

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Matter: - LOCAL PLAN POLICY SS4

Hearing Statement from Mr K Wainman,

On behalf of: -

Ken Wainman Associates Ltd, (Local Plan ID: - 997702).

Mr N Mountford (Local Plan ID: - 997677)

Mr & Mrs Gibbins (Local Plan ID: - 997304)

SESSION 2 – AFTERNOON, TUESDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2018

Matter 2 – Strategy & Strategic Policies

Issues: -

- **The spatial distribution of development;**
- **Settlement Hierarchy**
- **Settlement Boundaries and the Countryside**
- **Green Belt**

STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This statement builds upon the consultation written representations submitted by Ken Wainman Associates, Mr N. Mountford, and Mr and Mrs Gibbins which relate to Policy SS4 and includes responses to the specific issues contained in the Matters, Issues, and Questions for the Examination and Hearing Sessions (MIQ's). The comments in this representation also relate to Policy SS3. A separate written representation (ID: 997702) was submitted with regard to Policy SS3; this asked the reader to see the comments relating to Policy SS4. Because this statement covers SS3 I have not submitted a statement for SS3.
- 1.2. Every attempt will be made to be brief and not repeat previous representations but may be some overlap.

2. ISSUE 1 – THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 I have the following observations: -

The Green Belt is given disproportionate priority over the needs of individual settlements and different parts of the District

- 2.2. I consider that this policy is not sound because the emphasis on minimising loss of Green Belt Land means that it does not take proper account of the residential and employment needs of the different parts of the District and the individual settlements. It is appreciated that protecting the Green Belt is important; but so is meeting the needs of the people in the Moorlands. The result of the broad-brush approach in the Plan is that the needs of individual rural settlements and residents are not met in the Plan in terms of the proposed housing provision and distribution and, employment land distribution, affordable housing, social housing, old persons housing, and other types of specialist housing.
- 2.3. Paragraph 50 in the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local planning authorities should *“identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand”*.
- 2.4. The Council's response is that:
“To provide precise housing/affordable housing requirements for individual villages would be overly prescriptive and inflexible. Furthermore, affordable housing needs at this level tend to reflect much shorter timeframes than the Local Plan.
- 2.5. My response to this is how can the Council ensure there is enough land to meet future needs if they have not carried out a thorough assessment of the likely needs of the different villages and settlements in the rural areas. The key words in Paragraph 50 of the NPPF are *“particular locations”* and *“local demand”* whereas the Council only provide figures for the three towns and an overall allocation for the

Rural Area. The weakness of the overall figure for the rural areas is that it ignores the needs of the individual villages. It is contended that this will not ensure the vitality and sustainability of many of the villages; that it will lead to further reductions in services and facilities in the villages, particularly the smaller villages; and that young people will not be able to obtain housing in the villages. Housing in the rural areas is expensive. The present policies in the Plan will only exacerbate this.

- 2.6. It is appreciated that needs can change but there is less flexibility in waiting to assess needs when specific applications are received. Put in simple terms there may, in many instances, not be enough land allocated to meet affordable, social and special housing needs in the villages. For instance, in Endon and Werrington, the amount of residential land is unlikely to meet the future affordable housing needs (please see my earlier written consultation response) and the general need for housing. The same applies to the smaller villages, such as Dilhorne, where the opportunities for new dwellings are limited.
- 2.7. Looking at the residential allocations in the other larger villages, apart from Blythe Bridge, there is relatively little new housing land allocated; instead the Plan relies on windfall sites and infill to meet needs but no assessment appears to have been made as to whether there are likely to be sufficient such sites to meet local needs. Seven of the larger villages, not counting Blythe Bridge, are surrounded by Green Belt; no residential land is allocated in five of these villages. The last twenty years has seen steady pressure to develop windfall and infill sites in all the villages, and particularly those in the Green Belt, with result that the number of potential sites remaining is likely to be small. In addition, in the Green Belt any potential infill sites outside the larger villages' settlement boundaries would not be considered to be in the village and therefore would be inappropriate development.
- 2.8. Equally, in the larger villages outside the Green Belt there have been similar development pressures and the opportunities for infill and windfall sites are similarly limited. Only Alton and Upper Tean have allocated residential sites.
- 2.9. Only limited development is proposed in the smaller villages (Policy SS8) with the provision of affordable housing focussed in the larger villages. It is hard to see how the commitment in Policy SS8 (larger villages) that *"These settlements shall retain and enhance their role as rural service centres, providing for the bulk of the housing requirement of the rural areas and also for employment needs of a scale and type appropriate to each settlement having regard to infrastructure capacity and character"* will be achieved.
- 2.10 Item 2 in Policy SS8 reads as follows:
Meet housing requirements by:

- *Increasing the range of available and affordable house types, including for first time buyers and families;*
- *Allocating a range of deliverable housing sites with good accessibility to services and facilities;*
- *Supporting the development of housing windfall sites within the village boundaries, subject to wider Local Plan policies;*
- *Allowing for rural exceptions housing in appropriate locations on the edge of settlements (in accordance with Policy H1). This will be additional to the housing provision for the rural areas;*
- *Giving consideration to limited infilling on the edge of settlement boundaries, subject to the criteria set out in Policy H1.*

2.11. It is difficult to see how bullet points above will be achieved given the small number of allocated sites in the villages.

Need for more housing and employment land in the Rural Area and a better distribution of employment land to the villages.

2.12. Just under about half (46%) of the District's population live in the rural parts of the area but the amount of housing land supply is 25% of the District total and the amount of employment land supply is 30% of the District total. It is appreciated that there is not a direct correlation between the proportion of the population living in the rural area and housing and employment land needs but the proposed amount of housing land and the distribution of both housing and employment land means that only a small amount of new housing and employment opportunities/land would be provided in large parts of the countryside and the villages.

2.13. The anticipated housing provision in rural area is 818 dwellings (Table 7.7) to be achieved via windfall and infill sites. The number of dwellings on the six allocated rural sites amounts to 461 dwellings (see Policy H2) leaving 357 dwellings to be built spread across the rest of the rural part of the District which includes 6 of the District's total of larger villages (Biddulph Moor, Brown Edge, Cheddleton, Ipstones, Kingsley, and Wetley Rocks); 29 smaller villages and various other settlements such as Cheddleton Heath. The figure of 357 dwellings would probably include a good number of farm-building conversions, including class Q conversions, leaving the residue to be distributed amongst the 6 large villages, all the small villages and possible other small settlements (see below).

- 2.14. The approach in the Local Plan with regard to villages is different to that in the Core Strategy and the NPPF. Paragraph 7.15 in the Core Strategy states that *“The strategy for the rural areas is based on ensuring that villages continue to be vibrant and sustainable communities, providing opportunities for people of all ages. The rural areas will maintain an important role within the District in terms of providing homes and jobs to meet local needs with better links with services and facilities in the larger villages and towns in order to address the decline in the rural economy and tackle social exclusion”*.
- 2.15. Paragraph 28 in the NPPF seeks to create a prosperous rural economy including promoting the retention of local services and community facilities in villages. This aim does not appear to be part of the Submission Local Plan.
- 2.16. The Spatial Objectives in the Local Plan chapter 6 “Aims and Objectives” do not include any reference to ensuring the long-term vitality and sustainability of rural villages and as such it is considered that the Plan is unsound as it does not accord with the Core Strategy (para, 7.15) and the policies in Paragraph 28 of the NPPF; in particular with regard to promoting the retention of local services and community facilities in villages. It is considered that 357 houses spread across 6 large villages, 29 smaller villages and other rural areas would not be sufficient to maintain the vitality and sustainability of community facilities in these communities. There are primary schools in many of the smaller villages (for example Blackshaw Moor, Dilhorne, and Rushton Spencer) and at a time when proportion of older people living in the villages is generally increasing new housing is important to ensure that there are enough young people in a village to ensure the existence of the school. This also applies to other community facilities in the smaller villages.
- 2.17. It is contended that more housing provision should be made in rural areas and that the proportion of housing in rural areas should be increased to at least 30% of the District total. The precise figure should be based on a more thorough assessment of the particular housing and economic needs of the various rural villages and communities.
- 2.18. The Spatial Objectives in the Local Plan do include *“To develop and diversify in a sustainable manner the District’s economy and meet local employment needs in the towns and villages”*. In the rural areas the employment allocations are concentrated in a limited number of locations. It is contended that more small employment sites should be identified in all the larger villages and in certain of the smaller villages - where there are suitable sites - to support economic growth and create a strong and diverse rural economy across the District.
- 2.19. This proposed approach is in accord with Paragraph 28 of the NPPF which amongst other things supports the growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas including new buildings and sustainable tourism. In

contrast, the distribution of employment land in Policy SS4 is not in accord with Paragraph 28 of the NPPF.

