partnership with developers and landowner interests. Following an assessment of potential directions of growth for Stone, through the Stafford Borough Infrastructure Strategy published in July 2009, the area west of Stone is most deliverable for housing development and south of Stone Business Park for employment development. Land north of Stone is within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and areas east of the town are constrained due to access issues across the West Coast mainline railway.

8.3 Due to the scale of new development requirements new housing and employment will be required on greenfield land on the edge of Stone, to be delivered through the Strategic Development Location in partnership with developers and landowner interests. The Key Diagram below illustrates the location of the Strategic Development Locations for Stone town to provide new housing development to the west and new employment development to the south of the town. This housing and employment provision will ensure a sustainable community for the future, with new housing having strong accessible links to Walton local centre and Stone town centre whilst the employment area is supported by transport links via the A34 to the M6 motorway.

Housing

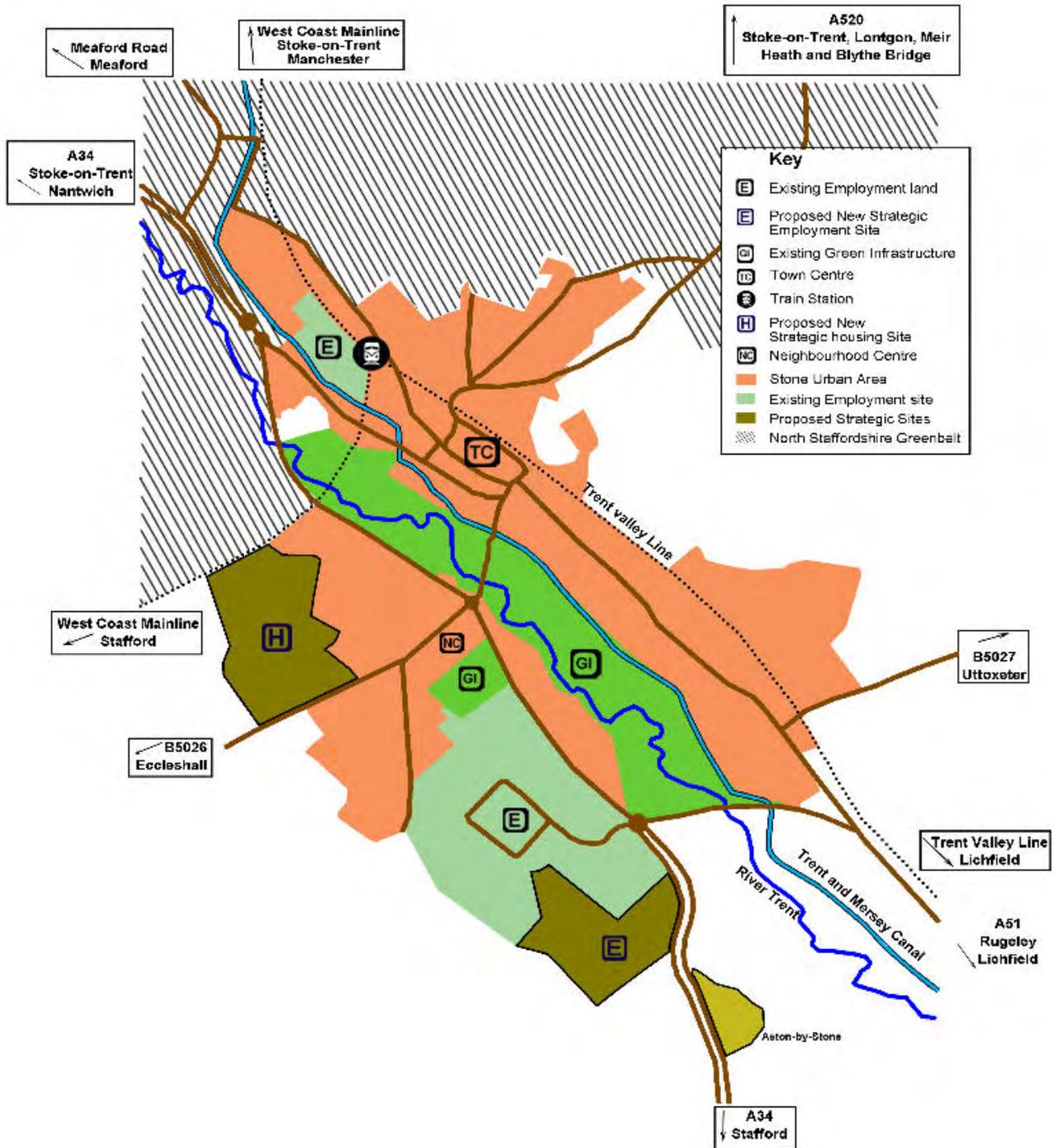
8.4 In terms of housing type, Stone and environs has a significant oversupply of detached properties to the detriment of mid sized units such as semi-detached properties and terraced housing. There is also a pressing need for more affordable housing to meet current and future demand. The tenure is similar to Stafford Town with the majority being owner occupiers. Analysis of the population information for Stone shows that the over 65 year olds will increasingly be a significant group. However an element of family housing will still be required to provide for local needs. Increasing and enhancing the provision of educational, health and community facilities will support increased housing growth including for the elderly population.

