

Neighbourhood Plan
Shenstone | Stonnall | Little Aston



Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan, 2015-2029

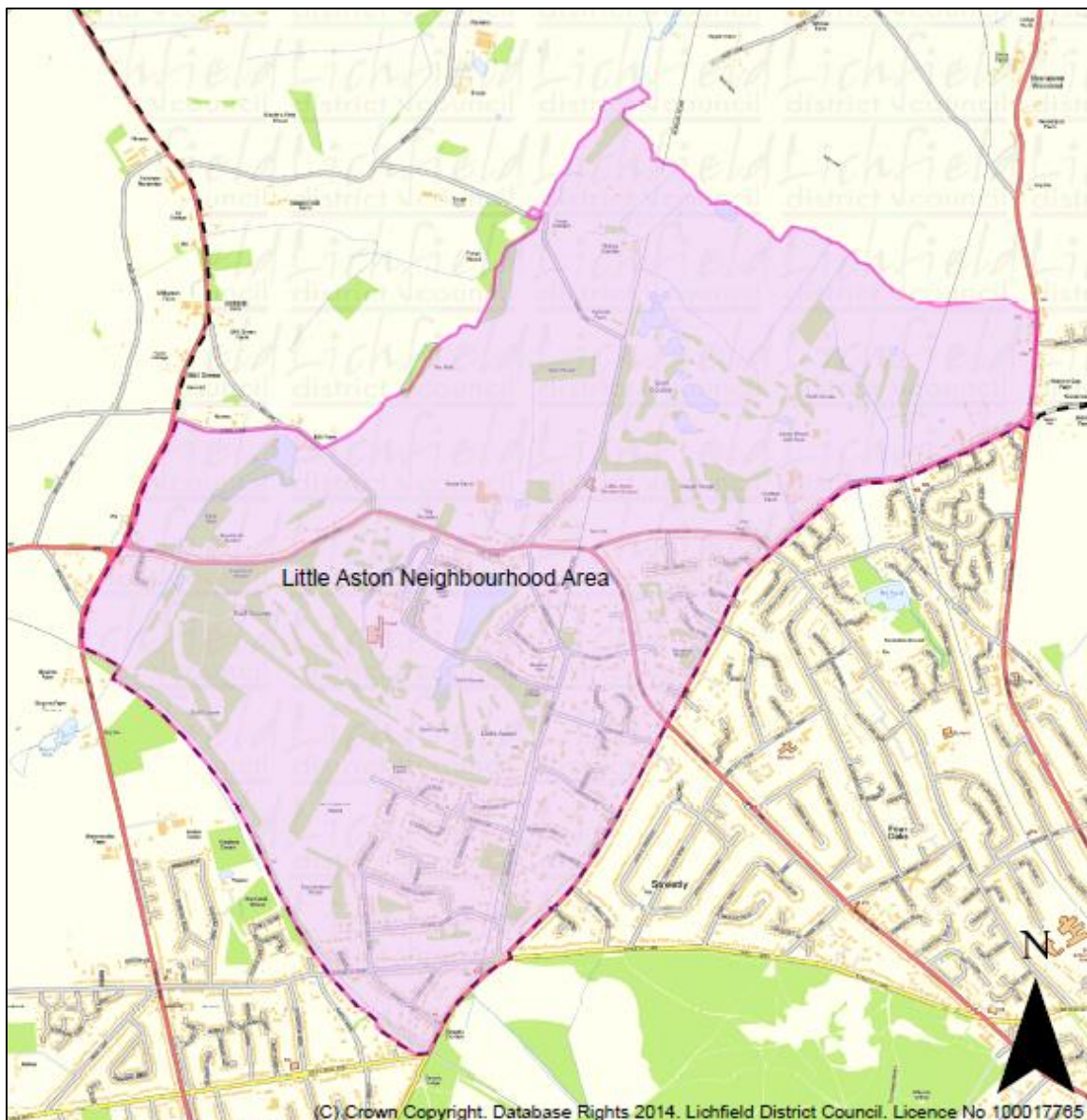
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document represents the Neighbourhood Plan for Little Aston. It represents one part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area over the period 2015 to 2029, the other part being the 2015 Lichfield District Local Plan.
- 1.2 Lichfield District Council, as the local planning authority, designated the Little Aston Neighbourhood Area in February 2013 to enable Shenstone Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan (LANP) Group.
- 1.3 The LANP is being prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. The LANP Group has prepared the plan to establish a vision for the future of the neighbourhood area and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning and controlling land use and development change over the plan period 2015 to 2029.
- 1.4 The map below shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area.



