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STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

**LANDSCAPE, LOCAL GREEN SPACE AND HERITAGE IMPACT STUDY: ASSESSMENT
OF ADDITIONAL SITES**

OCTOBER 2017

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Wardell Armstrong

Sir Henry Doulton House, Forge Lane, Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 5BD, United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0)1782 276 700 Facsimile: +44 (0)845 111 8888 www.wardell-armstrong.com



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) is currently in the process of preparing a Local Plan and in 2016 Wardell Armstrong LLP were instructed by SMDC to undertake a study assessing the Council's preferred options development sites in relation to their landscape and heritage impact.

Subsequently three additional potential development sites were identified by SMDC, and the potential landscape and heritage impacts of these sites has been assessed in accordance with the methodology used in the 2016 study.

The results of this assessment are summarised below:

- LE102 Bank Farm: The site is of medium landscape sensitivity. It is suitable for development in heritage terms (subject to further research in the form of a Heritage Statement).
- BD104 Land Between Meadows Way and Tunstall Road, Biddulph: The site is of low landscape sensitivity. It is suitable for development in heritage terms.
- BDNEW West of Biddulph Valley Way / East of Woodside Farm: The site is of high landscape sensitivity. It is suitable for development in heritage terms.

This assessment and the 2016 study forms part of a wider evidence base to support SMDC's Local Plan. Therefore, the conclusions will be weighed against other evidence when determining the overall suitability of a site for development.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) is in the process of preparing a Local Plan to shape future development of the District up to 2031. The Preferred Options Local Plan for SMDC will identify site allocations to meet the District's objectively assessed housing need (OAHN). A number of studies are being undertaken to determine which allocations should be taken forward in the Submission Local Plan.
- 1.1.2 In 2016 Wardell Armstrong LLP were instructed by SMDC to undertake a study assessing the Council's preferred options development sites in relation to their landscape and heritage impact¹ (hereafter referred to as the 2016 study).
- 1.1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with the 2016 study, which is available on SMDC's website².
- 1.1.4 This current report assesses the landscape and heritage impact of three additional sites which have emerged through Local Plan consultation or other circumstances (e.g. have recently become available for development) by applying the same methodology of assessment that was used for the 2016 study. This methodology is included at Appendix 1, and an example of the site assessment sheets used is included at Appendix 2. The locations of the three additional sites are illustrated on Maps 1 and 2 accompanying this report.
- 1.1.5 The results of the survey of the additional sites are set out in the next section (Section 2). Conclusions are provided at Section 3.
- 1.1.6 The 2016 study forms part of a wider evidence base to support SMDC's Local Plan. Therefore, the conclusions within the 2016 study and this report will be weighed against other evidence when determining the overall suitability of a site for development.

¹ The 2016 study also included a review of SMDC's Visual Open Space (VOS) designations, however this is not of relevance to the current report which relates to preferred options development sites only.

² <https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/article/1367/Landscape-and-Green-Belt-studies>

2 RESULTS

2.1 Landscape

2.1.1 Table 2.1 below details the results of the landscape assessment for the additional sites.

TABLE 2.1 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT	
Ref	Summary and Recommendations
LE102	<p>Bank Farm</p> <p>Site comprises a single field on the north-western edge of Leek, which slopes steeply up from the A523. The topography of the site could be a constraint to development. However, the site is enclosed by tree belts to the north-west and north-east, and industrial development to the south-east which reduces the visual prominence of the site. Cottages to the east of the site and surrounding vegetation contributes to the rural character of the site, however the adjacent A523 highway and industrial development detracts from this character. The site fits in well with the existing settlement form, and development within it would be viewed against the adjacent industrial development. Development within the site, with appropriate landscaping, could potentially screen existing views of industrial development on approach to Leek. Consideration should be given to limiting building height due to the rising topography of the site.</p> <p><i>Site is of medium landscape sensitivity. Site specific landscape mitigation measures could include restricted building heights. Topography within the site could be a constraint to development.</i></p>
BD104	<p>Land Between Meadows Way and Tunstall Road, Biddulph</p> <p>Site comprises a sloping, triangular field bound on two sides by Meadows Way and Tunstall Road. The roundabout at the junction of these two roads is located immediately south of the site. The site is generally enclosed by vegetation, reducing its visual prominence. The adjacent settlement edge to the north is formed by Beehive Farm, and is not well defined. Development within the site (particularly in combination with development of the land to the north, surrounding Beehive Farm) could strengthen the settlement edge.</p> <p><i>Site is of low landscape sensitivity.</i></p>
BDNEW	<p>West of Biddulph Valley Way / East of Woodside Farm</p> <p>Large site on western edge of Biddulph comprising agricultural land, enclosed by Wharf Road to the north. The south-western boundary of the site is not well defined, generally formed by fencing and hedgerows on irregular field boundaries. The site is located beyond the dismantled railway, which currently forms a strong, vegetated settlement edge and limit to development. The site is inter-visible with the Green Belt to the west. Development within the site would encroach on the surrounding countryside, and would adversely affect the existing settlement edge. Development of the site could potentially</p>