Employment

8.5 Stone has a number of significant employers providing jobs for hundreds of people. In recent years new employment development has taken place at Stone, in particular at Stone Business Park. However there is also evidence of existing employment sites being redeveloped for housing. The Council has completed an assessment of existing employment areas and established that the majority of these locations should be retained in order to sustain a balanced future community. The potential supply of employment land, together with a highly skilled workforce, creates the opportunity for attracting new employers to the town.

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Stone Town Key Diagram



Environment

8.6 The most important recreational amenity areas for the town centre is the River Trent corridor including the multi-functional community resource and much valued Trent and Mersey Canal, which traverses the town centre boundary. It provides an excellent leisure facility for both canal boaters and for walkers and cyclists along the towpath. Furthermore, Westbridge Park also provides a valuable recreational space for indoor and outdoor events throughout the year, known as a Destination Park. As part of the Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy the key recommendation for Stone is the creation of a canal and riverside park alongside the River Trent, the Trent and Mersey Canal and the associated floodplain. The river corridors through the town will be important to provide

increased recreational provision and walking / cycling links to other parts of Stone Town as well as links to the open countryside, facilitating improvement of biodiversity, accessibility, flood protection, provide for better quality leisure facilities, and create tourism opportunities.

8.7 As part of proposed new housing development on the edge of Stone, green infrastructure will be a key element for future local communities including the provision of links such as walking and cycling routes as well as enable provision of an increased quantity and better quality open space, sports and recreation facilities for both future and current residents in Stone Town.

8.8 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Stafford Borough was completed and published in February 2008 which identified the extent of the floodplain affecting the urban area of Stone. These floodplain areas do have a significant role to contribute in terms of green infrastructure. No new development should take place on low-lying land adjacent to the River Trent due to water resource implications.

8.9 A number of historic assets, are important to Stone particularly including the Stone Conservation Area, which encompasses the historic High Street, important 19th Century residential suburbs and the canal environs. The Historic Environment Character Assessment indicates that development to the east is likely to have a greatest impact on the historic environment of Stone. Areas identified as having the least impact upon the historic environment mostly lie to the west of the town.

Stone Town Centre

8.10 A key objective in the strategy for Stone town centre is to support local economic growth and encouraging further investment for both Stone and its surrounding hinterland. The success of Stone town centre is due to the diverse range of complementary mixed use developments including leisure, retail, residential, employment and recreational use enabling the town centre to appeal to a wide range of age and social groups.

8.11 The National Planning Policy Framework requires Development Plans to define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres. The town centre and primary shopping area boundaries for Stone town are defined on the Proposals Map.

8.12 Following a review of the extent of Primary and Secondary Frontages and the Primary Shopping Area, and consideration of the mix of uses through the Stafford and Stone Town Centre Capacity Assessment, it has been established that the Primary Shopping Area should cover the main area with predominant retail activity. The primary frontages are those areas which hold a key retail role to the street and areas which include national and multiples attractions. Secondary frontages as those areas which hold less retail activity but are more likely to provide a wider range of occupiers (such as banks, restaurants and other service provision). Primary and secondary frontages are not specifically identified on the Proposals Map due to the dynamic nature of Stone town centre and its mix of uses. However the need for a primary and secondary frontages policy (and the location of defined frontages if a differential policy approach is appropriate) will be considered in the subsequent Sites and Allocations Development Plan Document.

