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1 Key Findings

This section highlights the key findings from the main summary report. Where further analysis has been conducted the results of this are shown in detail in the main body of the report.

Locations for development

When asked to consider how future development in South Staffordshire should be managed 82% of panel members support either existing Green Belt policies (44%) or even stricter ones preventing any new development in the Green Belt (38%). Among those who feel Green Belt policies should be relaxed to meet future development needs (15% of panel members), the type of development on Green Belt land deemed most acceptable are the development of affordable housing (79%), sports and recreational areas (56%) and community facilities such as schools and hospitals (55%). Attitudes to previously developed but now under used Green Belt sites also reflect the preference for maintaining the “green” nature of the green belt as just under half (48%) would like to see such sites redeveloped as open areas or forestry rather than for housing or employment.

When considering the location and scale of future developments in the district the preference is for dispersed development. Just under half of panel members (48%) state that new housing development should be spread equally across the district, while 45% state this should also be the case for new employment developments The fact that residents favour dispersed development is also supported by the fact that 89% of panel members feel housing should be spread equally across the district rather confined to larger sites in fewer locations. However it must me noted that there is some variation in opinion by area on such issues. Notably those panel members residing in EAG 5 are significantly more likely to favour focused housing and employment developments on a few sites. Therefore future Council decisions need to be sensitive to these local variations.

Preferences for future retail development is also influenced by area and by age. Those aged 65 and over favour new retail development in existing village centres. Those aged 45-64 favour development of existing residential retail locations and in the younger age group (25-44) the preference is for retail sites outside existing shopping locations. Further research may be required to further understand this issue to see if it is related to the shopping experience or to other issues such as mobility.

Development priorities

The support among the majority of residents for current or extended Green Belt policies also seems to influence some of the priorities residents express for future developments. For example on the issue of housing only 8% favour more housing in rural locations as a top priority while 55% feel encouraging a mix of housing types and densities should be the Council’s top priority. The Council should not prioritise density increases exclusively in village centres as only 22% agree this is the correct approach. Instead panel members appear to favour housing density increases that are sympathetic to village character (79% agree).
When considering the priorities the Council should adopt for economic development 44% of panel members feel that supporting tourism is the best way to assist the rural economy. Thinking about the district economy as a whole, regeneration rather than expansion is preferred. For example 32% feel that the regeneration of underused employment sites should be a top priority, while refurbishing existing buildings for employment use is a top priority for 29% of panel members. In comparison only 14% feel allowing business to expand should be the primary approach to developing the local economy. The preference for regeneration as an economic tool is also emphasised by the fact that 60% of panel members feel allowing different types of employment on existing employment sites is the best way to create new employment opportunities.

The environmental priorities expressed by panel members are the protection of important wildlife / geology (45% state this is a top priority). When considering the landscapes of the district, the conservation of historic landscapes and parkland is supported as the top priority by 34% of panel members. Following on from the regeneration theme noted above, 28% of those questioned stated historic buildings should be restored and given new uses. On wider environmental issues residents support all contributions the Council can make to problems such as climate change with the strongest support evident for the Council ensuring there are higher standards of energy efficiency in new developments.

Finally in order to ensure that the communities are sustainable it appears that the Council should focus on maintaining and improving existing village facilities (58% state this is a top priority). In addition 95% of panel members strongly agree that existing green areas within villages should be protected. On the issue of transport 35% state increasing levels of public transport should be the Council’s number one focus. Again on most of these issues there are variations between EAGs which the Council should recognise when developing the South Staffordshire LDF.
2 Background and Methodology

In October 2006, South Staffordshire Council commissioned BMG Research to manage a survey regarding future local development using South Staffordshire’s circa 1,300 strong residents’ panel (“The Viewpoint Panel”). This report presents the results of this survey conducted amongst panel members between November and December 2006.

