

**Matter 1 – intro****Has the Council has complied with the relevant procedural and legal requirements.**

This Examination relates to the South Staffordshire Local Plan which undertook Regulation 19 consultation in April 2024 and was subsequently submitted to Secretary of State on 11th December 2024. At both Regulation 19 and Submission stages the December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was the relevant national policy. The December 2023 NPPF has since been updated and the latest iteration of the NPPF is the December 2024. Annex 1 of the December 2024 NPPF sets out the transitional arrangements for plan making which confirms at paragraph 234 that policies in that version will apply from 12 March 2025, except where a number of exceptions apply. This includes point (b) where ‘the plan has been submitted for examination under Regulation 22 on or before 12 March 2025’. This is applicable to the submitted South Staffordshire Local Plan, and therefore the December 2024 NPPF is not the relevant version for the examination. As such the Council considers that the December 2023 NPPF is the relevant NPPF for this examination.

Whilst we acknowledge that an earlier Regulation 19 consultation took place in October 2022, and prior to the December 2023 NPPF being in place, that was not the Regulation 19 Plan that was taken forward to submission and is not the Plan subject to this examination.

In terms of compliance with other legal requirements, the council is confident that the plan has been prepared appropriately, in accordance with all relevant legal requirements, including the LDS, SCI and HRA requirements. Prior to submission, further HRA work was carried out across the region in partnership with other local authorities. This was led by South Staffordshire and confirmed that in combination, the Local Plan and other relevant plans policies and projects, will not have adverse effects on site integrity due to increased air pollution from traffic associated with local plans. Natural England were a partner in this project and support the findings, which is reflected in the SoCG on this matter.

In terms of the Sustainability Appraisal, the methodology applied is robust, based on up to date information, and the scope of options and reasonable alternatives explored, is justified. The iterative development of the SA has robustly informed and shaped the development of the Local Plan.