8.13 Based on current shopping patterns and the strong performance of existing facilities, there is a demonstrable need for further retail floorspace within the Borough. Having assessed the performance of each foodstore, the Town Centre Capacity Assessment study identified that certain facilities are trading much better than expected therefore, suggesting a need for greater competition and choice. Based on forecast increases in expenditure and current 'over-trading', there is an immediate convenience goods expenditure capacity within the Borough of £14.26m. In terms of Stone, the Study has identified that there is capacity for £12.8m of new trading floorspace at 2010, of which the permitted Aldi store will absorb 24% of the identified capacity. By 2015, the Study identifies £13.7m for new convenience goods floorspace equalling 1,400 square metres after taking into account the Aldi store. There is the potential for further convenience retail provision at Stone in order to increase local choice and competition. In terms of comparison goods there will be a capacity of approximately £70.4m by 2015 which could be spent in new facilities. This will increase further to £159.2m by 2021 increasing to £258.2m by 2026 equalling 2,230 square metres. This capacity is identified despite the difficult trading conditions that are forecast for the next three years. This is based on the distribution of new comparison goods floorspace over the plan period after taking into account extant planning permission and based on the current market share remaining constant. Beyond 2014 / 2015 the economy is expected to recover, and therefore the growth in expenditure is forecast to be much greater. The comparison goods role for Stone is less significant and it is not anticipated that there will be any significant demand for comparison goods retail floorspace in the future.

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8.14 The Town Centre Capacity Assessment evidence has identified retail capacity at Stone although there are no specific proposals to provide for this provision. In line with the National Planning Policy Framework the focus of new development should be at Stone town centre with sites considered through a sequential approach (edge of centre, then out of centre) to ensure continued vitality and viability of the existing centre.

Neighbourhood Centre

8.15 The illustrative map of Stone set out previously shows a Neighbourhood Centre at Walton which provide services and facilities including daily retail convenience outlets. This Centre is identified within the retail hierarchy as part of Policy E8 and will be defined on the Proposals Map when the Sites & Allocations DPD is prepared. In relation to the scale and location of new housing it is not anticipated that an additional Neighbourhood Centre will be required as part of new residential development.

Infrastructure

8.16 It is fundamental to the delivery of the growth aspirations for Stone that the necessary infrastructure is in place, at the right time, to support the proposed developments. The Infrastructure Development Plan which accompanies the Plan for Stafford Borough addresses these matters specifically, and is considered in more detail in Chapter 14. Comments here are made on the infrastructure requirements of Stone as a whole, and specific requirements relating to the Strategic Development Location are discussed under the SDL site policy. In the case of the SDL sites, the fine details of the necessary infrastructure provision will be developed as part of the Master plan which will be prepared, as required by the site policy.

8.17 Over recent years traffic movements on principal routes bisecting Stone have increased pressure on the road network during peak periods. The greatest pressures are on the A34 at the Walton and Stone Business Park roundabouts as well as through the centre of Stone on the A520 road. As a result of new development at Stone over the Plan period it will be necessary to implement transport management schemes in order to reduce traffic pressures.

8.18 Although significant numbers of people work in Stone there is a high degree of in and out commuting which adds pressure to the transport infrastructure. Travel to work patterns indicate that only a minority of journeys are made by public transport, walking and cycling with the majority made by private car. The location of development and the way that development is carried out is very important in helping to achieve these priorities and in reducing the need to travel.

8.19 Stone town centre has benefited from schemes to improve surface water run off and separation of foul water. An important consideration in terms of new residential development at Stone will be impacts on the current sewerage system, which reaches capacity during storm events due to the combination of foul water and surface water run off within the existing system. New development to the west of Stone will be required to increase storage capacity at Westbridge Park.

8.20 Information from Severn Trent Water has identified that any "on site" mains required for particular developments will need to be met by landowners and developers.

