

Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan



QUALITY PARISH COUNCIL

Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan

July 2015

Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan

GNOSALL MORETON & KNIGHTLEY

GNOSALL PARISH COUNCIL

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Gnosall Parish Council

Foreword

Welcome to the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Gnosall.

In the latter half of 2012, Gnosall Parish Council was made aware of the new local planning regime introduced by the UK Government and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations which came into force in April 2012. Deciding to write a Neighbourhood Plan for the long term future of Gnosall Parish, at a time when the area is also subject to intense, large scale housing development pressure was not an easy decision, but it was an important one. At the full council meeting of January 2013, Gnosall Parish Council agreed to make an application to Stafford Borough Council [SBC] for permission to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan for the area within the existing parish boundary. SBC completed the necessary consultation process with neighbouring parishes and statutory bodies before approving the application in July 2013. The Parish Council put in place a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with a constitution of equal numbers of Councillors and Parishioners. The Working Group began its work in September 2013.

It has proved to be a challenging exercise to put in place a positive planning framework for the Parish within a realistic timescale whilst keeping costs to a minimum. The Working Group and the Parish Council believe this has been achieved and the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish meets the necessary legal requirements, dealing with development issues in a positive, fair, proportionate and sustainable way. Parishioners will hopefully find it interesting and feel able to support it – because it is YOUR plan.

The Parish Council would like to thank the members of the Working Group and pay tribute to their hard work since September 2013, and for the assistance provided by the Planning Department at Stafford Borough Council.

Patricia Alker

Chair Gnosall Parish Council

Jeff Rhodes

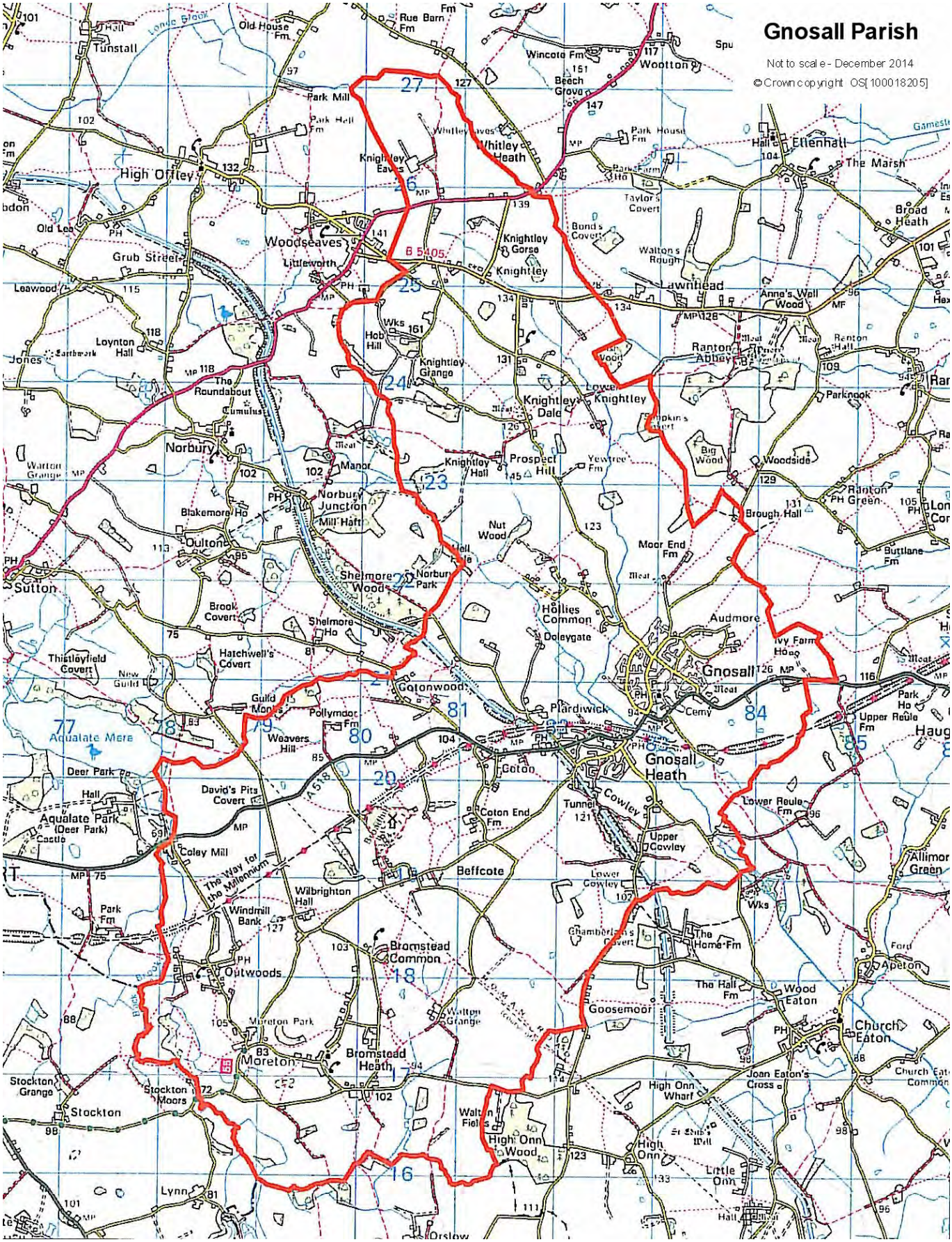
Chairman NP Working Group

Jeff Rhodes (Parishioner and Working Group Chairman)
Keith Abbott (Parish Councillor and Working Group Vice-Chairman)
Jayne Cooper (Parish Clerk and Working Group secretary)
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Map 1: Gnosall Parish Boundary (Neighbourhood Area)



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1. Introduction

1.1 The production of the Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan was supported by a wide range of information. Working Group minutes and all Neighbourhood Plan documents are available on the Parish Council website.

www.gnosallparishcouncil.org.uk

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan Area relates to all land within the Parish Boundary and is shown on Maps 1 and 9. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the whole of the Parish for the period up to 2031, which is the same period as the Local Plan for Stafford Borough Council 'Plan for Stafford Borough' (PFSB). It does not replace the PFSB for the Gnosall area, it sits alongside it, to add additional policies specific to Gnosall Parish. Where suitable policies already exist in the PFSB they do not need to be repeated in this Plan. The Plan is a dynamic document to be kept under review and will change over time.

1.3 The Plan is deliberately concise and is focussed on the main development related issues which have surfaced through work over the past fifteen months. Clearly there are a great many day-to-day issues of public interest, however only those which relate to land use planning matters and which are not already satisfactorily covered by planning policies in the PFSB are addressed in this Plan.



1.4 The Plan includes several components:

- A simple and clear Vision, based on local opinions expressed in the community survey.
- A set of five objectives supporting the five key issue categories which flowed from the survey findings.
- A new Settlement Boundary for the main village area, so as to encourage sustainable development within the new, defined boundary and limit development in the rural area outside it.
- A 'Local Green Space' plan identifying areas of valuable Local Green Space for special protection.
- A set of Gnosall-specific planning policies, numbered throughout the Plan, to supplement the Plan for Stafford Borough planning policies which already apply to planning applications for development in our area.

When the Neighbourhood Plan is in place, Stafford Borough Council will base their planning decisions affecting the Parish of Gnosall on the Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan planning policies as well as those contained in the PFSB.



2. Vision and Objectives

2.1 The vision for the Neighbourhood Plan has been developed through regular working group meetings and consultation. It captures the needs and aspirations of local people and looks ahead positively.

The vision for Gnosall is to maintain the attractiveness and vitality of Gnosall Parish and its settlements and to safeguard the qualities of Gnosall village, whilst accommodating the delivery of growth and development in ways which are environmentally sustainable, planned and proportionate, and which also maximise local benefits to the community.



2.2 After consulting with local people and key stakeholders, five key priorities emerged from the consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan to address. These are:

Key Objectives (KO):

KO1: Employment, Rural Diversification and the Local Economy

To support local economic development to help increase local job prospects through appropriately scaled and designed development proposals.

KO2: Sustainable Development Strategy

To define a new settlement boundary to accommodate a sustainable and proportionate amount of social and economic growth over the Plan period focussed on Gnosall and Gnosall Heath.

KO3: Housing Provision

To deliver new, sustainable, well designed housing development within the defined settlement boundary and in line with local expressed preferences for housing types so as to help meet the needs of current and future generations.

KO4: Environmental Protection and Community Facilities

To safeguard, improve and increase the local environmental and recreational resources of the Parish for the benefit of the social structure, health and well-being of local residents.

KO5: Maximise Local Benefits for the Community

To maximise local community benefits from any new development, by ring fencing funds received and using such funds in line with a priority system for local infrastructure, with initial focus on additional recreational resources.

2.3 The above five key objectives underpin the detailed planning policies in those five key areas, as set out in the following chapters of this Plan.



3. The Neighbourhood Plan and the planning system

3.1 The Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan is a new planning document. It is part of the Government's approach to enliven community planning with the aim to give local people more say about shaping development in the area where they live. The legal provisions to create Neighbourhood Plans are set out in the Localism Act 2011 and accompanying Neighbourhood Planning Regulations that came into force in April 2012.