	<p>compromise the surrounding sensitive countryside, as there would be no clear limit to development beyond the site.</p> <p>Site is of high landscape sensitivity.</p> <p>Please note that this study forms part of the wider evidence base to support SMDC's Local Plan. Therefore the conclusions within this report will be weighed against other evidence when determining the overall suitability of a site for development.</p>
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2.2 Heritage

2.2.1 Table 2.2 below details the results of the heritage assessment for the additional sites.

TABLE 2.2 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT	
Ref	Summary and Recommendations
LE102	<p>Bank Farm</p> <p>There is one Grade II Listed Building within the 400m buffer. The visual prominence of the site was reduced by surrounding development and vegetation. Development would be highly unlikely to adversely affect the setting of the designated asset due to the intervening topography and vegetation. The site is located within the refined non-designated HLC Historic Parks and Gardens associated with the non-designated Highfield Hall. As such, a Heritage Statement should be submitted as part of any proposals if the site was to be assessed for development (Historic Environment Character Assessment 2010). This should include an assessment of the significance of Highfield Hall and its associated landscape elements, the contribution that setting makes, the potential level of impact from development (if any), and possible opportunities for enhancement.</p> <p>Site suitable for development in heritage terms subject to further research in the form of a Heritage Statement.</p>
BD104	<p>Land Between Meadows Way and Tunstall Road, Biddulph</p> <p>There are seven Grade II Listed Buildings within the 400m buffer. Vegetation along the southern boundary of the site screens views of the church tower from the site. Due to the large road junction and intervening buildings, development would be unlikely to cause high adverse effects to the settings of the designated assets. Development in the site would change a small element of the HLC zone BBHECZ 3, although for the most part, it would remain unaltered (Historic Environment Character Assessment 2010).</p> <p>Site suitable for development in heritage terms.</p>
BDNEW	<p>West of Biddulph Valley Way / East of Woodside Farm</p> <p>There are six Grade II Listed Buildings within the 400m buffer. The Grade II Listed Mow Cop Castle was visible from the site, located approximately 1.8km west. Due to the intervening buildings and vegetation, development would not</p>

adversely impact upon the settings of the assets. From Mow Cop Castle, development in the site would be viewed against a backdrop of existing development and would not impact upon its setting.

The HER records the site of a colliery within the site boundary, which may be physically impacted upon by development (PRN 51705). The northern part of the site is set within the HLC zone BBHECZ 2 (Historic Environment Character Assessment 2010). The particular HLC type is least susceptible and development would not alter the character of the zone significantly. The southern part of the site is within the HLC zone BBHECZ 3 (Historic Environment Character Assessment 2010). Development in the site would change an element of the HLC zone BBHECZ 3 (Historic Environment Character Assessment 2010). However, with sensitive design, this could be mitigated.

Site is suitable for development in heritage terms.

3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

3.1.1 The potential landscape and heritage impacts of three additional sites within Staffordshire Moorlands have been assessed in accordance with the methodology used within the 2016 study. A summary of the results is set out below.

LE102 Bank Farm

3.1.2 The site is of medium landscape sensitivity. Landscape mitigation measures could include restricted building heights. The site is suitable for development in heritage terms subject to further research in the form of a Heritage Statement.