- 1.5 The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development and provide guidance to any interested parties wishing to submit planning applications for development within the designated Neighbourhood Area. The process of producing a plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to Little Aston, its residents, businesses and community groups. It has therefore given the community the opportunity to guide development within their neighbourhood.
- 1.6 Each section of the plan covers a different topic. Under each heading there is the justification for the policies presented which provides the necessary understanding of the policy and what it is seeking to achieve. The policies themselves are presented in the blue boxes. It is these policies against which planning applications will be assessed. It is advisable that, in order to understand the full context for any individual policy, it is read in conjunction with the supporting text.

National and local policy

- 1.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states:

"Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes ... can use neighbourhood planning to set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications (para.183).

Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.

Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. To facilitate this, local planning authorities should set out clearly their strategic policies for the area and ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. Neighbourhood plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies (para.184).

Outside these strategic elements, neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct sustainable development in their area. Once a neighbourhood plan has demonstrated its general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and is brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict. Local planning authorities should avoid duplicating planning processes for non-strategic policies where a neighbourhood plan is in preparation (para.185)".

- 1.8 The relevant Lichfield District Local Plan was adopted in February 2015 and covers the period to 2029. It has provided the strategic context for the neighbourhood plan.

Consultation

- 1.9 The LANP Group has developed the Neighbourhood Plan through extensive engagement with the community. Working Parties were set up to focus on particular issues and themes.



- 1.10 Four engagement events were held:

- A launch event in April 2013 to introduce the Neighbourhood Plan and understand the issues – following this event the Working Groups were formed.
- An engagement event in September 2013 to present the key issues emerging from the Working Groups and to seek feedback on these.
- A survey was undertaken in January 2014 which had responses from over 40% of households and in March 2014 an engagement event was held to present the findings of the survey work and to explore options for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- An engagement event in September 2014 to present the draft Neighbourhood plan and to seek feedback on this.

- 1.11 Additional consultations were undertaken throughout the process by the Working Groups with key stakeholders.