3.2 The Neighbourhood planning process gives communities the opportunity to prepare a vision and planning policies for their area and have them formally made by the Borough Council as part of the statutory Development Plan. Nationally, Neighbourhood Planning has had a further boost in a December 2014 report from the Government's Communities and Local Government Select Committee on the operation of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Select Committee's report followed a national consultation last year to which the Parish Council submitted comments. The following quotes from the conclusions of the MPs on the Select Committee firmly support what the Parish Council is trying to achieve in Gnosall.

"We are supportive of neighbourhood plans, and commend those communities who have got, or are working to get, a neighbourhood plan adopted".

"Nothing could do more to undermine confidence in neighbourhood planning than for a view to pervade that neighbourhood plans are being ignored in planning decisions".

"Instead of objecting to policies in neighbourhood plans, house builders and developers should be working with communities to ensure that development meets local needs."

3.3 In accordance with legislation, the Neighbourhood Plan must meet the basic conditions. To meet these, the Plan must:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- be compatible with European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) obligations.

How the Neighbourhood Plan has developed

3.4 Gnosall Parish Council is the relevant 'Qualifying Body' under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations and applied for Neighbourhood Plan area designation for the whole Parish area in May 2013. This was approved by Stafford Borough Council in July 2013 after the necessary statutory consultation.

3.5 Following approval of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area, a Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was formed to prepare the Plan.

3.6 The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group consists of ten volunteers made up of Parish Councillors and parishioners, supported by the Parish Clerk and an independent Planning Consultant. Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed from the outset.

3.7 The Working Group meets regularly and the minutes of all meetings are published on the Parish Council website, on which a Neighbourhood Plan section has been specially created. Regular updates and publicity for Neighbourhood Plan events and consultations are also included in the monthly 'Gnosall Parish News', a widely read local newsletter.

3.8 The Neighbourhood Plan has been developed through effective consultation with the people of Gnosall including key stakeholders from the Parish.

3.9 In January 2014 the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group undertook an extensive questionnaire survey as part of the evidence gathering process and distributed this to households and businesses within the Parish.

3.10 The survey provided essential and comprehensive feedback to the Working Group on people's general opinions about the area, what they want, what they don't want, which things make it attractive and which do not. It also provided answers to specific questions about development and environmental issues.

3.11 The findings are summarised in the July 2014 Feedback report on the Parish Council website and were presented, in more detail, at a public presentation in October 2014. The key findings are also described further below.

3.12 In addition to the questionnaire survey analysis, further feedback has been gained through the detailed public update presentation and Q&A session in October 2014, and various ad-hoc meetings and discussions with stakeholders as issues and queries have arisen.

3.13 A local Invitation to 'Submit Sites' was also undertaken to help in defining an appropriate new Settlement Boundary for Gnosall. These sites were identified for public consultation purposes in the December 2014 pre-submission draft Plan. An assessment of the sites submitted by landowners is included in Appendix 1.

3.14 In December 2014 a pre-submission draft Plan was published for a six week consultation period, in accordance with legal requirements. Comments received have been taken into account and incorporated into modifications in this final version of the Plan. Details of all consultation activities are included in the separate Consultation Report.

3.15 The above activities have informed and underpinned the development of the overall vision, key objectives and policies in this Plan. The policies and proposals in this Plan are supported by evidence, as identified in the Evidence Base document, included as Appendix 2.



The Need for a Neighbourhood Plan

3.16 Gnosall lies halfway between the county town of Stafford to the east and Newport (Shropshire) to the west and is a key service village to a wide rural hinterland.

3.17 The origins of the village can be traced back over 900 years to the Doomsday Book although the main expansions of population occurred around the mid-19th century when Gnosall was first connected by rail and then again with planned expansion of housing in the late 1970's.

3.18 The village is in two distinct parts, Gnosall to the north and Gnosall Heath to the south. With the smaller settlements of Moreton, Outwoods, Bromstead and Knightley and a wide rural area, the Parish has great diversity with both urban and rural character.

3.19 Employment opportunities in the village and the Parish are limited to a narrow range of jobs in agriculture and local services. There is some evidence that more people are running small businesses from home with the aid of modern telecommunications, although for most people of working age commuting to work necessitates travel to Stafford, Newport and other larger employment centres in the wider region.

3.20 Lack of access to employment, limited local opportunities, the need to travel to find work and some inadequacy in public transport were prevalent issues emerging from the initial consultation especially among the younger age groups.

3.21 Many of the residents play an active part in the local community. The village has a thriving primary school, a small but vibrant village centre, an active village hall and supports a host of community and recreational groups and activities.



3.22 The countryside around Gnosall contains features such as The Acres, the circular walk known as the "Audmore Loop", the former railway line and the Shropshire Union Canal which are cherished by local people. There is a high level of participation in outdoor activities. The high quality local environment and recreational opportunity based on walking and the canal particularly attracts visitors from a wider area.

3.23 The locational advantages of the village, its pleasant environment and its attractive countryside have brought about pressure for further development as evidenced through several planning applications for major housing schemes since 2011/12, particularly after publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012. There is a strong community perception that any growth of the village will be detrimental if it is unplanned and led by speculative applications from developers and major national house-builders.

3.24 Rising property prices mean that the village is increasingly unaffordable for young families whilst those seeking to retire or down-size find they have to move out of the village to find suitable accommodation.

3.25 In providing a clear framework for the growth of the towns of Stafford and Stone the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough (PFSB June 2014) is more strategic and less detailed than the previous Local Plan and only sets out broad parameters of a strategy to 2031 for the 11 Key Service Villages in the Borough and the remaining rural area.

3.26 The PFSB**,** in keeping with the localism and national planning policy agendas, provides a development strategy for the Stafford Borough area to deliver new development. This includes the identification of Gnosall as one of the Key Service Villages (KSV) with the opportunity to bring forward their own community-led Neighbourhood Plans if they wish. If areas decide not to undertake Neighbourhood Plans, further policies and site allocations for those areas would be undertaken as a second stage in the Borough-wide Local Plan (PFSB) process.

3.27 One of the most significant provisions of the PFSB is how the scale and distribution of housing growth is planned across the Borough to 2031. Spatial Principle SP4 requires provision to be made for 1,200 dwellings across the 11 Key Service Villages and 800 dwellings for the rural parts of the Borough.

3.28 Although the PFSB Plan period commenced in 2011, dwelling completions and commitments have already gone a long way in meeting the future KSV provision up to 2031. According to monitoring data from SBC (Land for New Homes monitoring reports), as of November 2014 around 900 dwellings have already been consented, leaving only around 300 more to be found. This represents a 75% delivery of the planned KSV housing provision in only the first three and a half years of the PFSB period. In Gnosall more than 200 homes have already been provided.



A Summary of the findings from the comprehensive community survey

The community survey provided the primary steer for the draft Plan and its findings are discussed in the July 2014 Feedback Report. The main topics are also summarised below.

Employment

3.29 Employment questions indicated a desire for more local employment opportunities but not for the allocation of sites for employment development. Nor have any sites been submitted for employment development. Consequently the issue has been addressed through a criteria based policy approach in policies 1 and 2. Employment policies E1 to E8 in the Plan for Stafford Borough (PFSB) are already in place and provide a further context.

Housing

3.30 The survey results revealed a high level of satisfaction with current housing provision, and a majority view (59%) for no more than 100 new homes, dropping to 27% support for no more than 200. There was also a strong preference for smaller bungalows amongst older residents and for more affordable homes for young families. These findings have been balanced against the Plan for Stafford Borough housing strategy and are addressed through policies 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, together with the Settlement Boundary policy approach. Development policies SP1 to SP4 and SP7 in the PFSB are already in place and provide further context, together with PFSB policies C1-C4 about housing types, PFSB policy C5 regarding housing proposals outside Settlement Boundaries and PFSB policies N1-3 about design and climate change.



Heritage and environmental assets

3.31 There are a number of environmental and heritage assets and buildings within Gnosall which are already protected legally, such as two Conservation Areas (the Gnosall Conservation Area and the Shropshire Union Canal Conservation Area), Listed Buildings, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Public Rights of Way. The Gnosall conservation area is shown on Maps 4 and 5 for information purposes. Environmental assets are already protected by policies N4, N5, N7 and N9 in the PFSB. Detailed records of these features are held on public databases at Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council. As protection already exists for these assets no further Gnosall policies are needed. However, other local facilities and areas which people considered important are proposed to be protected through policies 8, 9, 10 and 11



Local facilities and open space

3.32 The survey showed a healthy use of local facilities and also a generally good, or better, level of satisfaction with them. Public open spaces and the rural qualities of the area are also highly valued. Suggestions on the need for new and replacement facilities have informed the priority matters for investment using funds generated from development proposals where available, through policies 12, 13 and 14. These policies also flow from the overwhelming support for attempts to be made to leverage local benefit from development proposals which get planning permission. In the PFSB policies N4, N9 and C7 are also applicable. Local Green Spaces identified for protection are shown on Map 10. These are a combination of some areas of open space already afforded a degree of protection through the PFSB and further areas such as The Acres, allotments and the Village Green area on Brookhouse Road, adjacent to the Health Centre.



Traffic and parking

3.33 Traffic is, inevitably, a major public concern given the fact that the A518 runs through the heart of Gnosall and across the Parish. Particular concerns included speeding traffic, high numbers of HGVs and narrow road and pavement widths at certain pinch points. These are matters which either cannot realistically be addressed through planning policies in this document or which are already addressed in planning policies in the Plan for Stafford Borough. PFSB policies T1 and T2 already require the traffic impact of development proposals to be properly considered and taken into account. In that sense these issues will continue to be subject to planning control in the way they already are. In terms of local parking issues, particularly on the High Street, the Parish Council will continue to explore any opportunities for improvement.