BD104 Land Between Meadows Way and Tunstall Road, Biddulph

3.1.3 The site is of low landscape sensitivity and is suitable for development in heritage terms.

BDNEW West of Biddulph Valley Way / East of Woodside Farm

3.1.4 The site is of high landscape sensitivity. However please note that this study forms part of the wider evidence base to support SMDC's Local Plan. Therefore the conclusions within this report will be weighed against other evidence when determining the overall suitability of a site for development. The site is suitable for development in heritage terms.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Excerpt from Landscape, Local Green Space and Heritage Impact Study
(August 2016) – Methodology

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT

3.1.1 As described in the previous section, this study comprises three parts:

- Landscape impact;
- Heritage impact; and
- VOS review.

3.1.2 Each of the existing VOS sites as listed in the Council's Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008) was reviewed, and the scope of sites assessed in relation to their landscape and heritage impact included the following allocations within the draft Preferred Options Local Plan:

- Preferred Options;
- Employment Allocations;
- Mixed Use Development; and
- A Travellers Site.

3.1.3 Reserve sites reported to Council Assembly on 13th April 2016 were also assessed.

3.1.4 The locations and boundaries of the sites assessed are illustrated on Maps 1 to 6.

3.1.5 A specific methodology was developed for each part of the study to ensure compliance with the relevant guidance and policy, and the robustness of the results of the study. An overall approach was then developed, outlining the tasks to be undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the three methodologies.

3.1.6 The following sections describe the specific methodologies developed for each part of the study, and the overall approach that was utilised.

3.2 LANDSCAPE

3.2.1 The assessment of potential landscape impacts comprised a desk study and field survey, during which a site visit to each of the allocations was undertaken. The information gathered during these tasks determined the landscape sensitivity of each site; and informed the identification of potential landscape impacts and recommendations for mitigation measures where necessary.

3.2.2 The desk study included an analysis of GIS data, aerial imagery and OS mapping. This enabled the identification of the relationship between the sites and sensitive environmental receptors and landscape features, including the following:

- PDNP boundary;
- Public Rights of Way;
- Topography;
- Flood zones;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), and Sites of Biological Interest (SBI); and
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Ancient Woodland.

3.2.3 A site visit to each allocation was undertaken, and key vantage points were also visited where relevant in order to gain an appreciation of the site within the wider landscape. During the site visits, the following were recorded in relation to the sites:

- Current land use;
- Nature of adjacent settlement edges;
- Settlement pattern;
- Ecologically and hydrologically important features; and
- Relationship to the setting of the PDNP (where relevant).

3.2.4 The information gathered during the desk study and field survey was used to establish the relationship between susceptibility to change and value, allowing a judgement on the level of landscape sensitivity (low, medium or high) to be determined. These relationships are complex, and different levels of emphasis may be applied to susceptibility to change and landscape value. However, the following provides examples of the approach taken in this assessment:

- High sensitivity: Land with a high susceptibility to change and/or which is of high value, e.g. land adjacent to or visually prominent from the PDNP, land outside of the settlement pattern, land which has high visual prominence, land which contributes to heritage or ecological assets.

- Medium sensitivity: Land with a medium susceptibility to change and/or which is of medium value, e.g. land which has medium visual prominence, land which partially contributes to heritage or ecological assets.
- Low sensitivity: Land with a low susceptibility to change and/or which is of low value, e.g. land within the settlement pattern, land with low visual prominence, land which has no or very limited contribution to heritage or ecological assets.

3.2.5 Please note the above examples are only indicative, and are not a prescriptive matrix by which sensitivity is determined. As stated above, different levels of emphasis may be applied to susceptibility to change and landscape value. For example, an area of land with low susceptibility to change may still be of high sensitivity due to being of high value.

3.2.6 Where sites were identified as having medium or high landscape sensitivity and potential landscape impacts were identified, site specific mitigation measures were outlined based on the information gathered during the assessment.

3.3 HERITAGE

3.3.1 The heritage assessment followed the methodology presented in Historic England Advice Note 3 'The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans' (2015). The purpose of the document is to support all those involved in the Local Plan site allocation process. It presents a five step Site Selection Methodology comprising:

Step 1. Identify which heritage assets are affected by the potential site allocation

3.3.2 The Council's evidence base in relation to heritage currently consists of the following:

- Historic Environment Character Assessment (2010); and
- Staffordshire Historic Environment Record;

3.3.3 The above, as well as the Staffordshire Extensive Urban Surveys, were included within the documentation reviewed during the desk study to inform the baseline of the assessment. The search area was taken as an area of approximately 400m radius from the site boundary to identify designated heritage assets that may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed allocation. At discretion, assets of high importance beyond this distance were included.