Introduction

South Staffordshire Council is preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF) to replace the existing Local Plan. The LDF will guide the future development of South Staffordshire. South Staffordshire Council wish to involve local communities in helping to shape the contents of the LDF and allow residents to express what they feel are the key issues in the district. On this basis the opinions of residents were sought on the following issues:

- The importance of green belt land, and its future development;
- How new housing, employment and retail developments should be managed in terms of its location, density and character;
- Priorities for the management of the environment including landscapes, open spaces and historic buildings;
- Priorities for communities in the district such as transportation and services.

Any future development will need to balance economic, social and environmental factors. The overall aim of this research was to assess how residents of South Staffordshire prioritise and reconcile these sometimes conflicting demands.
**Methodology**

A questionnaire and letter was sent out to all 1,257 panel members and a reminder letter and questionnaire was sent to panel members that had not returned their questionnaire in the initial mailing window.

In total, 746 questionnaires were completed and returned to BMG, representing a response rate of 59%.

A sample of 746 is subject to a maximum standard error of ±3.6% at the 95% confidence level on an observed statistic of 50%. Thus, we can be 95% confident that if the whole population had responded and a census had been conducted, the actual figure would lie between 46.4% and 53.6% respectively.

The data collected has been subsequently weighted by ward and by demographic factors such as age; gender and economic status in order to ensure that the data is broadly representative of South Staffordshire as a whole. The exact profile of the data can be reviewed in the accompanying data report and a summary within the final section of this written report.

**Report contents**

The report summarises the main findings drawn from the sixth panel survey. Throughout the report area analysis has been used. Wards have been grouped together into five Environmental Action Groups (EAG) as supplied by the Council. They are:

**EAG 1** – Bilbrook, Brewood and Coven and Codsall;

**EAG 2** – Cheslyn Hay, Essington, Featherstone and Brinsford, Great Wyrley, Saredon and Shareshill;

**EAG 3** – Bobbington, Enville, Himley, Kinver, Lower Penn, Swindon, Trysull and Seisdon and Wombourne.

**EAG 4** – Pattingham and Patshull and Perton; and

**EAG 5** – Acton Trussell, Bednall and Teddersley Hay, Blymhill and Western Under Lizard, Dunston with Coppenhall, Hatherton, Huntingdon, Lapley, Stretton and Wheaton Aston and Penkridge.

Where tables and graphics do not match exactly to the text in the report this occurs due to the way in which figures are rounded up (or down) when responses are combined. Results that differ in this way should not have a variance which is any larger than 1%. 
Data reporting

A separate data report is available, which presents the data as a whole and broken down by several cross-tabulations including:

- Area
- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Economic Status
- Economic Activity
- Household tenure
3 Locations for development

Introduction

South Staffordshire is a predominantly rural area, 80% of which is designated as Green Belt. The district includes 19 conservation areas and 856 listed buildings. Villages are the most extensive form of urban development in the area. Such characteristics are key aspects of the character of South Staffordshire and form an important part of the experience of living in the area. However, such characteristics also present a challenge regarding where future development should be located. This first section looks at panel member’s views on how future development in South Staffordshire should be managed spatially. Views on the role of the Green Belt in managing development will be assessed as will opinions on where particular types of development would be best located in the future.

Future Green Belt management

All panel members were asked directly which approach the Council should take to managing the Green Belt in order to strike a balance between protecting the environment and meeting the development needs of the district. As Figure 1 illustrates, most respondents prefer the current approach as 44% state that the Council should maintain existing strict Green Belt policies. A further 38% favour even tighter Green Belt management stating that the Council should resist any new developments in the Green Belt regardless of the circumstances. 15% of panel members feel that the Council should relax Green Belt policies to meet longer-term development needs, with such opinions higher in EAG 1 (20% of residents) and EAG 4 (19%). There are no significant differences evident between EAG areas in the proportion of panel members who wish to see Green Belt restrictions maintained or expanded.
Further analysis by age and gender also does not show any significant differences in opinion regarding Green Belt management although it is notable that the younger panel members (aged 25-44) are least likely to state that Green Belt restrictions should be relaxed to meet longer term development needs (11% compared to 18% of those aged 45-64 and 17% of those aged 65+).