Telecommunications

3.34 Questions on telecommunications revealed major support for additional capabilities, such as fibre-optic broadband and better mobile phone coverage. Fibre-optic broadband is already being rolled out across the Parish through the 'Superfast Staffordshire' initiative. Mobile phone coverage and signal strength lies in the domain of the operator's network capabilities and service, and therefore it is not something which can be addressed easily through policies in this plan. However, feedback does indicate that any proposals to improve the network may find public support depending on their details.

4. Employment, Rural Diversification and the Local Economy

4.1 Gnosall residents have levels of qualifications similar to the national average and those of residents across Stafford Borough. The proportion of residents in self-employment is higher than the national average (12.3 %, 2011 Census). Unemployment is low and the proportion of the population in retirement is a third higher than the national average.

4.2 For those residing in the Parish, the largest employment sectors are in the Retail/Retail Services and Health and Social Care with a slightly lower proportion employed in the former than the national average and a slightly higher proportion in the latter (2011 Census). Numbers employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing are relatively small although the sector is over four times more significant in Gnosall Parish than in England as a whole.



4.3 There is little significant employment in the Parish and travel to work by car is much higher than the national average. Numbers travelling to work on foot and by bicycle are low. The proportion of the resident population mainly working from home is almost 6% (2011, Census), higher than the Borough and the national average.

4.4 The message from the initial consultation regarding employment is difficult for the Plan to tackle. A significant majority of respondents considered employment opportunities to be 'inadequate' or 'poor' (70.2%). The majority (68.7%) wanted to see more employment opportunities. However, of those people supportive of creating job opportunities the appetite for land release to provide for new businesses was less supportive with not quite half (48.3%) willing to see land allocated for employment. The PFSB and the 2012 Employment Land Review do not point to a need to specifically allocate land for employment development in Gnosall.

4.5 Small businesses can find it difficult to start up or continue trading because of a lack of flexible premises within their means. Some businesses become established at home and have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the limited employment provision in the Parish.

4.6 Many small-scale home-based operations do not require planning permission. Policy 1 below therefore applies to proposals which do require planning permission, for example for a change of use.

Policy 1 - Home-working

Small-scale, home-based businesses will be supported provided it can be demonstrated that:

(a) residential amenity and character of the neighbourhood, or rural character, will not be unacceptably harmed by virtue of noise and disturbance, smell, traffic generation, health and safety impacts, scale, design, appearance or nature of operations;

(b) the operation of the business activity can be contained within the existing curtilage of the premises;

(c) the operation of the business activity does not require substantial external modification of the premises.

4.7 Whilst the preferred location for new employment is in Gnosall and Gnosall Heath, economic change and intensification in agriculture over recent decades have resulted in a decline in farm related jobs.

4.8 There is a need to strengthen the economy in the rural area by supporting the sustainable growth of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. Some innovative diversification of farms in the Parish has shown capacity to create jobs and to offer better and more accessible services.

4.9 There are often opportunities for reusing or adapting surplus existing rural land and buildings for commercial, light industrial, recreational or environmental uses such as guesthouses, farm shops, rural workshops or other business premises, helping the countryside to diversify, flourish and sustain itself.

4.10 The 'community consultation survey' indicated a good level of support for improving the tourist accommodation offered in the Parish. Bed and Breakfast proposals would broadly be supported where they could be accessible and sustainable, and where they supported and had wider benefits for other local businesses.

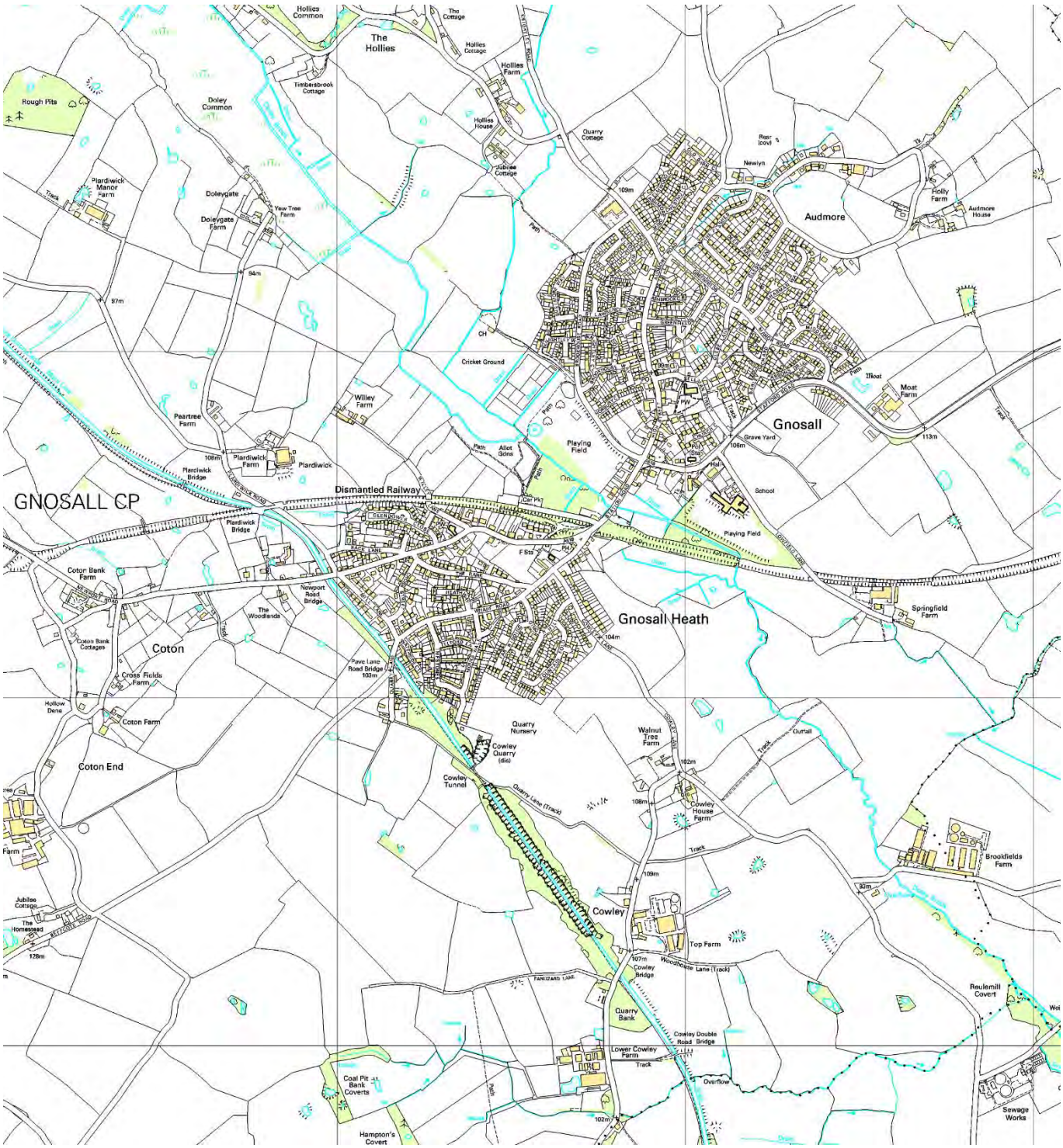
Policy 2 - Rural Diversification

The sustainable growth and expansion of businesses and enterprise in rural areas, through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings, will be supported.





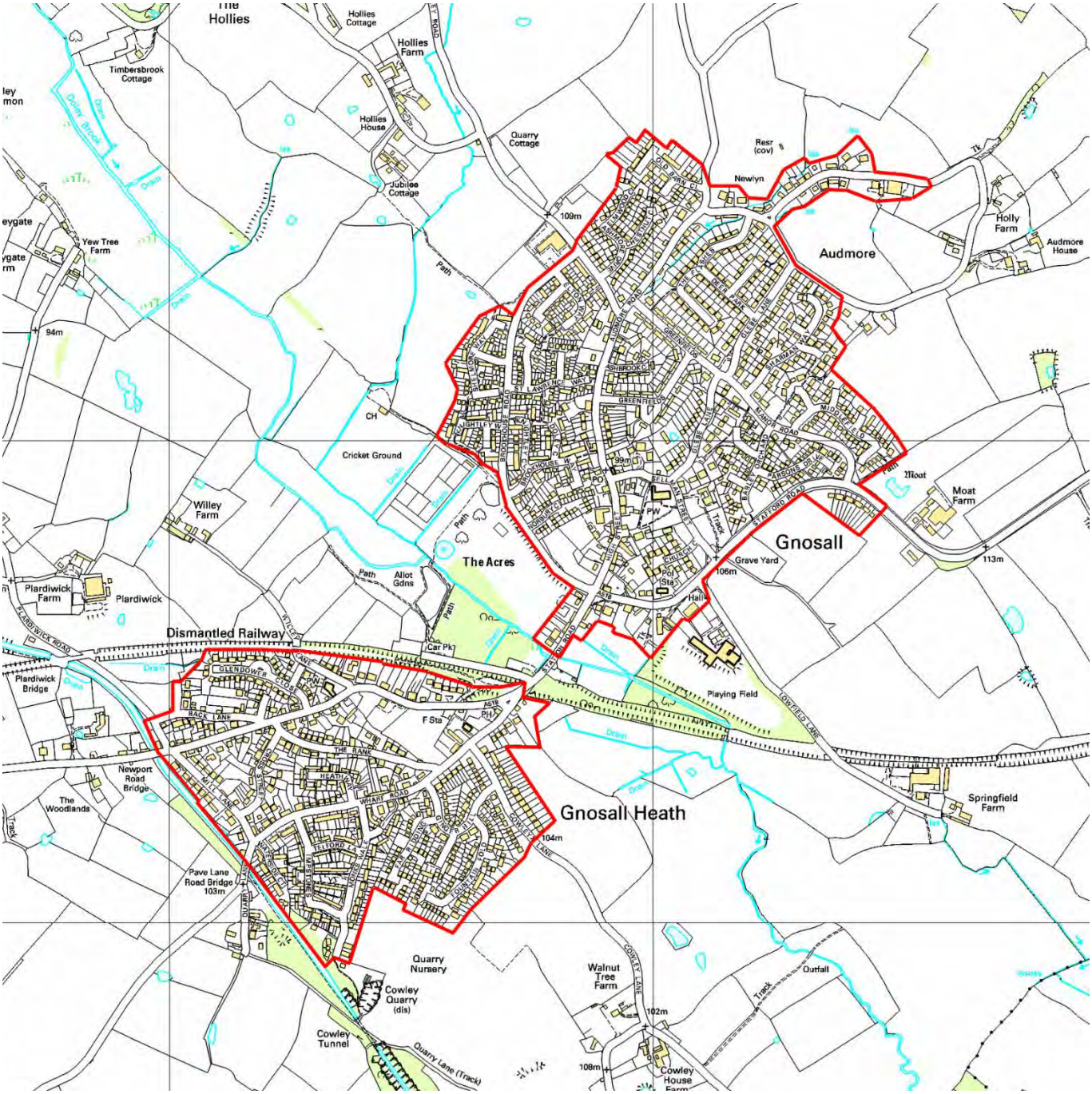
MAP 2: Gnosall & Gnosall Heath and Environs