8.21 With regards to community infrastructure provision new development will be required to deliver education contributions to primary, middle and secondary school facilities at Stone. Significant development in the Walton area of the town may require improvement of existing school sites in the locality.

8.22 Electricity providers have identified that the 11kV infrastructure at Stone is at capacity and therefore new development will require local improvements with further details to be provided by Central Networks. However no major gas infrastructure would be required at Stone, with 'standard' connections to the medium pressure system to be provided by developers.

POLICY STONE 2 – WEST & SOUTH OF STONE

Within the area West & South of Stone identified on the Proposals Map a sustainable, well designed mixed use development will be delivered between 2021 and 2031. Any application for development on a part or the whole of this area must be preceded by, and consistent with, a comprehensive Master Plan for the sites including building Design Statements which has been submitted and agreed by the Council. Development must deliver the following key requirements:

Housing

- i. Delivery of approximately 500 new homes with 30% being affordable housing in a mix of housing types, tenures, sizes and styles and a greater proportion will be 2 and 3 bedrooomed properties;
- ii. Provision to meet the needs of an ageing population through new extra care and specialist housing;
- iii. Integration with the social and physical infrastructure of the existing area and its landscape (including provision for new facilities at Manor Hill primary school);

Design

- iv. Development is of a design and layout with appropriate landscaping that reduces impacts on the surrounding area and landscape;
- v. The development should maximise on-site renewable or low carbon energy production including associated infrastructure to facilitate site-wide renewable energy solutions;

Employment

- vi. At least 18 hectares of new employment land south of Stone Business Park with comprehensive links for a range of transport modes to housing development areas;

Environment

- vii. Measure to alleviate flooding and surface water management on the site and reduce associated implications for the River Trent valley corridor through necessary works and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS);
- viii. Provision of a network of green infrastructure including play areas, green corridors allowing wildlife movement and access to open space together with necessary measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development on the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation including Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace;
- ix. Protect nature conservation interests including the Site of Biological Importance;

Transport

- x. Improvements to transport capacity along the A34 in the vicinity of the Walton roundabout as well as deliver local transport network measures;
- xi. Measures to improve accessibility by non-car transport modes to Stone town centre through walking and cycling connections;
- xii. An access, transport and travel plan strategy for the Strategic Development Location that maximises travel and accessibility by non-car transport modes via safe, attractive and conveniently designed street, pedestrian and cycling connections within the development and to Stafford town centre, nearby existing and new employment areas. The strategy shall identify access points to the site and between the site and the existing settlement. It shall also identify construction access arrangements that do not disrupt existing residents and improvements to transport capacity along the B5026 Eccleshall Road and the Walton roundabout with A34;

Infrastructure

- xiii. Provision of a local electricity sub-station and connection to the grid
- xiv. Potable water reinforcement of water supply required
- xv. Waste water infrastructure investment required for sewage due to known local flooding problems
- xvi. Local highway improvements and enhancements of the A34 / A51 roundabout and the B5026 Eccleshall Road

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xvii. Gas reinforcement to support housing development

xviii. New primary school provision required as well as extensions to existing secondary school to accommodate projected growth in pupils

xix. Children's play areas and multi-use games areas requirement on-site

xx. Telecommunications provided through Stone exchange enabled with Superfast Fibre Access Broadband

xxi. Primary health care provision delivered by increased capacity at existing facilities

Developer contributions will be required to provide the strategic infrastructure needed to achieve a comprehensive sustainable development at this Strategic Development Location.

Context

8.23 8.23 Development to the west of Stone is located beyond the main residential areas to the west of Stone and north of the B5026 towards Eccleshall. The key employment area south of Stone is west of the A34 and extends the Stone Business Park industrial location. A primary school and GP surgery are within 20-30 minutes walking distance of the area although Alleynes secondary school is further away and as such may rely on public transport or the private car. There are good links to Stafford and the City of Stoke on Trent by public transport.

Proposed Development

8.24 8.24 The land west of Stone will comprise a greenfield housing site delivering a total of approximately 500 new homes and the employment area south of Stone will deliver a total of 18 hectares. Due to the implications of new development at Stone on the North Staffordshire conurbation's urban regeneration initiatives the housing and employment areas within the Strategic Development Location will not be delivered until after 2021 in order to provide an opportunity to deliver brownfield land development within the North Staffordshire area.