Those panellists who thought some Green Belt land should be used to meet future development needs in the district were asked which particular types of development it is acceptable to use Green Belt land for. The most popular response provided was that it is acceptable to use Green Belt land for affordable housing which was endorsed by four in five panel members answering this question (79%).
This reflects the fact that in the previous Viewpoint survey almost half of respondents (45%) suggested that they are worried about the lack of affordable housing in their village with one fifth (20%) indicating they are very worried. Sports/ recreational areas and community facilities such as schools and hospitals would also be widely accepted on existing Green Belt land (supported by 56% and 55% of residents answering this question respectively).

**Figure 2**

![Acceptable Development on Green Belt Land](chart)

The relatively small number of panel members answering this question limits the amount of sub-group analysis that can be performed. However it can be observed that the level of support for each type of development shown in figure 2 is broadly consistent among males and females with the exception of transport links. Significantly more men (59%) deem that it is acceptable to use Green Belt land to improve transport links compared to females (27%).

To further inform future Green Belt management, panel members were also asked to state their preference regarding the future use of Green Belt sites which have previously been developed but are now not used. The most common response was that redundant sites should be reclaimed as open space or forestry which was endorsed by almost half of panel members (48%). A further third (35%) would prefer that redundant sites are redeveloped to provide new housing while only 10% feel such sites would be best redeveloped as new employment sites.
However opinions on this issue do vary by EAG as shown in table 1. Those residing in EAG 1 are most likely to state previously developed sites should be developed to provide new housing, while those in EAG 2 and 3 are most likely to prefer that such sites are reclaimed as open space and forestry.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREFERRED USE OF PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED BUT NOW UNUSED GREEN BELT SITES (ALL RESPONDENTS)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAG 1</th>
<th>EAG 2</th>
<th>EAG 3</th>
<th>EAG 4</th>
<th>EAG 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redundant sites should be redeveloped to provide new housing.</td>
<td>35 %</td>
<td>47 %</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td>32 %</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>35 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redundant sites should be redeveloped to provide new employment sites.</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redundant sites should be reclaimed as open spaces or forestry.</td>
<td>48 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>56 %</td>
<td>54 %</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>46 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know/ Not provided</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMPLE BASES</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those panel members who would prefer that any new developments in Green Belt land are resisted also resist development of previously developed Green Belt sites. Only 24% of this group would like to see previously developed sites developed into housing compared to 59% of those who believe some Green Belt land should be used to meet longer term development needs. The majority (64%) of those who feel all Green Belt development should be resisted feel that the best use of previously developed but unused Green Belt sites is open space and forestry.
Future distribution of specific development types

The opinions noted above on Green Belt management provide an overview of how the residents of South Staffordshire would like to see development managed in the future. However to further probe resident’s spatial preferences for development a series of questions were included about where particular developments should be located and the form they should take. These questions addressed the issue of whether future housing, employment and retail developments should be developed in concentrations or dispersed across the district.

Housing

When asked about how future housing location development should be distributed, approaching half of panel members (48%) believe developments should be shared equally across large and small villages in the district. Two in five (40%) believe that future housing should be mostly in the main villages but with limited growth in smaller villages. The least popular approach among panel members is the development of a few large urban areas as only 7% would like to see new housing located exclusively in the main villages of the district.

Further analysis shows that such preferences do vary across the five Environmental Action Groups in the district. Significantly more residents of EAG 5 (15%) would like to see future housing concentrated in the main villages of the district while those residing in EAG 1 and 2 would prefer an even spread of new housing among large and small villages in the district.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS SHOULD SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL LOCATE NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT (ALL RESPONDENTS)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAG 1</th>
<th>EAG 2</th>
<th>EAG 3</th>
<th>EAG 4</th>
<th>EAG 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively in the main villages of the district</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the main villages but with limited growth in smaller villages</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developments should be shared equally across large and small villages in the district</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/ not provided</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAMPLE BASES</strong></td>
<td><strong>746</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
<td><strong>219</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>118</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The opinion that future housing developments should be shared equally across large and small villages in the district was also supported significantly more by the following groups:

- Those who feel green belt policies should be relaxed to meet the long term development needs of the district (61%);
- Males (53% c.f. 45% of females).