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Map 3: Previous Residential Development Boundary

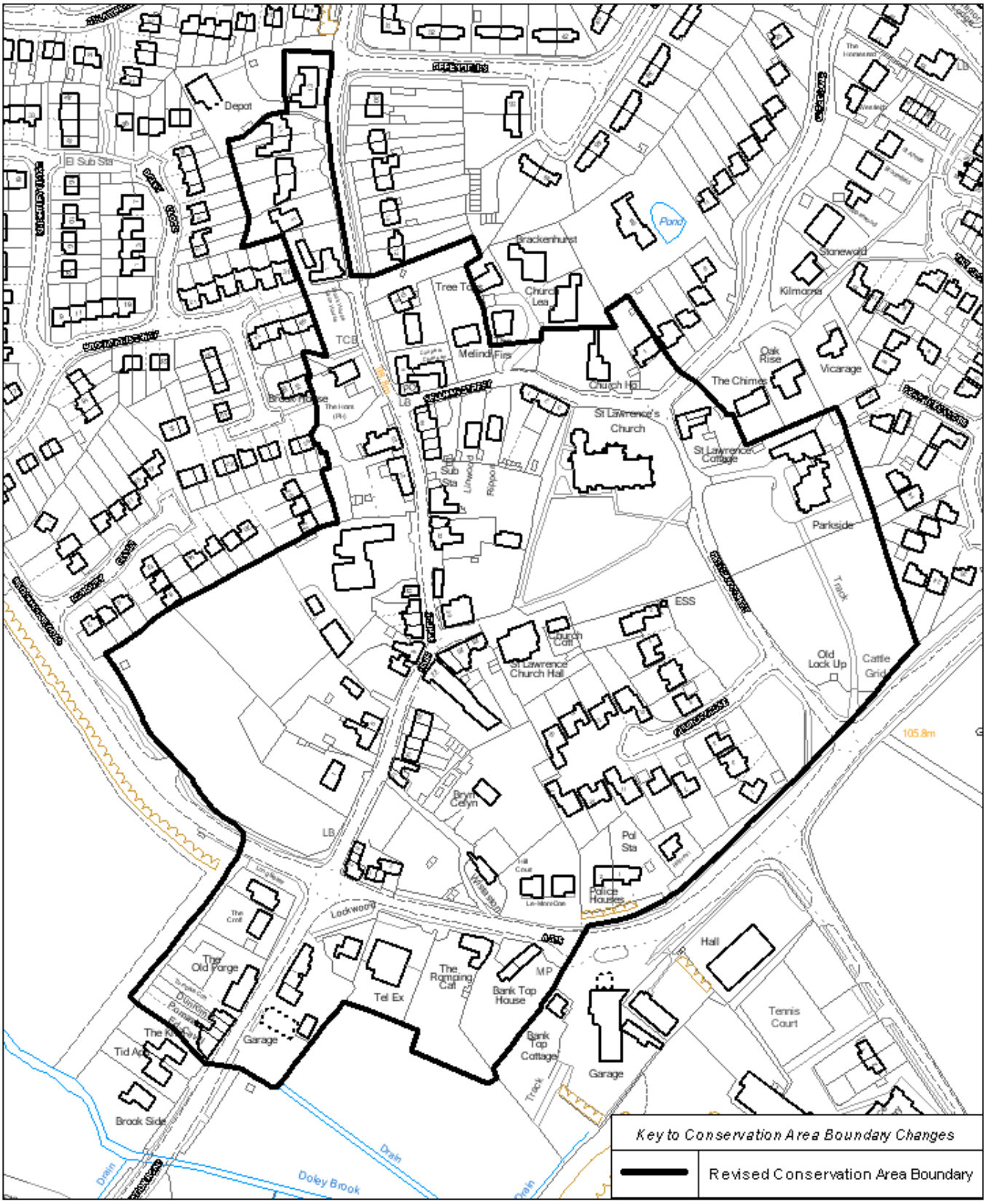
(Stafford Borough Council Local Plan 2001)



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Map 4: Gnosall Conservation Area

Source: Stafford Borough Council (Gnosall-CAA-2013) - Designated 25 November 2013



Map 5: Gnosall Conservation Area
Character Appraisal Map

Source: Stafford Borough Council (Gnosall-CAA-2013) - Designated 25 November 2013



5. Community and Housing

Why does the Parish need more new homes?

5.1 National policy establishes that the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development. "Sustainable" means ensuring that better lives for ourselves doesn't mean worse lives for future generations. "Development" means growth. We house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices.

5.2 There are many factors in determining how much new development is needed and these include the social, economic and environmental impacts of accommodating new development. For example, relevant factors include demographics and the impact of the market on demand and supply. The starting point for this Neighbourhood Plan is to provide for a reasonable share of the 1,200 new dwellings allocated to the Key Service Villages (KSVs), proportionate to the function and sustainability of Gnosall; as well as a share of the 800 dwellings for the remaining rural area of the Borough (2011-2031). It is noted that the 800 figure is an overall Borough figure, rather than one intended to be apportioned to different rural areas/Parishes.



Housing Growth

5.3 In line with the localism agenda of the Government, the PFSB took a deliberate approach not to apportion a housing target to specific Key Service Villages (KSVs) leaving it for community led Neighbourhood Plans to resolve. Recognising that not all communities would produce or be able to produce Neighbourhood Plans the PFSB reserve position is to address KSV allocations through a Site Allocation Document.

5.4 In the absence of a Borough-wide apportionment methodology, a pro-rata split of the 1200 dwelling allocation for KSVs, based on simple population points to a target for Gnosall village of 240 (Gnosall having 20% of the total KSV population). Balanced against this, the community consultation findings showed a majority support for less than 100 houses, dropping to 27% support for no more than 200.



5.5 By November 2014, more than 200 dwellings had already been built or committed with planning permission. Taking account of the PFSB policy, reconciling all the demand and supply factors, planning constraints and in particular the response to the community consultation survey, it is considered that 230 new dwellings for Gnosall village and 20 dwellings in the rural area of the Parish over the Plan period of 2011-2031 is a fair, appropriate and sustainable target.

Policy 3 - Housing Provision 2011-2031

To meet the housing needs of the Parish over the plan period, the development of at least 230 dwellings within the Settlement Boundary and at least 20 dwellings in the rural area will be supported.

Housing Policies

Affordable Housing

5.6 The NPPF states that in order to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should use an evidence base to ensure that the Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing. In rural areas, LPAs should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing. In relation to Gnosall Parish this assessment has been undertaken by Stafford Borough Council and is addressed by policy C2 of the PFSB, which requires 40% affordable housing for schemes over 12 dwellings in Gnosall.

5.7 The provisions of Policy C2 of the PFSB are supported in relation to the specific requirements to provide affordable housing in Gnosall. Consequently there is no need to duplicate that policy requirement in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Conversions of Existing Buildings

5.8 An important contribution to the provision of new dwellings in the plan area, both market and affordable, can be made from converting buildings although this is often overlooked as no new building is involved. Adaptation of the existing stock can contribute to meeting the needs of smaller households and reduce the level of vacant and underused property.

5.9 Any conversions should respect the character of the surrounding area, and the amenity of existing areas.

5.10 In the rural parts of the Parish housing development in the open countryside is to be resisted and the priority for the conversion of any buildings including barns and other historic farm buildings is to provide space for employment and community uses.