3.3.4 The baseline was also informed by analysis of GIS data, aerial imagery and OS mapping. This enabled the identification of the relationship between the sites and sensitive heritage features, including the following:

- Listed Buildings;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Conservation Areas;
- Registered Parks and Gardens; and
- Registered Battlefields

Step 2. Understanding what contribution the site (in its current form) makes to the significance of the heritage asset(s)

3.3.5 A site visit to each of the allocations which had designated heritage assets within 400m was undertaken, and key vantage points were also visited, where relevant, in order to gain an appreciation of the site within the wider landscape. At discretion, assets of high importance beyond this distance were also visited. During the site visits, the following were recorded in relation to the sites:

- Current land use;
- Relationship to the setting of the designated heritage asset.

Step 3. Identify what impact the allocation might have on that significance

3.3.6 The information gathered during the desk study and field survey was used to determine the sensitivity of the heritage assets and the nature of impacts which would be reasonably expected if the site were allocated.

Step 4. Consider maximising enhancements and avoiding harm

3.3.7 Where possible, opportunities to maximise enhancements and avoid harm to designated heritage assets were considered. Where this was not possible and potential heritage impacts were identified, site specific mitigation measures were outlined based on the information gathered during the assessment.

Step 5. Determine whether the proposed site allocation is appropriate in light of the NPPF's tests of soundness

3.3.8 The overall assessment has considered a large number of proposed allocation sites (117) and tested these against a proportionately assembled base evidence and potential for enhancement or minimisation of harm has been proposed where

possible. This approach is consistent with national policy (NPPF) where conservation of heritage assets needs to be undertaken in a manner appropriate to their significance.

3.4 VISUAL OPEN SPACE

3.4.1 As detailed within the Policy Context section above, it is considered that it would be beneficial to replace the existing VOS designation with the LGS designation in order to ensure that it is NPPF compliant. Therefore all existing VOS sites were reviewed in order to identify whether they are suitable for the LGS designation.

3.4.2 A site assessment sheet was produced for the review of the VOS sites, which comprised two parts. The first part assessed the suitability of the site to be designated as a LGS against the criteria outlined within the NPPF. This ensured that the LGS designations to be included within the Local Plan will be compliant with national planning policy.

3.4.3 If the site was found not be suitable for designation as an LGS, the second part of the sheet was then completed. This part assessed the site against general green infrastructure criteria, similar to the VOS criteria used within the 2008 assessment. This allowed a judgement to be made about potential alternative designations or uses for the site.

3.4.4 The site assessment sheets were predominantly informed by the field survey, during which a site visit of each VOS was undertaken. However the information gathered on site was also supplemented by the desk study where relevant (e.g. the identification of the historical use of the site).

3.4.5 The assessment also made recommendations on potential boundary changes that could be undertaken to strengthen the designation of the site, and identified a small number of potential new LGS sites. New LGS sites were only identified when these were adjacent to an existing VOS, and therefore apparent during the field survey.

3.5 OVERALL APPROACH

3.5.1 A staged approach was developed in order to undertake the three parts of this study, in accordance with the above methodologies. This approach broadly comprised the completion of a site assessment sheet for each allocation, informed by desk study and field survey. These sheets were then used to analyse the potential landscape and heritage impacts, and review the existing VOS designations.

3.5.2 Two separate site assessment sheets were used: one for landscape and heritage; and one for the VOS sites. A copy of the site assessment sheets is included at Appendix 1.

3.5.3 The format of the sheets was informed by the relevant guidance, the policy review and the initial findings of the desk study. This ensured the sheets were tailored to the aims of the study, and relevant to the District.

3.5.4 The staged approach broadly comprised the following tasks, undertaken as an iterative process:

Task 1: Policy Review

3.5.5 Relevant background documentation and policies was reviewed, enabling the work to be undertaken in the context of the NPPF and other relevant guidance as detailed within the specific methodologies above.

3.5.6 Of particular importance within this task was the review of the current VOS designation against the requirements of the NPPF, enabling a judgement to be made on whether it is an appropriate designation to retain.