Investigating the scale of future housing location further all panel members were asked what the Council’s future approach to housing development should be. The vast majority (89%) of South Staffordshire residents feel that housing should be on smaller sites spread across the district and only 9% preferred the option of large housing sites in a few locations. As shown in Table 3 such opinions are consistent across EAG 1-4, while in AEG 5 significantly more panel members (17% favour housing on large sites in a few locations).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE THE COUNCIL’S APPROACH TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE DISTRICT? (ALL RESPONDENTS)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAG 1</th>
<th>EAG 2</th>
<th>EAG 3</th>
<th>EAG 4</th>
<th>EAG 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New housing should be on large sites in a few locations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New housing should be on smaller sites spread across the district</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not provided</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAMPLE BASES</strong></td>
<td><strong>746</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
<td><strong>219</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>118</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender also appears to have an influence on the opinions on this matter. Nine in ten (91%) females favour an even spread of housing across the district compared to 86% of males, a difference which is significant. Conversely significantly more males than females would prefer a few large housing sites (12% c.f. 7% of females).
Employment developments

When asked about the location of new employment developments, panel members provided similar responses as they did regarding housing development. Just under half (45%) believe developments should be shared equally across large and small villages in the district. A third (33%) believe that future employment developments should be mostly in the main villages but with limited growth in smaller villages. The least popular approach would be to focus employment developments in the main villages of the district as only 12% of panel members chose this option. Further replicating the views on housing, residents in EAG 5 are significantly more likely to favour new employment developments being limited to the main villages in the district.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS SHOULD SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL LOCATE NEW EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT (ALL RESPONDENTS)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAG 1</th>
<th>EAG 2</th>
<th>EAG 3</th>
<th>EAG 4</th>
<th>EAG 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively in the main villages of the district</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the main villages but with limited growth in smaller villages</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developments should be shared equally across large and small villages in the district</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/ not provided</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAMPLE BASES</strong></td>
<td><strong>746</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
<td><strong>219</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>118</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such views on the future location of employment were not influenced by whether panel members were in employment or whether they worked full or part time.
Retail Developments

When considering the location for future retail developments approaching half of panel members (48%) state that future retail developments would be best located within the shopping centres that already exist in residential areas. This option is especially preferred by panel members residing in EAG 4 (57% endorsed this option). Retail development within existing village centres is preferred by a quarter of residents overall, while 20% favoured large retail sites outside existing shopping centres. As Shown in Table 4 the latter option is preferred most by residents of EAG 2.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHERE DO YOU THINK THAT ANY NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD BE LOCATED? (ALL RESPONDENTS)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAG 1</th>
<th>EAG 2</th>
<th>EAG 3</th>
<th>EAG 4</th>
<th>EAG 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within existing village centres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the shopping centres that already exist in residential areas</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On large retail sites outside existing shopping centres</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know/not provided</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMPLE BASES</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes value less than one percent

Preferences for the location of future retail development also appear to be influenced by age. For all age groups retail development in existing residential centres was the most favoured option but notable differences are evident:

- Those aged 65 and older are significantly more likely to state future retail development should be located in exiting village centres (31% compared to 20% of those aged 25-44).

- Those aged 45-64 are significantly more likely to state future retail development should be located in existing residential shopping areas (55% compared to 45% of those aged 65+ and 45% of those aged 25-44).

- Those aged 25-44 are significantly more likely to state future retail development should be located in large retail sides outside exiting shopping centres (28% compared to 11% of those aged 45-64 and 17% of those aged 65+).
4 Development Priorities

Introduction

As well as exploring the preferred location and distribution of future development in South Staffordshire, a key purpose of this survey was to identify the development priorities within the district. To this end, several questions were asked relating to key issues such as housing, transport, open spaces and environmental protection in order to establish the most important priorities within each area of the Council’s responsibility.