Policy 4 - Dwelling, Barn and Farm Building Conversions

The conversion of existing houses and the re-use and conversion of other buildings to create more housing will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the amenity and the character of existing residential areas would be retained. Housing in rural areas should be located where it will maintain the vitality of rural communities.



Policy 5 - Support for Creative and Innovative Infill Development

Infill development that does not harm residential amenity or the overall character of the area will be supported. Particular support will be afforded to creative or innovative forms of infill development that complement local character.



5.11 Infill development within the previous development boundary of Gnosall and Gnosall Heath has in the past provided a source of housing land and has allowed self-build and more innovative housing schemes to flourish. Sensitive control of this form of development is required to minimise the impact on neighbouring properties and ensure that the overall character and the amenity of the village is not damaged.

5.12 The Parish Council is supportive of creative building and high standards of design and welcomes self-build and infill development that are built with the community's needs in mind, are attractive, create distinct identity and respect and enhance local character. Sensitive design and good landscaping are particularly important to successfully develop and integrate small sites into the established built form of the village.

Policy 6 - Support for Good Design

New development proposals that exhibit good design and contribute positively to the built environment of the Parish will be supported, particularly where they:

(a) respond to the local context and the form of surrounding buildings;

(b) take account of landscape and topographical features and respect local character;

(c) reinforce local architectural distinctiveness;

(d) ensure all components of the proposal, such as buildings, car parking, access routes, open space and landscaping are well related to ensure an integrated and attractive development;

(e) retain wildlife habitats and retain trees, shrubs and hedges that contribute to local character;

(f) seek to use traditional materials consistent with the local building vernacular to help retain and enhance the local character of existing and new buildings and their environments unless it can be demonstrated that the use of non-traditional materials can complement local character. The use of traditional materials will also be preferred for repairs to roads, pavements, kerbs and underground services where possible and appropriate, depending on functional requirements;

(g) adopt the principles of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS);

(h) include innovative, low carbon design components;

(i) include sustainable design, construction and operational elements;

(j) use hedging and/or trees for highways boundaries where possible and where in keeping with the existing streetscape;

(k) ensure safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and road users;

(l) promote walking, cycling and public transport use;

(m) include adequate, accessible and visually suitable provision for waste and recycling bins.

5.13 Good design should be the aim of everyone involved in the development process when building in Gnosall Parish. It is essential to improve environmental quality by producing attractive, vibrant and sustainable developments with a strong sense of place, in which people want to live, work and recreate. These principles will help ensure that the development itself is not only well designed, but also complements and enhances the existing environment. Developments should also seek to encourage a healthy lifestyle through the provision of opportunities for walking and cycling, and safe places to play where these are appropriate.



6. Settlement Boundary and Housing Distribution

6.1 The Settlement Boundary, as shown on Map 6, provides for sustainable growth over the plan period taking into account a variety of factors, including:

- risk of flooding from Doley and Hollies brooks into the flood plain
- run-off into the flood plain from housing developments
- topography
- ground conditions and contamination
- ground water and nitrate vulnerability
- highway access
- development limit of the Way for the Millennium (former railway line)
- impact zone of Doley Common SSSI
- conservation area and setting of listed buildings
- best and most versatile agricultural land
- landscape and visual impact
- ecology and habitats
- impact on open countryside
- coalescence of Gnosall and Gnosall Heath.



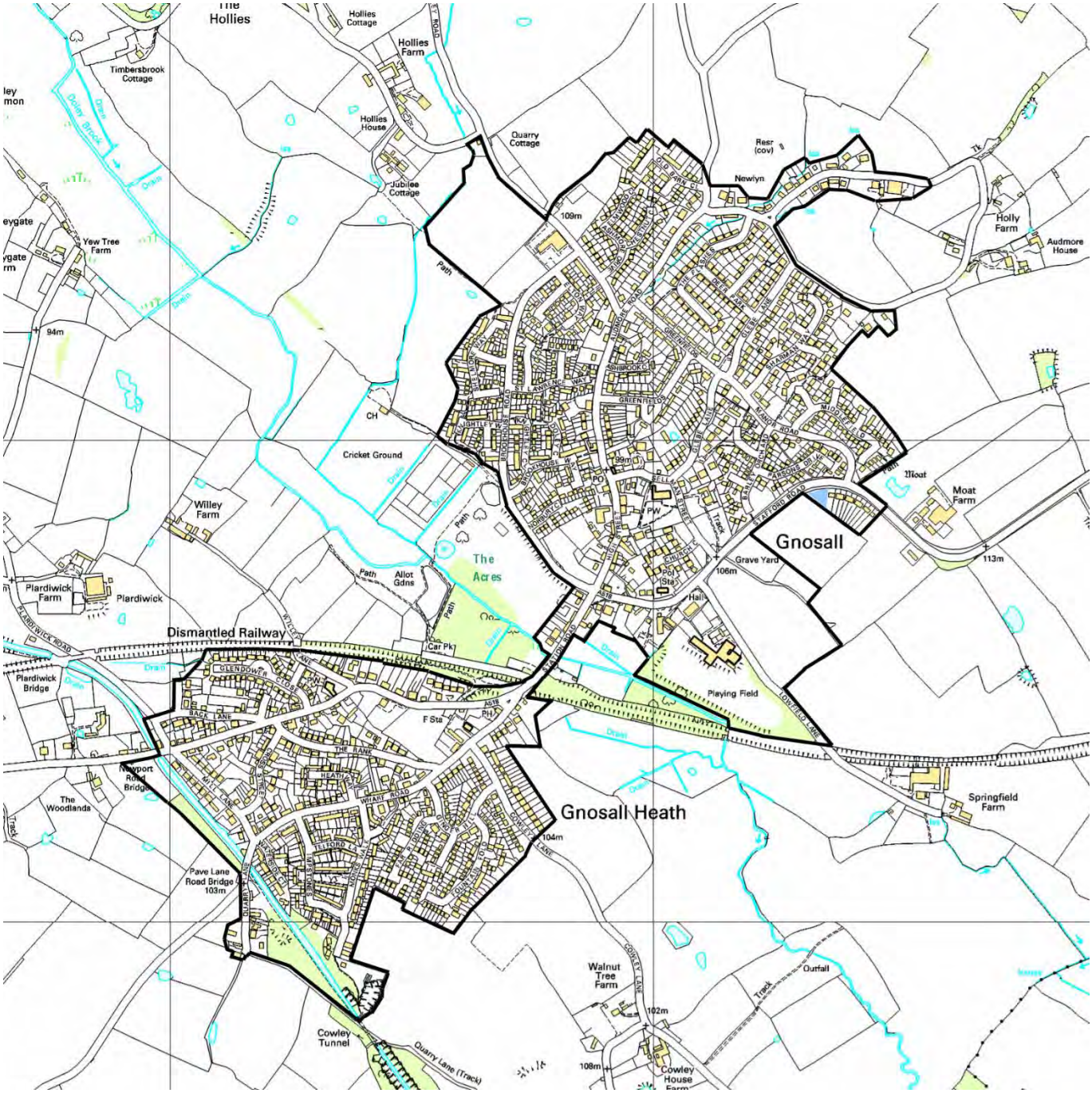
Policy 7 – Settlement Boundary

Development within the Settlement Boundary, as defined on Map 6, will be supported.