2 LOCAL CONTEXT

History of Little Aston

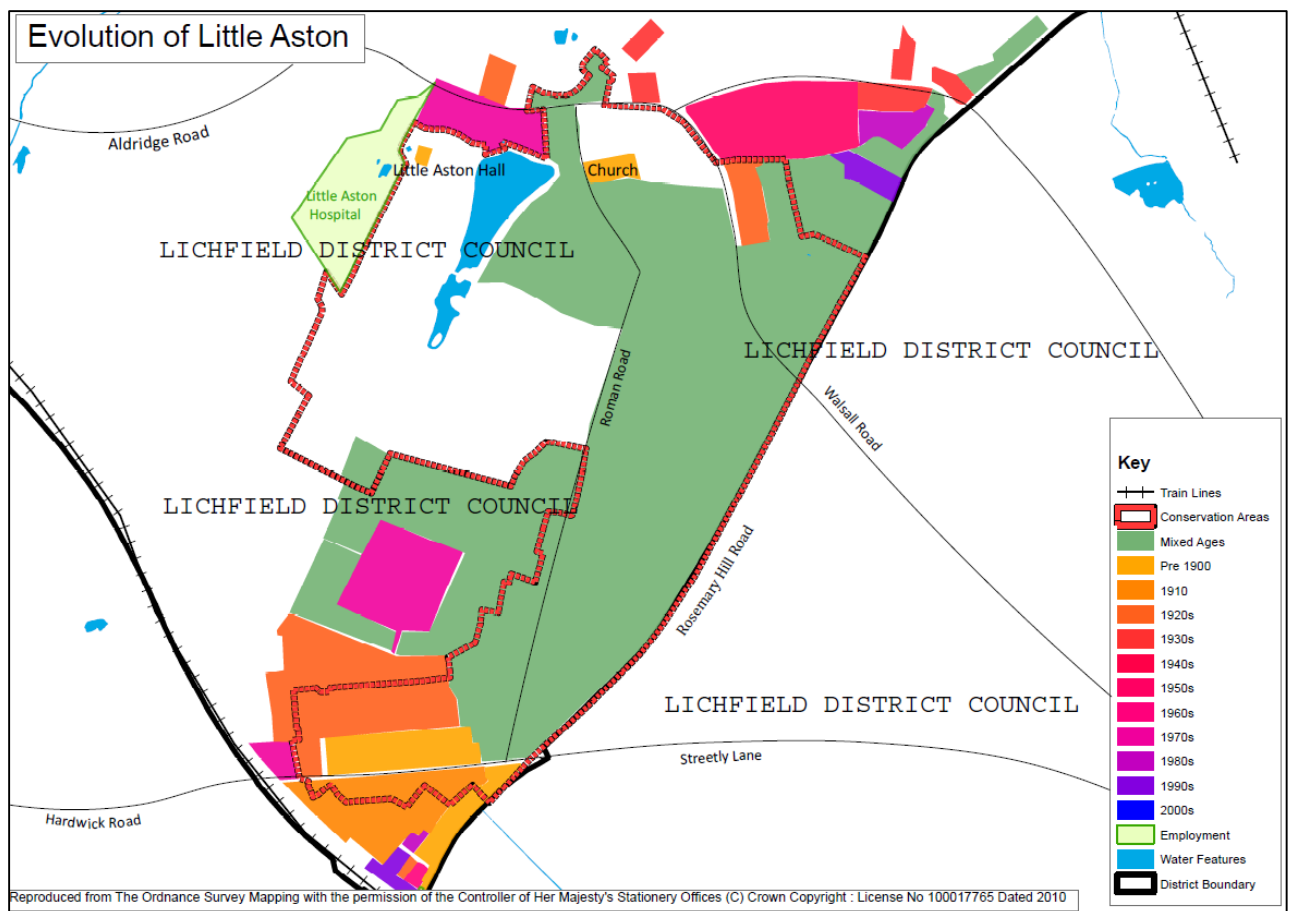
- 2.1 Little Aston has a long history that has shaped the community today.
- 2.2 In Roman days, Ryknild Street cut through the heart of Little Aston to link up with Watling St near Wall. It gives its name to Roman Road that runs through the Little Aston Park Estate.
- 2.3 The links with Shenstone and Stonnall can be traced back to the Domesday Book with the settlement of Aston mentioned with Fotherley and Woodend alongside Stonnall and Lynn Chesterfield within the parish of Shenstone. From 1774 onwards, with later Tithe and Enclosure maps, it is easier to track the development of the settlements and see the history of Little Aston unfold.
- 2.4 These maps showed various mills in Shenstone Parish with a significant mill at Little Aston on Mill Lane, on the River Bourne. It was a corn mill and a lease in 1830 showed it was owned by William Leigh. In 1838 a later Tithe Map shows Shenstone Parish comprising of 8,452 acres with William Leigh of Little Aston owning 2,590 acres (of which the hall and park amounted to 770 acres). The hall mentioned is Little Aston Hall that was built in 1730 in a Georgian style with a park and a lake.
- 2.5 The 1774 map also shows Little Aston Forge in Forge Lane downstream on the River Bourne from Little Aston Mill. There are records of a lease dated 1600 from Roger Fowke, Lord of the Manor of Little Aston, to a Philip Foley and that it produced over 100 tons of bar iron a year selling most of the output to the West Bromwich slitting mill. The forge went out of use in 1749 when converted to a mill. The last remains of the forge were destroyed by fire in 1902 and the area is now the location for a sewage works.
- 2.6 In 1818 when the Enclosure Act came into force, large areas of Little Aston Common adjoining Sutton Park were assigned to William Tennant, the then owner of Little Aston Park, which doubled the size of the estate. The estate was sold in 1828 to William Leigh who kept it until 1844 when it was sold to Edward Jervis. The hall was restyled and enlarged in 1857 (at a reputed cost of £35,000) and looked very much like the picture below taken in 1986.

Figure 2.1: Little Aston Hall



- 2.7 Little Aston became a separate ecclesiastical parish within Shenstone on consecration of St. Peters Church in 1874, with the church being built at the expense of Edward Jervis on land donated by him.
- 2.8 The Hall passed through various owners in the early 1900s until in 1925 the Little Aston Hall estate of over 1,500 acres was broken up, with the Hall and 118 acres surrounding it purchased by a Harry Scribbans and the remaining land sold piecemeal by auction leading to the current Little Aston Park estate as we now know it.
- 2.9 The Hall was lived in until 1949 and remained unoccupied from 1950 until 1954 when it became the Midlands HQ of Esso. From 1968 it served as a residential centre for GKN. In 1984 the site was developed, the hall converted into superior residential apartments and seven new blocks each of six apartments built in the grounds overlooking the lake. Further blocks of apartments, a residential care home and the private hospital have since followed.
- 2.10 Much of the rest of the Little Aston of today stems from 1910 onwards as shown on the map in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Evolution of development in Little Aston