Task 2: Desk Study

3.5.7 GIS data, and other available documentation relating to the allocations, was analysed to establish the baseline and identify sensitive environmental receptors.

3.5.8 This task enabled sensitive environmental receptors and landscape features to be identified. It also identified which designated heritage assets could potentially be affected; and informed the understanding of the contribution the allocations make to the setting of these assets.

3.5.9 This information gathered during this task was recorded on the site assessment sheets, which were then completed during the field survey.

Task 3: Field Survey

3.5.10 A site visit to each allocation was undertaken. In addition, designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the allocations were visited in order to consider whether setting contributes to their overall significance, and whether development within the allocations would cause change to their setting which could cause an impact to their overall significance.

3.5.11 The site assessment sheets, containing information gathered during the desk study, were completed on site with further information gathered during the field survey.

3.5.12 The field survey was undertaken in late April, May and early June 2016.

Task 5: Analysis

3.5.13 The information gathered during the desk study and field survey, and recorded on the site assessment sheets, was analysed to determine the potential landscape sensitivity and heritage impacts of each allocation, and review the VOS designations.

3.5.14 The analysis was undertaken in accordance with the relevant guidance and policy, as outlined within the specific methodologies above.

3.5.15 The analysis allowed identification of the following:

- In relation to the landscape assessment:
 - Sites which are of low landscape sensitivity;
 - Sites which are of medium landscape sensitivity; and
 - Sites which are of high landscape sensitivity.
- In relation to the heritage assessment:
 - Sites which are suitable for development in heritage terms;
 - Sites which are suitable for development in heritage terms subject to mitigation; and
 - Sites which could not be developed without substantial heritage impacts.
- In relation to the VOS review:
 - Sites which are suitable for designation as LGS;
 - Sites which are not suitable for designation as LGS, but may be suitable for a separate green infrastructure designation; and
 - Sites which are not suitable for designation as open space.

3.5.16 Where sites are identified as being of medium landscape sensitivity, or as suitable for development in heritage terms subject to mitigation, recommendations on appropriate measures to minimise potential impacts are provided.

3.5.17 In addition, sites which may require further, more detailed assessment prior to inclusion within the Submission Local Plan are identified.

Appendix 2
Site Assessment Sheet

Landscape and Heritage Impact Assessment

Site Assessment Sheet

DATE SURVEYED:

SITE NAME:

SITE REFERENCES:

SETTLEMENT:

SMDC CATEGORY:

CHARACTER AREAS

National Character Area:

Landscape Character Type:

EXISTING LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

	Located in	Adjacent to	Visible from
National Park:	<input type="text" value="N/A"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Green Belt:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

TOPOGRAPHY

Flat: Sloping: Undulating:

Brief description of site and surrounding area:

FLOOD RISK

Area within Zone 3: Zone 2: Zone 1:

Comments:

LANDSCAPE AND VEGETATION STRUCTURE

Landscape Structure:

Open: Semi enclosed: Enclosed:

Field pattern:

N/A: Regular: Irregular:

Small: Medium: Large:

Enclosure materials:

Fencing: Hedgerows: Hedgerows With trees:

Dry Stone Walls: Other:

Hedgerow condition:

Managed: Unmanaged: Gappy:

Hedgerow trees/tree belts (condition): Good: Poor:

Woodland adjacent to site: Yes: No:

Comments:

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs):

TPO Ref No: In site: Adjacent to site:

Comments:

CURRENT LAND USE/HABITATS WITHIN THE SITE

Previously developed:	Bracken/Scrub:
Unimproved grassland:	Woodland:
Semi-improved grassland:	Arable:
Improved grassland:	Marshland:
Ruderal grassland:	Allotments:
Horticulture:	Landfill:
Quarrying/Mineral working:	
Amenity:-	
Playing fields:	Informal Open Space:
Historic Parks and Gardens:	
Other:-	

	In	Adjacent
Public footpaths / Bridleways:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
National Trails / Bridleways:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

BIODIVERSITY

Statutory Designations: SPA: SAC: SSSI:
 NNR: LNR:

Ancient woodland on or adjacent to site: Yes: No:

Site of Biological Interest: On: Adjacent to:

Biological Alert Site: On: Adjacent to:

Presence of water bodies on, or adjacent to the site:

On site: Adjacent to site: No:

Comments:

SITE CONTEXT

Does the site affect the setting of The National Park?