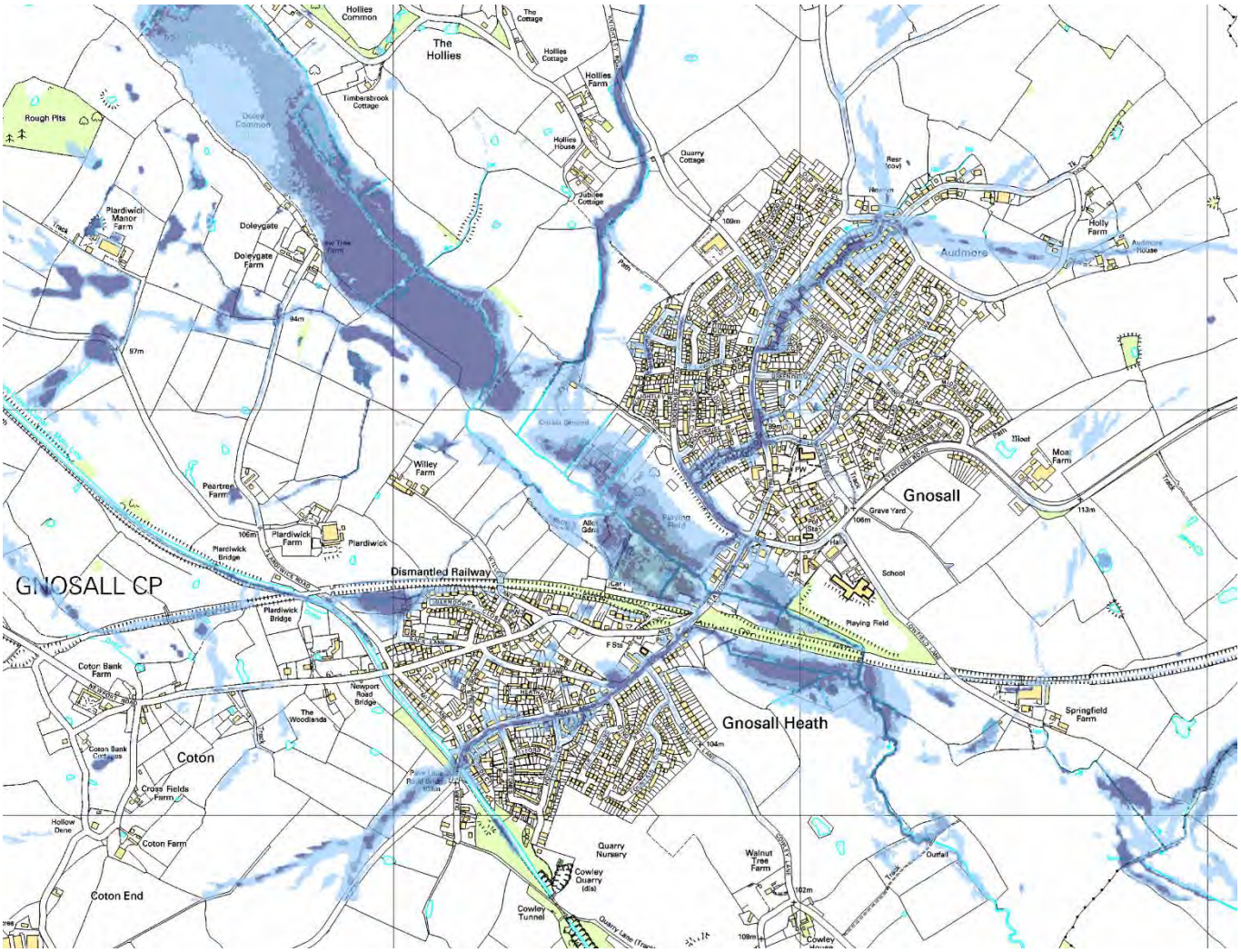
Map 6: Settlement Boundary



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Map 7: Gnosall Surface Water Flood Risk

Source: SBC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2014



Gnosall & Gnosall Heath - Risk of Flooding From Surface Water

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

Map 8: Agricultural Land Classification





7. Green Infrastructure and Recreation

7.1 Being a rural Parish, in the heart of Staffordshire, it is clear from responses to the January 2014 community survey and the consultation on the December draft Plan that this geographical context is highly valued by local residents and represents the very essence of life in the Parish.

7.2 While Gnosall and Gnosall Heath are the main settlements and therefore house the main population and services, the outlying smaller settlements and the wider rural area are fundamental components of the Parish and provide the tranquil, attractive rural context which encourages so many residents to stay and which also attracts new residents. Establishing an appropriate Settlement Boundary is a key means of safeguarding the Village and Parish character. However, it is also important to protect specific environmental and historic assets which are also locally valued.

7.3 Green infrastructure is a broad term that includes the more obvious local green areas such as 'The Acres' and the 'former railway line' as well as more incidental areas of managed verges and open spaces within housing areas. Gnosall's green infrastructure covers both the built networks for sustainable transport (public rights of way, cycle paths and bridleways) and naturally occurring wildlife corridors, habitat and eco-systems.



7.4 Matters relating to the environment and the environmental quality of the village and surrounds generally were explored in the January 2014 community consultation survey. A majority expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the Parish environs and the consultation revealed a significant engagement in a range of outdoor activities. The natural environment is held in high regard and respected by parishioners.

7.5 The issue of environmental quality is woven into almost every aspect of people's perception and views of the Parish. It is clear that when people express concerns about new house building, employment provision, transport, highways and many other matters; what they are implicitly concerned about is the quality of the natural and built environment.

7.6 The PFSB addresses a number of environmental issues and in particular sets out detailed policies for the protection and enhancement of the areas in the Borough defined by statutory designation. Doley Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is already designated for protection under wildlife legislation and the two long established Conservation Areas in Gnosall are also already protected under planning law. These two Conservation Areas are Gnosall Conservation area in the village and the Shropshire Union Canal Conservation Area at Gnosall Heath, which is part of the longer, linear Shropshire Union Canal Conservation Area running through Staffordshire. There are also a number of Listed Buildings within Gnosall which are protected under existing laws. These features are shown for information purposes on Maps 4 and 5. Detailed records are held on databases at the Borough and County Councils. Public Rights of Way are also already protected through Highways legislation and planning policies in the PFSB but additional local policy protection is proposed below. The connections of all the built areas in the Parish to the surrounding countryside are highly valued by residents.

7.7 Gnosall is a largely rural parish, predominantly comprising of intensively managed grassland and arable farmland. However, the local countryside contains a

number of valuable wildlife habitats, particularly wetlands along the Doley Brook, scattered ancient woodlands and unimproved grasslands. The most significant area is the Doley Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) situated northwest of the village. This wetland is one of a series of regional meres and mosses that includes the nearby peat land SSSIs at Aqualate and Loynton Moss.

The parish also contains a number of Sites of Biological Interest (SBI). These are designated for their local importance as they represent some of the best remaining areas of semi-natural habitat in the county. The wetland along Doley Brook is also selected as a Biodiversity Alert Site. Although not yet designated, this habitat is arguably of grade one SBI quality following recent habitat restoration work. Sites of environmental importance within the parish are identified on Map 9.

PFSB policy N5 already provides protection for these sites, therefore no additional policy is required in this Plan. However, landowners and developers need to be aware of any constraints which apply. Detailed records of nature conservation sites are held by Stafford Borough Council (see Table 2 below) and Staffordshire County Council.

Table 2: SBC SBI References for Gnosall

82/30/03	Doley Brook
81/06/77	Walton Wood
81/09/36	Broadhill Common
82/10/56	Coton (north of)
82/12/91	Hollies Common
72/94/84	Ball's Rough and Gorsey Covert
82/03/62	Wood Brook Bank
82/11/27	Rough Pits
71/99/91	Polesworth and Lindore Woods
71/88/70	Outwoods Bank
72/90/48	Pollymoor Wood



7.8 The policies below recognise the fundamental role that green infrastructure and the natural environment play in creating an identity for Gnosall Parish. They also acknowledge that the environment is inextricably linked to local economic prosperity, the health and well-being of those living in Gnosall and the attraction of the village as a place to live.

7.9 Gnosall village is fortunate in having local green space within and adjoining the built up area of the village as well as access to the countryside around it.

Recreation

7.10 In terms of formal recreation facilities, Gnosall is served with play areas, sports fields and community buildings which are also used for organised health and fitness activities. Until recently, the primary school accommodated a small swimming pool. This loss was a major concern for the village and replacement recreational resources are therefore seen as a key priority for investment, as identified in section 8 and policy 14.

7.11 Gnosall Heath has very good access to the canal, to the 'old railway line' and other good walking routes. However, it is lacking in a children's play area, although the play area at Gnosall is not too far away.



Policy 8 – Space for Recreation.

The retention and improvement of existing informal and formal recreational resources will be supported.

The provision of an area for recreation in Gnosall Heath will be particularly supported should opportunities arise, especially where this incorporates a children's play area and a space for casual sports.

Rights of Way and the Countryside

7.12 The NPPF expects planning policies to help protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Wherever possible, opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks should be sought.

7.13 Gnosall Parish has an extensive system of public footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways. These rights of way are a valuable resource, providing an essential leisure and recreational function. They are highly valued and regularly used by the local community.

7.14 The diversion and/or closure of footpaths remains the responsibility of the Highway Authority. However, the Parish Council should be consulted on any proposals, resisting development proposals that would adversely affect the amenity of footpaths unless an adequate alternative route for the right of way is provided.

Policy 9 - Protecting and Enhancing Rights of Way

Any new developments must ensure that all existing footpaths, bridleways, cycle ways and other rights of way that they will impact upon are retained.

The improvement or extension of the existing rights of way network will be supported.

Community Action

Support will be given to innovative and creative land management measures that protect and enhance the intrinsic value of the countryside around Gnosall and Gnosall Heath. Allowing for improved public access and connections between the rural and built-up parts of the Parish.



Local Green Space

7.15 Local Green Space is defined in national planning policy (the NPPF) and national planning guidance (the NPPG) as being a designation which is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. By designating land as 'Local Green Space' local communities are able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. However, in order to justify protection by way of special designation such areas need to meet relevant criteria set out in national guidance and usually also require the co-operation of landowners. National advice states that Local Green

Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space and that the designation should only be used:

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

7.16 Local Green Spaces have been identified and designated in this Plan, so that special protection can be afforded to the green spaces that are considered important to the local community.

7.17 The Acres wildlife area and the adjacent allotments between Gnosall and Gnosall Heath are popular facilities owned and managed by the Parish Council. They are highly valued, having been the subject of considerable investment and grant funding over recent years. These are clear candidates for Local Green Space designation, which is supported by the Parish Council as owners. There is also the Village Green on Brookhouse Road and other areas which are locally valuable and already benefit from a degree of policy protection through the PFSB by being defined as green infrastructure as shown on Map 10.

Policy 10 - Local Green Spaces

The areas shown individually on Maps 10a to 10e and together on Map 10, are designated as Local Green Spaces (LGS), where new development is ruled out other than in very special circumstances.

LGS 1: Gnosall Village Green

Located off Brookhouse Road this site was designated as a Village Green in 2011. This is a publicly used open space with visual amenity. It is owned and managed by Gnosall Parish Council for the benefit of the whole community in accordance with Town & Village Green guidelines.

LGS 2: Richmond Park Play Area

A former play and recreational area for the Richmond Park Estate, located off Manor Road. This open space includes a pedestrian route into the estate. It is managed within the settlement boundary and has a restrictive covenant. It is under the ownership of Stafford Borough Council (Deed Packet A1670).