Housing priorities

Several questions regarding future housing developments were presented to panel members. These covered the type of housing that should be prioritised, its scale and its character.

When presented with three different options to prioritise regarding the housing mix in the district, over half (55%) of panel members stated that encouraging a mix of housing types and densities on new housing sites is the top priority. Residents of EAG 3 (60%) and EAG 4 (63%) are most likely to state that this should be the Council’s top priority regarding housing. Among those panel members who support existing or extended Green Belt protection significantly more prioritise a mix of housing densities on new sites compared to those who feel Green Belt land should be used to meet development needs (63% and 53% respectively compared to 38%).
Figure 3

The provision of more specialist housing for elderly and vulnerable groups was stated as the first priority by 29% of all panel members rising to 33% among those aged 45-64 and 38% among those aged 65 and over. In terms of area, the provision of this type of accommodation is supported most strongly in EAG 1 where 39% of panel members feel this should be the Council’s first priority.

Table 6 shows the results when panel members were probed further on the issue of housing density. Just over one in five (22%) feel that housing density should only be increased in village centres and half disagree. When the proportion who disagree are subtracted from those who agree this results in overall balance score of -28. The strongest support is for increasing housing density as long as it is sympathetic to the character of a village. Four in five panel members (79%) agree with this statement while only 12% disagree producing a balance score of +67.
Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW STRONGLY DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING APPROACHES THE COUNCIL MAY TAKE ON HOUSING DENSITY (ALL RESPONDENTS)</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>BALANCE SCORE</th>
<th>% POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Council should only increase housing density in village centres.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Council should protect certain villages from any increases in housing density to protect their character</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>+48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing housing density is acceptable as long as it is sympathetic to the character of a village</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 746

Agreement with the notion of sympathetic increases in housing density is highest among panel members residing in EAG 4 (86%) and lowest in EAG 3 (73%). Support for this is also influenced by age. While 85% of those aged 25-44 agree increasing housing density is acceptable as long as it is sympathetic to the character of a village, this falls to 70% among those aged 65+.

The other key housing issue that panel members were asked to consider was the future provision of affordable housing. Approaching three quarters (73%) of panel members support the idea that the Council should ensure all new housing developments include some affordable housing. The least support for this was among residents of EAG1 (65%). Over half (53%) of all panel members also support increases in the amount of affordable housing on proposed new housing sites.

However there does not seem to be support for the notion that affordable housing development should follow different guidelines compared to other forms of housing. Only 20% of panel members support the statement “the Council should allow small scale affordable housing on sites where housing would not normally be allowed.” Perhaps unsurprisingly such an approach is supported by only 11% of panel members who feel all development of Green Belt land should be resisted compared to 46% of those who feel some Green Belt land should be utilised for development needs.
Economic priorities

One aim of the Local Development Framework will be to encourage land uses that create jobs and contribute to the local economy. In this context South Staffordshire Council wished to ascertain which approaches to the local economy residents feel should be prioritised.

Given its rural nature, future plans for the economic development of South Staffordshire need to consider the rural economy. In order to assist the rural economy over two in five panel members (44%) feel that promoting and encouraging tourism should be the Council’s top priority. A further 21% state this should be the Council’s second priority. This reflects the attitude towards tourism in recorded in the last South Staffordshire Viewpoint study which found more than four fifths (81%) of respondents think that tourism is important to the South Staffordshire economy with over one third (34%) indicating it is very important.

*Figure 4*
Looking at the South Staffordshire economy as a whole, figure 5 illustrates a third (32%) of panel members feel that in order to support the local economy, regeneration of under used employment sites should be the top priority for the Council. The similar approach of refurbishing existing buildings so they can be used for employment was chosen as a top priority by 29% of panel members.

Figure 5

The regeneration of under-used employment sites was chosen as the top priority by 41% of residents in EAG 1 and EAG4, the highest level of support across the five EAG areas that make up the district. Among panel members who resist all future development in the Green Belt 35% state building refurbishment and 32% state regenerating under-used employment sites should be the top Council priority for supporting the local economy. This is higher than among those who believe Green Belt policies should be relaxed to meet development need although this difference is not significant.
Looking more specifically at encouraging new development, as shown in figure 6 there is a strong preference for full utilisation of existing employment sites rather than the development of new sites or the expansion of existing ones.