- 2.20. It is also contended that the allocation is not in accord with Policies SS8 (Larger Villages) and SS9 (Smaller villages).
- 2.21. Policy SS8 (larger villages) includes a policy to “*Meet limited employment needs by:*”
- ❖ *Enabling small-scale new employment development;*
 - ❖ *Improving and intensifying the use of existing employment areas and, where appropriate, expanding them.*

Yet only 2 out of the 12 larger villages contain proposed employment allocations – Blythe Bridge, and Waterhouses. In reality at the moment there are few sites where employment uses would be permitted. It is contended that allocated provision should be made in all the larger villages for small scale employment development.

- 2.22 Policy SS9 (Smaller villages) includes the following policy - “*Enabling small-scale new employment development including ‘live-work’ developments which are for a rural enterprise or an existing authorised business use*”. The words “which are for a rural enterprise” are not in accord with Paragraph 28 of the NPPF. More importantly there are few sites, other than converted buildings which are often not suitable for employment uses. It is contended that small employment sites should be distributed in a considered way across the smaller villages.

2.23 **Suggested Modifications**

Overall, it is considered that Policy SS4 is unsound and that it needs to be modified as follows:

- **The needs of the individual villages need to be considered rather than the present broad-brush approach to:**
 - ❖ Ensure their continued viability and vitality;
 - ❖ Provide housing for young people in the villages;
 - ❖ Ensure that there is enough housing land in the villages to meet local need and demand including for affordable, social and special needs
- **The proposed housing allocation in the Rural Area should be increased to at least 30%** which was the figure previously proposed and which provided a wider range of housing sites in the rural areas. The final proportion to be based on an assessment of particular locations and local demands.
- **Housing allocations should be more evenly spread across all the villages – both large and small - to ensure and enhance their services and ensure and enhance the vitality and sustainability of the villages.**
- **Employment land should be more widely distributed across the rural area to support the creation of a prosperous rural economy.**

3 ISSUE 2 – SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

- 3.1 There are a number of small settlements in the countryside across the District which the Council consider where no development is permitted. Examples of such settlements are Cheddleton Heath, Bradley-in-the Moors, and Cauldon Low. Such sites are not included in the hierarchy and it is contended that it should be acceptable for small residential developments to be permitted in the settlements based on the recent revised definition of “isolated homes in the countryside” in the Appeal Court judgement Braintree DC v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

- 3.2 The Court concluded that the word “isolated” in the phrase “isolated homes in the countryside” simply means a dwelling that is physically separate or remote from a settlement and that proposed dwellings near to settlements are not necessarily isolated. The words “near” and “settlements” are not defined but the judgement clearly states that it can include hamlets.

4 ISSUE 3 – SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES AND COUNTRYSIDE

- 4.1 This issue is explored in more detail in separate hearing statements written by me on behalf of Mr Wheat and Mr Mountford relating to Policies SS9 (ID: 993918 & 997677) and by Ken Wainman Associates for Policy SS10 (ID: 1160235). I note the Council intend to modify Policies SS2 and SS8 to distinguish between those villages that lie within the Green Belt and those elsewhere.
- 4.2 I contend that the Plan should be modified to also include Policy SS9 (Smaller Villages) in the proposed Council modification because smaller villages in the Green Belt have few suitable infill sites available as most gaps/sites have in the past been subject to planning applications and appeals and the sites that remain probably do not qualify as “limited infill in villages”. It is contended that villages in the Green Belt should have enlarged or new settlement boundaries which would include sites which the Council is prepared to see developed.
- 4.3 Also, it is requested that Plan defines what constitutes a “village”. Settlement boundaries would make villages easier to identify; particularly in those villages - such as Dilhorne and Longsdon – where the Green Belt washes over and would enable new residential development which would support services in the villages. It would also make it easier to identify what buildings comprise the village and what do not. For instance, Longsdon is a scattered village and the Council consider, contrary to many of the residents, that only a limited part of the village qualifies as a village and the rest does not.
- 4.4 **Suggested modifications**

- **Modify Policies Plan modify Policies SS2, SS8 and SS9 to distinguish between those villages that lie within the Green Belt and those elsewhere.**
- **Include in Policy SS2 settlements in the Rural Area which are not identified as villages but where development would not be isolated.**
- **All Green Belt villages - larger and smaller - should have a settlement boundary which would enable and include sites where future infill development would be acceptable. Such boundaries need not be contiguous.**
- **Include a definition of “a village”.**
- **Allow small residential development in settlements and hamlets which are not included in the list of smaller villages.**

5 ISSUE 4 – GREEN BELT

5.1 Suggested Modifications

- **Increasing the amount of land allocated for housing and spreading it across the villages would of necessity involving taking land out of the Green Belt.**
- **Identify more land in the Green Belt for housing particularly in the larger villages.**

The exceptional circumstances that justify this are:

- ❖ The present allocations in the rural areas do not meet the housing needs of the various villages (see Issue 1 above) and would not ensure the continued vitality and viability of the villages.
- ❖ The particular needs of the individual villages have not been addressed.