LGS 3: Barley Orchard Estate Area

A green area owned by Stafford Borough Council, created for the Barley Orchard Estate, located off the A518 Stafford Road. This green area is an open space designed to retain the character of the immediate neighbourhood by the inclusion of mature trees. It is used for recreation and a children's play area.

LGS 4: The Acres

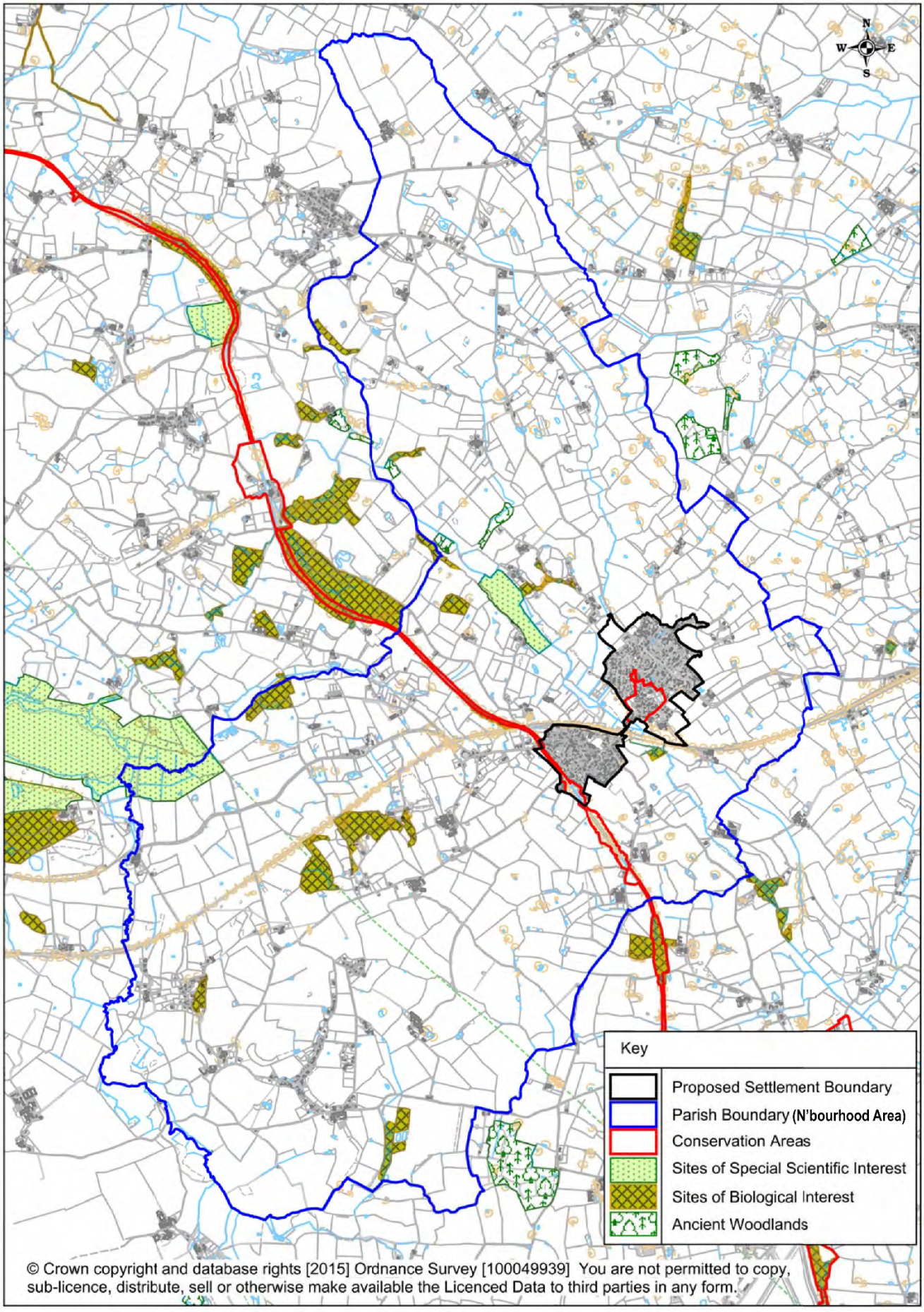
Located between Brookhouse Road and the former railway line. This 25 acre site is the largest area of public open space in the village and is been owned and managed by Gnosall Parish Council. This popular site includes allotment gardens, children's playground, a family picnic area, sports fields and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).

The wetland area along the Doley Brook is designated as a county Site of Biological Importance and is managed by the Parish Council for its public amenity and conservation value – winning three Green Awards from Stafford Borough Council.

LGS 5: Canal Side Green Space

Located on the south bank strip of the Shropshire Union Canal running from Newport Road Bridge to the Cowley Cutting. It is owned and managed by the Canal & River Trust and falls within the Shropshire Union Canal Conservation Area. This heavily used area is maintained in line with the trust's conservation objectives as a heritage asset and to enhance its appeal for public enjoyment.

Map 9: Sites of Environmental Importance



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Map 10: Local Green Space (Protected)

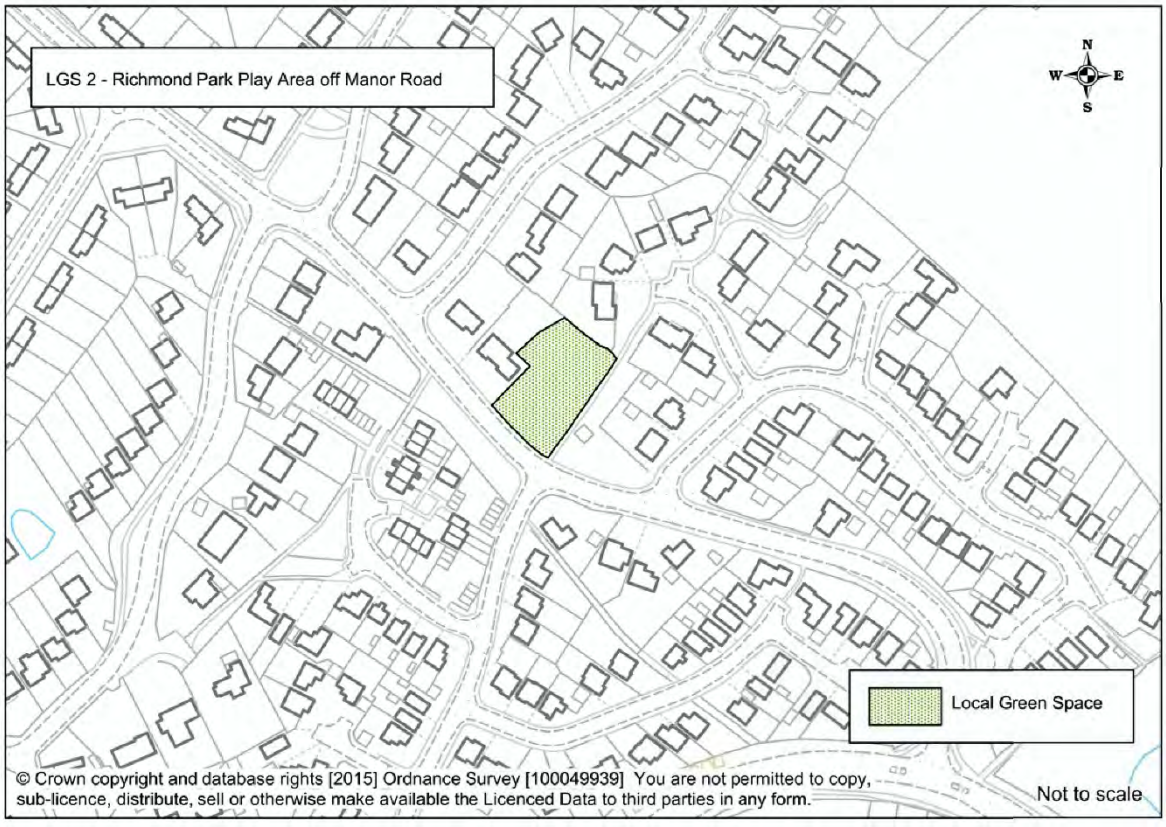


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Map 10a: LGS 1 – Village Green