Yes: No:

Comments:

Adjoining settlement edge:

Well defined Edge: Weakly defined Edge:
Vegetated Edge: Urbanised Edge:

Adjacent building type:

Residential: Commercial/Industrial: Agricultural:

Other: _____

Adjacent building density:

High: Medium: Low:

Visual prominence of site:

High: Medium: Low:

Would development contribute to visual coalescence of settlements/existing centres?

Yes: No:

Potential for improvement of settlement edge:

Yes: No:

Designated heritage assets and settings (within 400m)

Is Site Assessed In The Staffordshire Moorlands ‘Historic Environment Character Assessment’ (2010)?

YES (See Section A) NO (See Section B)

SECTION A

Site within HECZ:

“High” Values Identified

Evidential Historical Aesthetic Communal

“Medium” Values Identified

Evidential Historical Aesthetic Communal

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

SECTION B

Site within HLC Character Type/s:

-
-
-
-

SECTION C

CONSERVATION AREAS

Within Site Adjacent to Site Visible from Site

Could development potentially affect its/ their setting?

LISTED BUILDINGS

GRADE I

Within Site Adjacent to Site Visible from Site

Could development potentially affect its/ their setting?

GRADE II*

Within Site Adjacent to Site Visible from Site

Could development potentially affect its/ their setting?

GRADE II

Within Site Adjacent to Site Visible from Site

Could development potentially affect its/ their setting?

SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

Within Site Adjacent to Site Visible from Site

Could development potentially affect its/ their setting?

HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

Within Site Adjacent to Site Visible from Site

Could development potentially affect its/ their setting?

TRAFFIC LIGHT **RED** **ORANGE** **GREEN**

State How to Maximise Enhancement

State How Harm Could Be Minimised/ Avoided



SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Recommendations, including Mitigation:

DRAWINGS

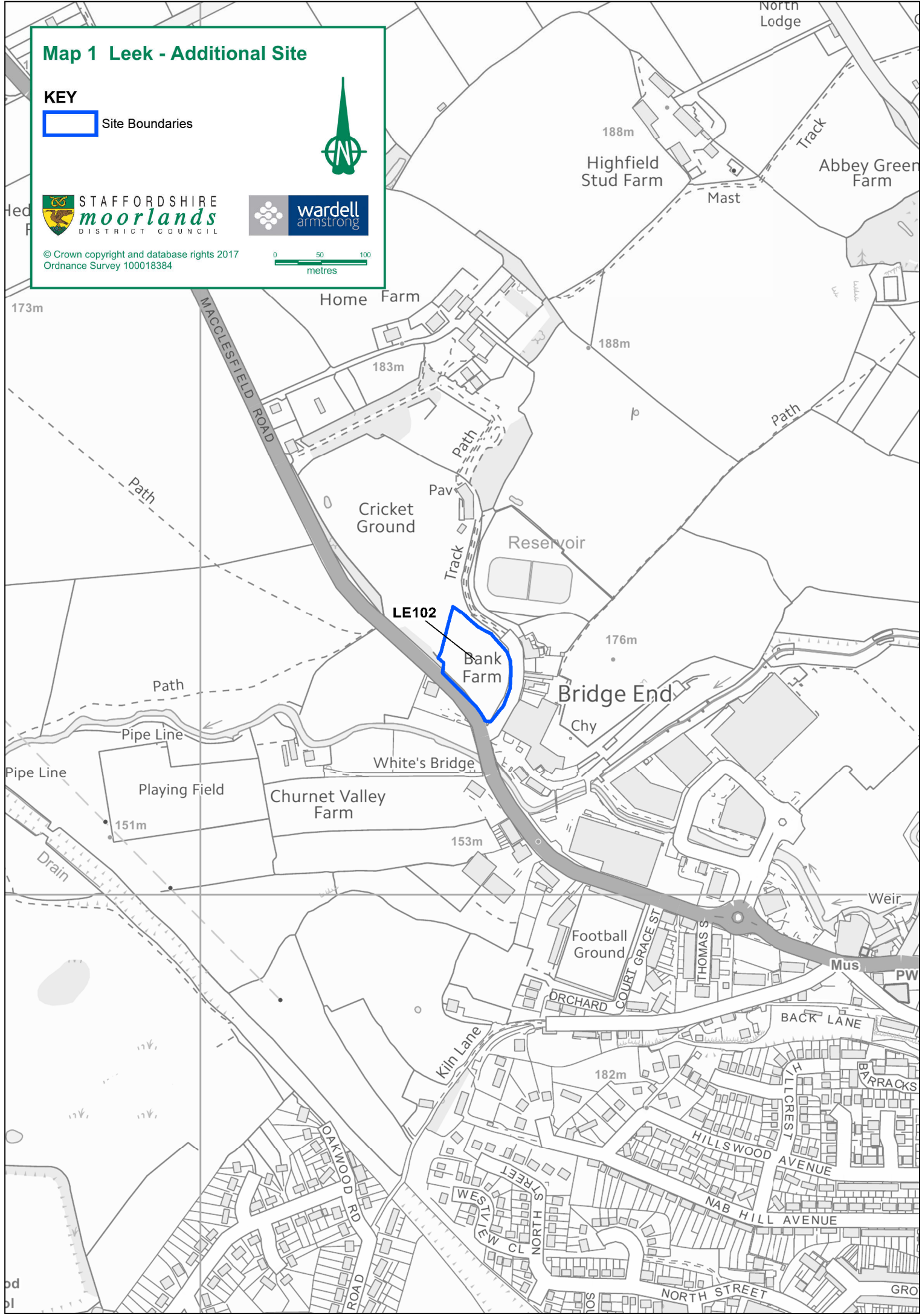
Map 1 Leek - Additional Site

KEY

 Site Boundaries



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Ordnance Survey 100018384



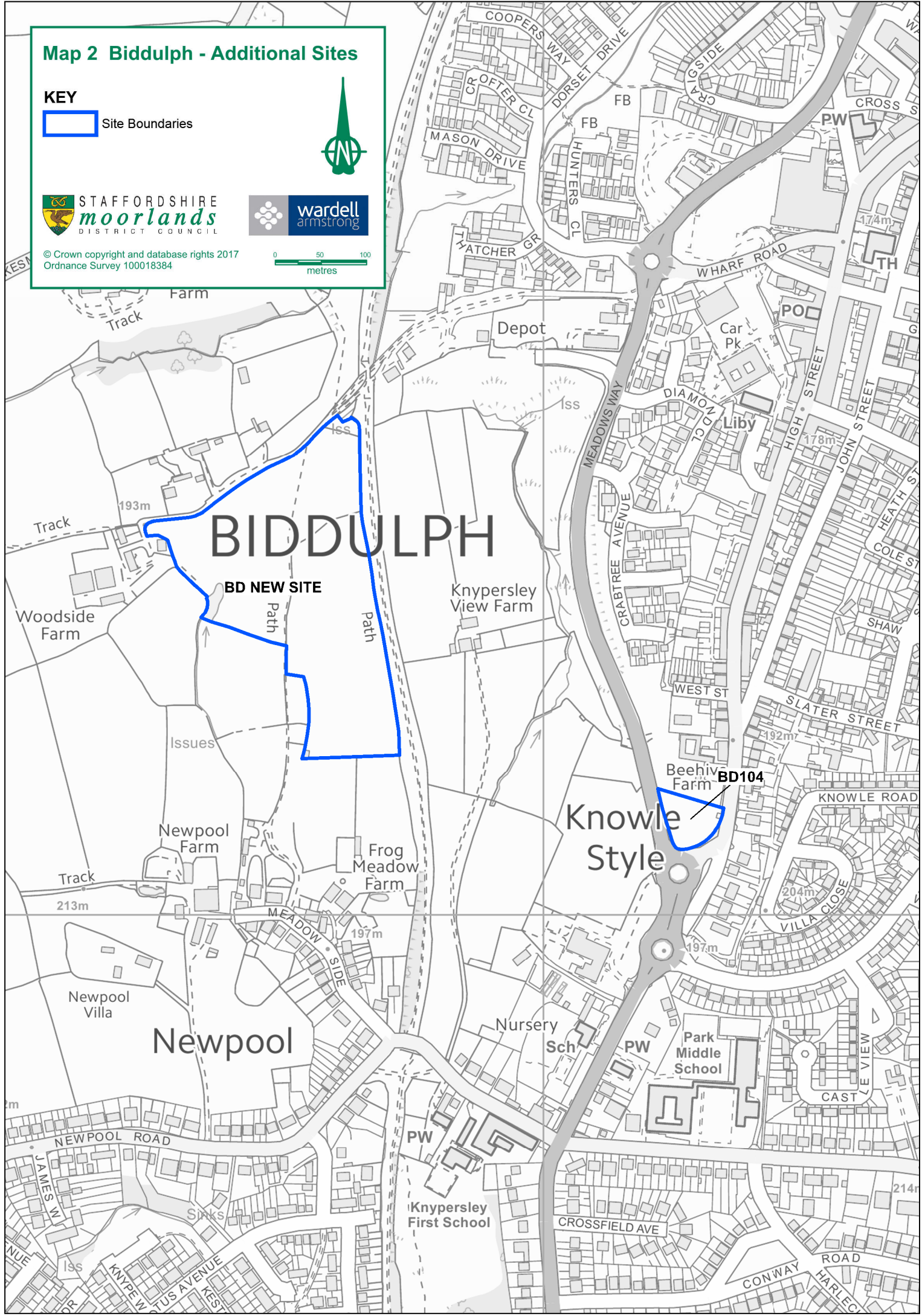
Map 2 Biddulph - Additional Sites

KEY

 Site Boundaries



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Ordnance Survey 100018384



BIDDULPH

BD NEW SITE

Knowle Style

BD104

Newpool

Knipersley First School

Park Middle School

Nursery Sch

Woodside Farm

Newpool Farm

Frog Meadow Farm

Knipersley View Farm

Beehive Farm

Issues

MEADOW SIDE

213m

193m

155m

197m

192m

178m

174m

214m

Track

Track

Farm

Depot

Car Pk

POC

Track

Track

Path

Path

204m

KNOWLE ROAD

SLATER STREET

JOHN STREET

TH

WHARF ROAD

MEADOWS WAY

CRABTREE AVENUE

DIAMOND CL

WEST ST

WEST ST

197m

197m

PW

PW

CROSSFIELD AVE

CONWAY ROAD

HARLEC

WATCHER GR

MASON DRIVE

CROFTER CL

COOPERS WAY

DORSET DRIVE

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STOKE-ON-TRENT
Sir Henry Doulton House
Forge Lane
Etruria
Stoke-on-Trent
ST1 5BD
Tel: +44 (0)178 227 6700

BIRMINGHAM
Two Devon Way
Longbridge Technology Park
Longbridge
Birmingham
B31 2TS
Tel: +44 (0)121 580 0909

CARDIFF