**Figure 6**

![Bar Chart: Preferred Approach to Develop New Employment Opportunities in the District (All Panel Members)](chart.png)

However this preference is not equal across all EAG areas. Over three in five (65%) panel members in EAG 3 state that allowing different types of employment on existing employment sites should be the top priority yet in EAG 4 the equivalent proportion falls to 48%. Indeed in EAG 4 three in ten (30%) believe that existing employment sites should be allowed to expand.

The approach that panel members seem to advocate for the Council is a pragmatic one. Three in ten (28%) feel that when employment sites are put under pressure from alternative uses such as housing the all employment sites should be protected. However the majority 69% state that the Council should only protect the best employment sites and allow poor quality sites to be redeveloped. No definition was provided in the questionnaire regarding what constitutes a good or a poor quality employment site, but it does appear that the majority of South Staffordshire residents are willing to allow the Council to make judgement decisions rather than having them follow absolutes such as all employment sites must be protected.
However the responses regarding how the Council should facilitate the right mix of shopping facilities in the District are slightly different. Two in five (41%) state that preventing existing shops being converted to non-retail uses is the priority and three in ten (31%) believe protecting the existing mix of land use is the most crucial approach. When combined this means in when considering retail, 72% of panel members believe that maintaining the status quo is the priority.

**Priorities for Environmental and Landscape Protection**

Protection of the environment and the landscapes is one of the key areas that the LDF will need to address. The Council wants to protect the environment in South Staffordshire and also make a contribution to tackling wider environmental issues. In this context a number of questions were included in the survey to determine the views of residents on possible approaches to environmental and landscape protection.

In order to protect the natural environment of South Staffordshire 45% of panel members feel that protecting sites which have important wildlife or geological importance should be the top priority. This is a top priority in all 5 EAG areas, and is supported most in EAG 5 where 55% state it should be the top priority. Support for the protection of important wildlife and geology is highest among younger age groups. Over half (52%) of those aged 25-44 state this as a top priority falling to 43% among those aged 45-64 and 36% of those over 65 years of age. Despite this support for wildlife protection, overall only 13% of panel members feel that actively managing and creating wildlife habitats should be the Council’s top priority.
Further analysis of this question provides additional insight into how environmental considerations are related to the views on other aspects of development. It is interesting to note that:

- **Half (50%)** of those who feel all future Green Belt development should be restricted believe that protection of important wildlife/geology should be the Council’s top environmental priority. However **44%** of those who state Green Belt land needs to be used to meet long term development needs still place protection of important wildlife/geology as their top priority.

- **Approaching two thirds (63%)** of panel members who favour new housing in large developments on a few sites state protection of important wildlife/geology as their top environmental priority.

Environmental protection is not confined to the protection of rare species or undeveloped land, it also encompasses historic buildings and where man made and natural elements combine to produce landscapes. To
understand attitudes to historic buildings and landscapes all panel members were presented with 5 approaches the Council could take to these issues and were asked to rank them from one to five. Figure 8 shows the proportion of panel members who placed each environmental strategy in their top three.

Figure 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities for Management of Landscapes and Historic Buildings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> Ensure it has a comprehensive record of the historic environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> Encourage the restoration and new uses for historic buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong> Promote the conservation and improvement of historic landscapes, parklands and gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> Identify landscapes that deserve special protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E</strong> Identify landscapes that need to restored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panel members believe that the Council should prioritise the conservation and improvement of historic landscapes parklands and gardens. A third of panel members chose this as their first choice and a further 29% stated it should be the Council’s second highest priority. Those stating this at the top priority for the Council are significantly more likely to be:

- Residents of EAG 2 (38%);
- Female (40% compared to 26% of males);
- Aged 25-44 (42% compared to 32% of those aged 45-64 and 22% of those aged 65 and over).
Approaching three in ten (28%) of panel members believe that of the five options the Council could take regarding landscapes and historic buildings, restoring historic buildings and finding new use for them is the top priority. Significantly more of these panel members are:

- Residents of EAG 1 (34%);
- Aged 25-44 (33% compared to 26% of those aged 45-64 and 21% of those aged 65 and over).