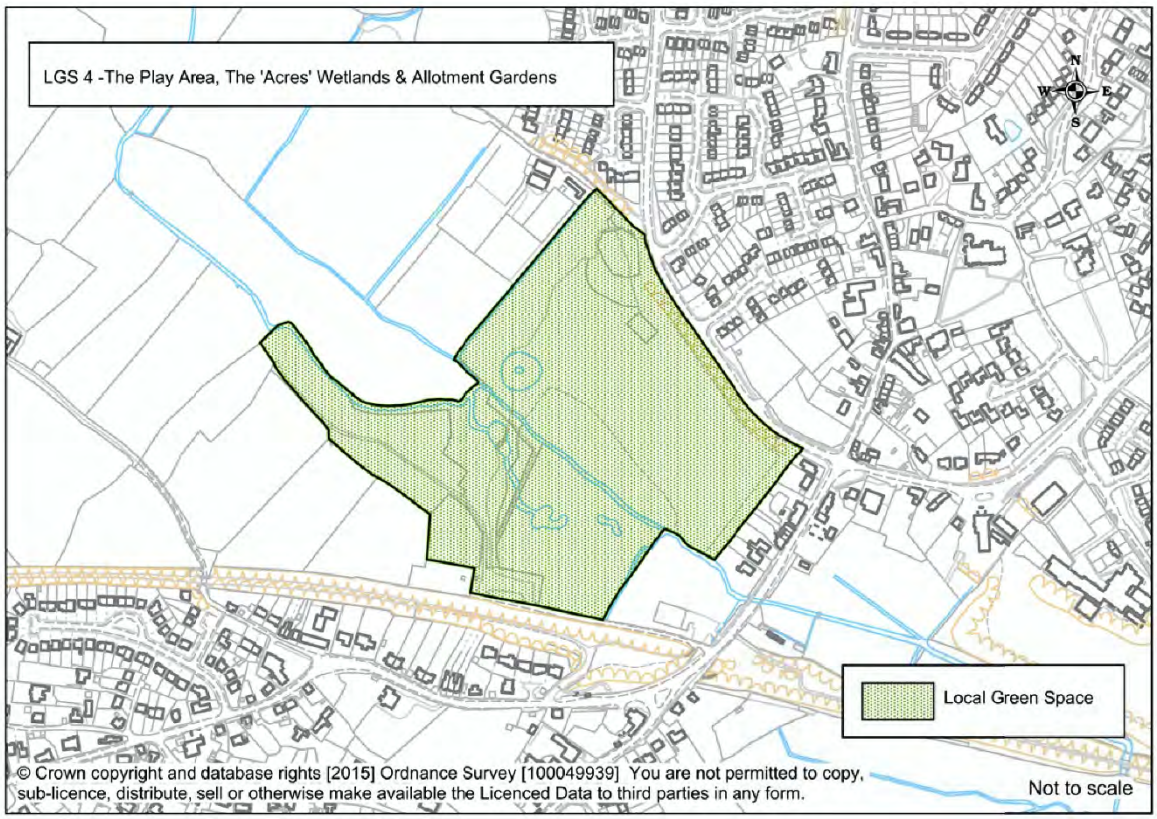
Map 10b: LGS2 – Play Area for Richmond Park



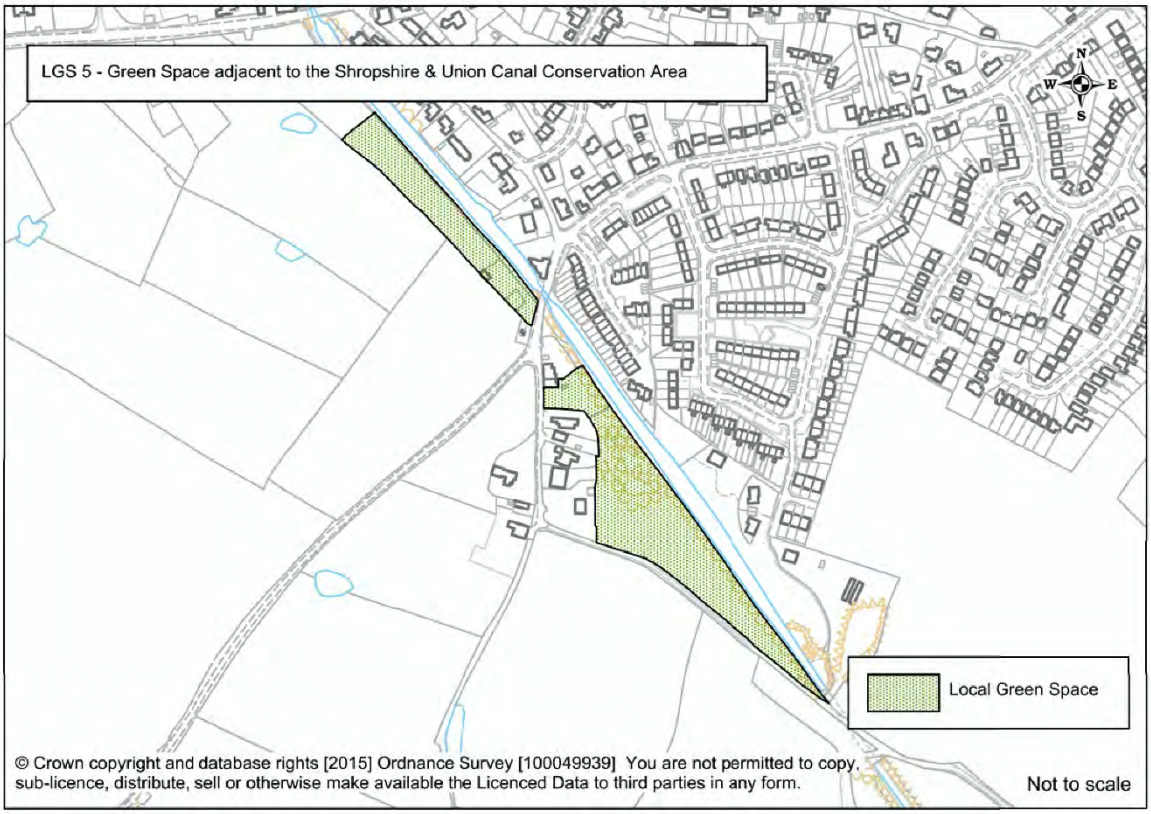
Map 10c: LGS3 – Green Space for Barley Orchard



Map 10d: LGS4 – The 'Acres' and Allotments



Map 10e: LGS5 – Green space in canal side conservation area





8. Planning Obligations and Local Infrastructure Priorities

Community Action

Applicants and the Local Planning Authority are strongly encouraged to actively engage with the Parish Council in respect of pre-application discussions relating to planning applications within the Parish area. The comments of the Parish Council should be given full and proper consideration.



Community Action

Applicants and the Local Planning Authority are strongly encouraged to consult with the Parish Council in respect of the draft heads of terms and detailed provisions of any proposed Planning Obligations under S-106 of the Town & Country Planning Act which are intended to be attached to planning permissions for development within the Parish area. This shall be to ensure that, as far as possible, any relevant financial provisions shall be ring-fenced for use off-site within the Parish.

Policy 11 - Local Priorities for Infrastructure in Gnosall

The financing and delivery of the following infrastructure projects using the Parish Council's proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy, financial contributions through Planning Obligations and any other sources funding will be prioritised as follows:

1. **A new community centre or major redevelopment of the existing Grosvenor Centre.**

2. **A third phase of 'The Acres' to enhance recreation facilities.**

3. **Recreational facilities, such as an all-weather sports pitch or a skate park, to meet the needs of young adults in the village.**

These priorities will be reviewed by the Parish Council at least every five years through the plan period to 2031 and will be consulted on prior to any change.



Glossary

Local Green Space: defined in national planning policy (the NPPF) and national planning guidance (the NPPG) as being a designation which is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. To be successfully designated they should meet relevant criteria set out in national guidance and usually also require the co-operation of landowners.

NPPF: the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework.

NPPG: the National Planning Practice Guidance - an on-line national planning guidance resource.

KSV: Key Service Village (as defined in the Plan for Stafford Borough).

LPA: the Local Planning Authority. The public authority whose duty it is to carry our specific planning functions for a particular area. In respect of Gnosall and Stafford Borough, this means Stafford Borough Council.

Neighbourhood Plan: a voluntary planning policy document which can be produced by a Qualifying Body, under the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations. When approved ("made") it becomes part of the development plan for the area, in addition to the Local Plan for the area, which in this case is the Plan for Stafford Borough produced by Stafford Borough Council.

Neighbourhood Plan Qualifying Body: the legal qualifying body with powers to be able to produce a Neighbourhood Plan under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations - in this case it is Gnosall Parish Council.

PFSB: the Plan for Stafford Borough, 2011 – which is the Local Plan for the area, produced by Stafford Borough Council in their role as the Local Planning Authority.

SBC: Stafford Borough Council.

SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment (Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004).

SHLAA: Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (produced by Stafford Borough Council).

HRA: Habitats Regulations Assessment (Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010).

SA: Sustainability Appraisal – a requirement of the Local Plans process.

Screening Assessment: An assessment to consider any requirements under the Habitats Regulations and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, in accordance with EU Directives.

Basic Conditions Statement: a required document under the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations to show how a Neighbourhood Plan meets the necessary legal requirements.

Consultation Report: a required document under the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations to explain how consultation has been carried out and comments taken into account.

Conservation Area: an area of special architectural or historic interest designated for protection by the Local Authority (Stafford Borough Council) under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In Gnosall there are two Conservation Areas: the Gnosall Conservation Area in the old centre of Gnosall and another along the Shropshire Union Canal. The canal conservation area is part of the much longer Shropshire Union Canal conservation area running through Staffordshire.

SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest – a type of biological or geological site designated for protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

SBI: Site of Biological Interest.

GNP: Gnosall Neighbourhood Plan.

RDB: Residential Development Boundary (terminology from the previous Stafford Borough Local Plan).

SB: Settlement Boundary (terminology from the Plan for Stafford Borough 2011). The defined Settlement Boundary for Gnosall establishes a development boundary such that development inside the SB is considered acceptable, in principle, in contrast to development outside it. However, even within the SB, specific development proposals in planning applications still need to be acceptable in terms of details and site specific considerations.

CIL: Community Infrastructure Levy - a type of financial charge on planning permissions which may be introduced by SBC under recent national legislation.

S-106: Section 106 of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act, which enables legal agreements known as Planning Obligations to be entered into in connection with planning permissions.

Windfall sites: sites which are not specifically allocated for development in planning policy documents but which become developed through successful, opportunistic planning applications by or on behalf of landowners.



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