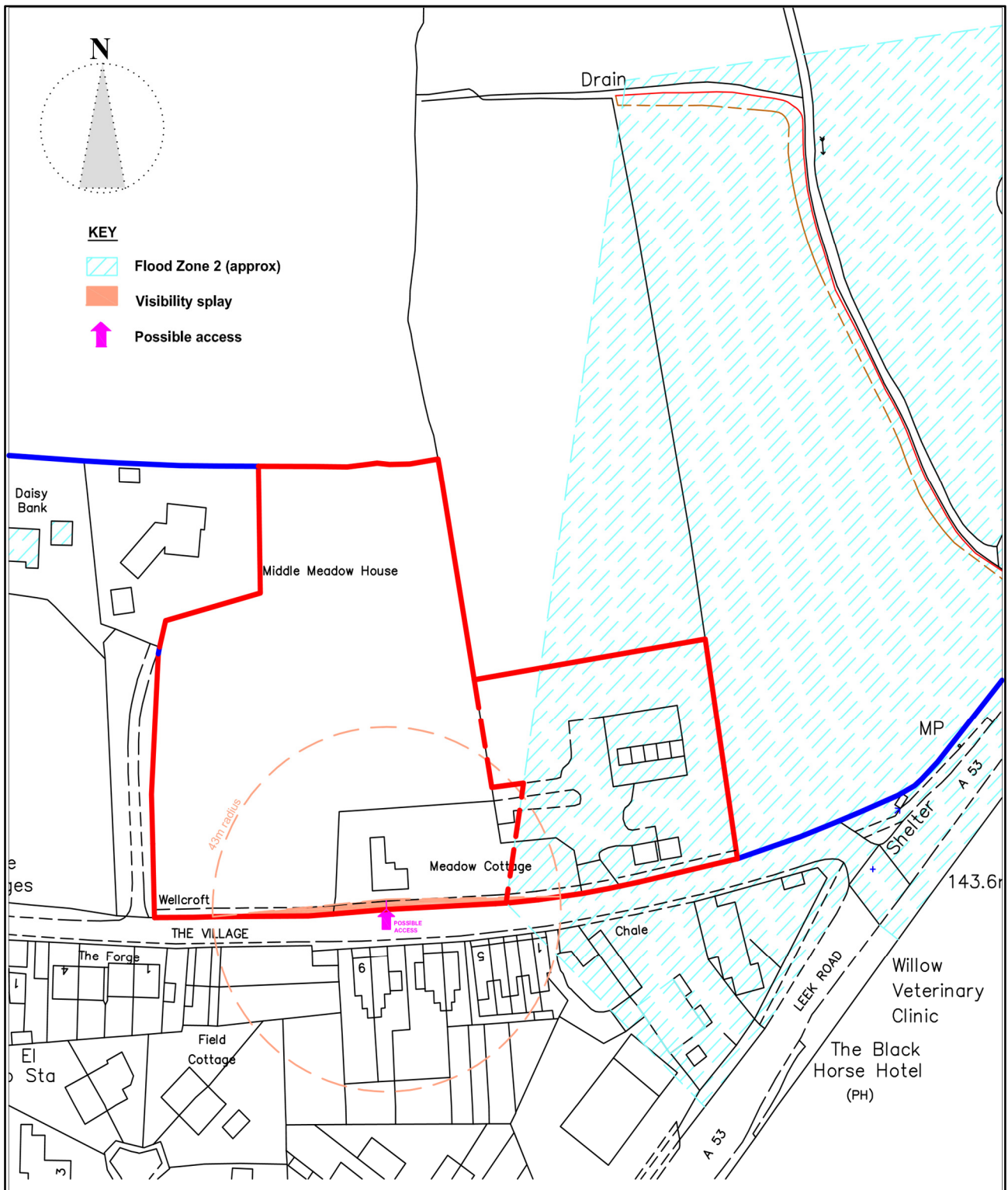
The following sites are the subject of representations under Policy H2: -

- **Remove Site EN030 – Meadow Cottage, Endon - from the Green Belt to enable more housing to be provided in Endon and include it within the residential allocations in Policy H2. (Local Plan ID: 997304)**
- **Remove the site at Little Ash Farm, Ash Bank Road from the Green Belt to enable more housing to be provided in Werrington and include the site within the residential allocations in Policy H2. (Local Plan ID: 995432)**
- **Include Stockton Brook in Endon and identify “Endon and Stockton Brook” as a larger village in Policy SS8.**
- **Remove Mr Mountford’s site – Quarry House Farm, Stockton Brook - from the Green Belt and include the site in the list of rural allocated sites in Policy H2. (Local Plan ID: 997677).**