22 Windsor Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BY
Tel: +44 (0)292 072 9191

CUMBRIA
Marconi Road
Burgh Road Industrial Estate
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA2 7NA
Tel: +44 (0)122 856 4820

EDINBURGH
Great Michael House
14 Links Place
Edinburgh
EH6 7EZ
Tel: +44 (0)131 555 3311

GLASGOW
2 West Regent Street
Glasgow
G2 1RW
Tel: +44 (0)141 433 7210

LONDON
46 Chancery Lane
London
WC2A 1JE
Tel: +44 (0)207 242 3243

MANCHESTER (City Centre)
76 King Street
Manchester
M2 4NH
Tel: +44 (0)161 817 5038

MANCHESTER (Greater)
2 The Avenue
Leigh
Greater Manchester
WN7 1ES
Tel: +44 (0)194 226 0101

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
City Quadrant
11 Waterloo Square
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 4DP
Tel: +44 (0)191 232 0943

SHEFFIELD
Unit 5
Newton Business Centre
Newton Chambers Road
Thornccliffe Park
Chapelton
Sheffield
S35 2PH
Tel: +44 (0)114 245 6244

TRURO
Baldhu House
Wheal Jane Earth Science Park
Baldhu
Truro
TR3 6EH
Tel: +44 (0)187 256 0738

International offices:
ALMATY
29/6 Satpaev Avenue
Regency Hotel Office Tower
Almaty Kazakhstan
050040
Tel: +7(727) 334 1310

MOSCOW
21/5 Kuznetskiy Most St.
Moscow
Russia
Tel: +7(495) 626 07 67

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