When considering South Staffordshire Council’s wider role in environmental issues such as climate change residents strongly support all of the possible contributions the Council could make. Encouraging higher standards of energy efficiency in new developments is the most favoured option with nine in ten (93%) agreeing that the Council should do this including 54% who agree strongly.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW STRONGLY DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD...? (ALL RESPONDENTS)</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>BALANCE SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the development of public transport so that there are alternatives to the car</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure higher standards of energy efficiency in new developments</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the use of renewable energy and the development of renewable energy schemes</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help limit flooding in the district</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 746**
Transport Priorities

When considering transportation issues in South Staffordshire the action that most panel members state should be the Council’s first priority is increasing current levels of public transport. Over a third (35%) of panel members overall state this as their top priority with residents EAG 1 (42%) and EAG 2 (42%) significantly more likely to deem it the top transportation priority. In terms of age, increasing levels of public transport is the top priority for 40% of 45-64 year olds compared to 34% of those aged 65 and over and 30% of those aged 25-44.

Figure 9

One in five (20%) panel members state that reducing the need to travel by ensuring villages have a good range of services and facilities should be the Council’s single top priority. When the cumulative results are analysed (by adding the first, second and third choices) this was the transport priority chosen most often. Those panel members supporting this strategy are most likely to reside in EAG 5 where 25% of panel members state it should be the first priority.

South Staffordshire Council as part of their transport strategy wish to make walking and cycling a sustainable alternative to the car. In this context all panel members were presented with three possible approaches the Council could take to increase levels of walking and cycling in the district. When considering these approaches half (49%) of panel members believe that the Council should make creating new pedestrian and cycling routes their first priority, while a third (35%) state the Council should prioritise improving those routes that already exist.
Further analysis by area shows that although in each EAG the overall ranking of priorities is consistent with the order shown in figure 10 there are some notable differences. Those residing in EAG 2 and EAG 4 (57% and 60% respectively) are significantly more likely to favour the creation of new routes compared to residents of the other areas. In EAG 1, 3 and 5 more panel members favour improving existing routes compared to EAG 2 and 4.

Finally, in order to fully understand any barriers that prevent South Staffordshire residents choosing alternative means of transport, panel members were asked to state if there was anything else the Council could do to promote walking and cycling. Four in five (79%) of panel members did not provide an answer at this question. But among those who did the most common responses were:

- Improve safety (30 panel members);
- Maintain pathways/cycle routes to a higher standard (27 panel members);
- Develop/promote healthy lifestyle programmes (17 panel members);
- Street lighting could be improved (17 panel members);
**Priorities for ensuring sustainable communities**

The Local Development Framework will seek to ensure that South Staffordshire communities have a bright future, with the appropriate mix of essential community facilities. These facilities include education, healthcare and leisure. To ensure that the villages in South Staffordshire have a range of essential facilities and services in the future, panel members were asked to prioritise the importance of five possible Council activities.

Figure 11 shows the proportion of residents who stated each approach would be among their top three priorities. Maintaining and improving existing facilities is the top priority for over half (58%) of panel members. In total 83% of panel members places this among the top three priorities the Council should have for the development of sustainable communities.