Maps of the three sites – Meadow Cottage, Little Ash Farm and Quarry House Farm are contained in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

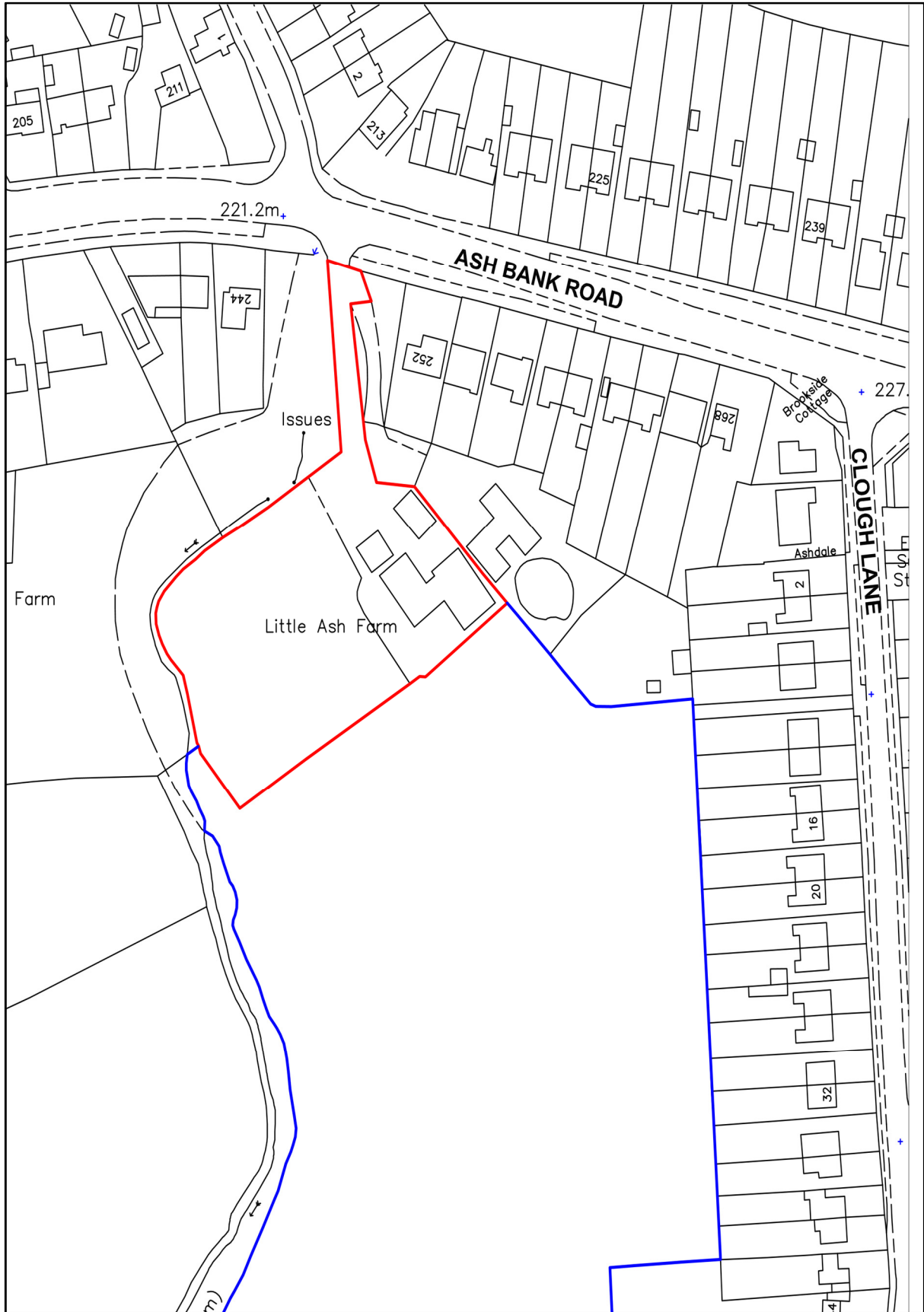
APPENDIX 1 – Location Plan, Meadow Cottage, The Village, Endon, ST9 9EX.

(not to scale)



APPENDIX 2 – Location Plan, Little Ash Farm, Ash Bank Road, Werrington, ST2 9EB

Not to scale



APPENDIX 3 – Location Plan, Quarry House Farm, Moss Hill, Stockton Brook, ST9 9NW

Not to scale