Development Requirements and Implementation

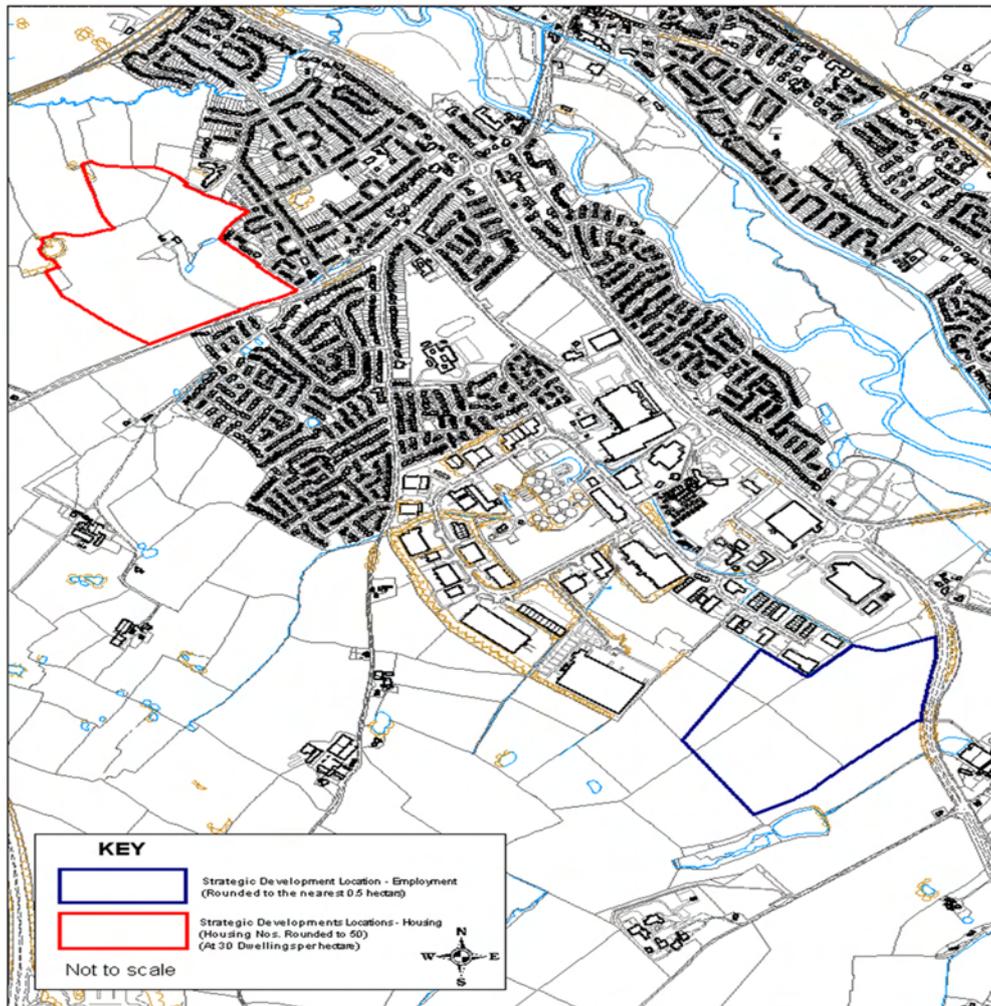
8.25 Infrastructure requirements are listed in the Policy, and further details are provided in Appendix **. Of these requirements the following have been identified as critical to the delivery of the Strategic Development Location.

- Provision of a local electricity sub-station and connection to the grid in order to meet the needs of the new development.
- Potable water reinforcement of water supply required in order to meet the water resource needs of the new development
- Waste water infrastructure investment required for sewage due to known local flooding problems in order to meet the water resource needs of the new development

8.26 Based on current information from the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and working in partnership with developers for the land west of Stone it has been established that the scale of development is capable of delivering the infrastructure requirements listed.

Development to the West and South of Stone

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Stone Concept Diagram