**Figure 11**

COMMUNITY ISSUES TO PRIORITISE (ALL RESPONDENTS)

- Maintain and improve existing facilities in villages: 58% (1st Priority), 18% (2nd Priority), 7% (3rd Priority)
- Make existing facilities and services more accessible: 5% (1st Priority), 30% (2nd Priority), 27% (3rd Priority)
- Make schools available for wider use by the community: 2% (1st Priority), 13% (2nd Priority), 27% (3rd Priority)
- Ensure future health care sites are provided in accessible locations: 16% (1st Priority), 23% (2nd Priority), 25% (3rd Priority)
- Ensure that new housing developments include new community facilities: 8% (1st Priority), 15% (2nd Priority), 13% (3rd Priority)

Further analysis shows that the proportion of panel members who think maintaining and improving existing facilities in village is highest among:

- Residents of EAG 4 (67%);
- Females (61% compared to 53% of males);
- Those aged 25-44 (68% compared to 52% of those aged 45-64 and 47% of those aged 65 and over).
When asked if there are anything else the Council should prioritise to make sure local communities have the facilities they need in the future the most common responses from panel members were:

- Provide more facilities/activities for young people (41 panel members);
- Improve public transport (34 panel members);
- Safeguard local post offices/shopping facilities (13 panel members);
- Provide more facilities/care for the elderly (13 panel members).
Priorities regarding leisure, open space and recreation

South Staffordshire Council wants to ensure that the need for green space within villages is met. This need is partially for aesthetic purposes, green specs making a contribution to the character of villages but also as a location for leisure activities. When panel members were asked to agree with five statements about green spaces in villages the statement that provoked the strongest agreement was “existing green areas within villages should be protected.” Over nine in ten (95%) of panel members agree with this statement including three quarters who agree strongly. Closely related to this 90% of panel members agree that existing open spaces and green areas need to be managed and improved. Agreement with this statement was strongest in EAG2 where 97% of panel members agreed.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW STRONGLY DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS...? (ALL RESPONDENTS)</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>BALANCE SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing green areas within villages should be protected</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing open spaces and green areas need to be managed and improved</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Council should encourage greater biodiversity</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Council should allocate more land within villages as open space</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of open space should be provided as part of all new developments</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the issue of open space in all new future developments, this is most strongly supported by residents of EAG 4 (95% agree), those aged 45-64 (89%). It is also interesting to note that support for open space as part of all new development was supported to an equal extent by those who favour housing developments on a few large sites (84%) and those who would prefer housing development spread across smaller sites across the district.
When presented with three statements regarding the leisure and recreational facilities in South Staffordshire just over half (54%) agreed that the district needs new leisure and recreational facilities, and 8% disagreed. Agreement with this statement is highest in EAG 4 where over two thirds (69%) agree and lowest in EAG 3 where 49% of residents agree.

The strongest agreement is for the statement “South Staffordshire should have a range of facilities which are attractive to everyone. This was supported by 88% of panel members including 40% who agreed strongly. Agreement with this statement was consistent between males and females and across age groups so there was no evidence of any particular group feeling that their recreational needs were not been met.

When considering new developments two thirds of residents believe that all new developments should include leisure and recreational facilities, a lower proportion than those who said all developments should contain open space. Again agreement with this statement was significantly higher among those residing in EAG 4 (79%) suggesting that the Council should pay particular attention to the leisure and recreational needs of this area as evidence suggests the needs of resident here are perhaps not currently being met.
5 Trust in the South Staffordshire Council

To establish how confident South Staffordshire residents are that the Council will make the correct choices for the future of the district all panel members were presented with the statement "I trust the Council to make the right decisions about the future development of the District." Overall just under half (47% of panel members agree with this statement including 9% who strongly agree. Such agreement is highest among those who are over 65 years of age (64% agree). In contrast 16% of panel members overall disagree with this statement with a further 28% neutral on this issue.

Figure 12

- **Strongly Agree**: 9%
- **Agree**: 38%
- **Neither Agree nor Disagree**: 28%
- **Disagree**: 11%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 5%
- **Don’t Know/Not Provided**: 9%

**Unweighted Base = 746**
6 Profile information

The following table highlights the demographic profile of respondents.

*Table 9*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics &amp; Profile</th>
<th>Actual Number Of Interviews Completed</th>
<th>Unweighted Percentage</th>
<th>Weighted Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAG Area 1</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAG Area 2</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAG Area 3</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAG Area 4</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAG Area 5</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-44 years old</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64 years old</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have A Disability / Long Standing Illness</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Employment</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupiers</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social renters</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>