Source: Lichfield District Council

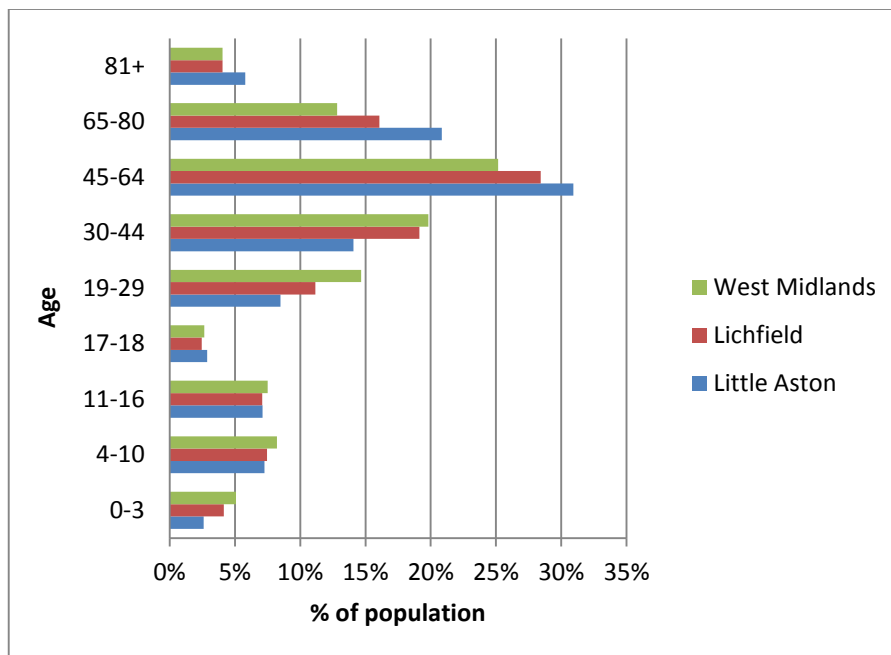
Profile of the community

2.11 Unless stated otherwise, the profile of the community has come from the 2011 Census.

Population

2.12 In 2011, the population of the ward was 2,920. Compared to Lichfield District, it has a high proportion of older people - 27% were aged 65 or over in Little Aston compared to 20% across the district (see Figure 2.3).

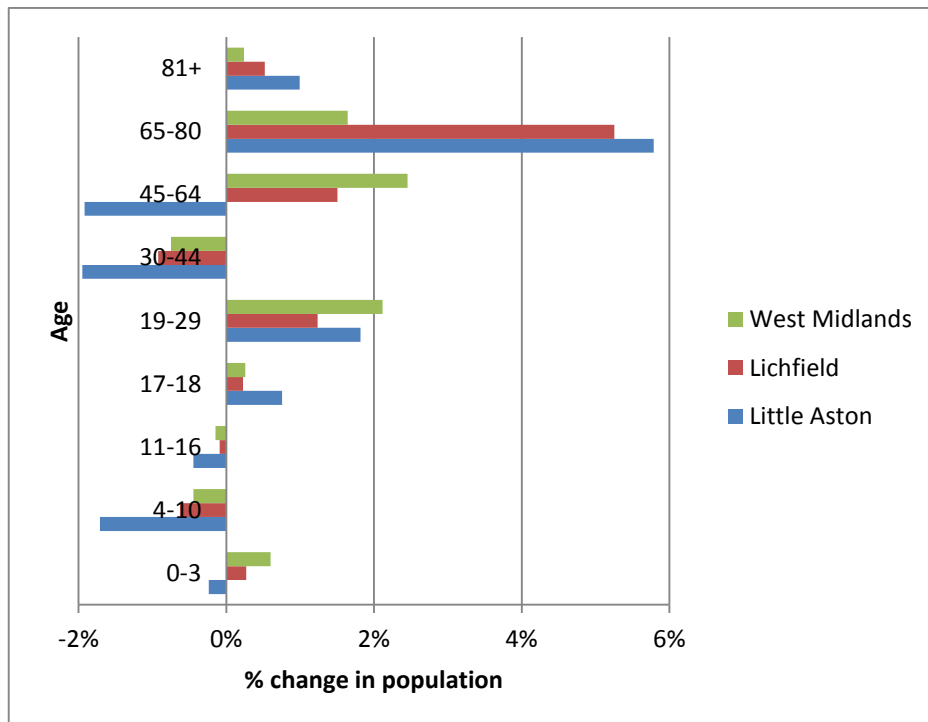
Figure 2.3: Population profile, 2011



Source: 2011 Census

2.13 Since 2001, the population of the parish has only grown by 90 persons, a 3.2% change compared to 8.0% growth across Lichfield District as a whole. This is reflective of the restrictions on growth in Little Aston due to the presence of the green belt. What is particularly interesting is the change in population by age group.

Figure 2.4: Change in population, 2001-2011



Source: 2011 Census

2.14 Little Aston experienced very strong growth in its retirement population (aged 65 and older) whilst also experiencing a decline in much of its population of working age (aged 30 to 64). This demonstrates not only an ageing population structure but also a declining workforce, although this was partially offset by the increase in people of young working age (age 19 to 29). This is shown in Figure 2.4).

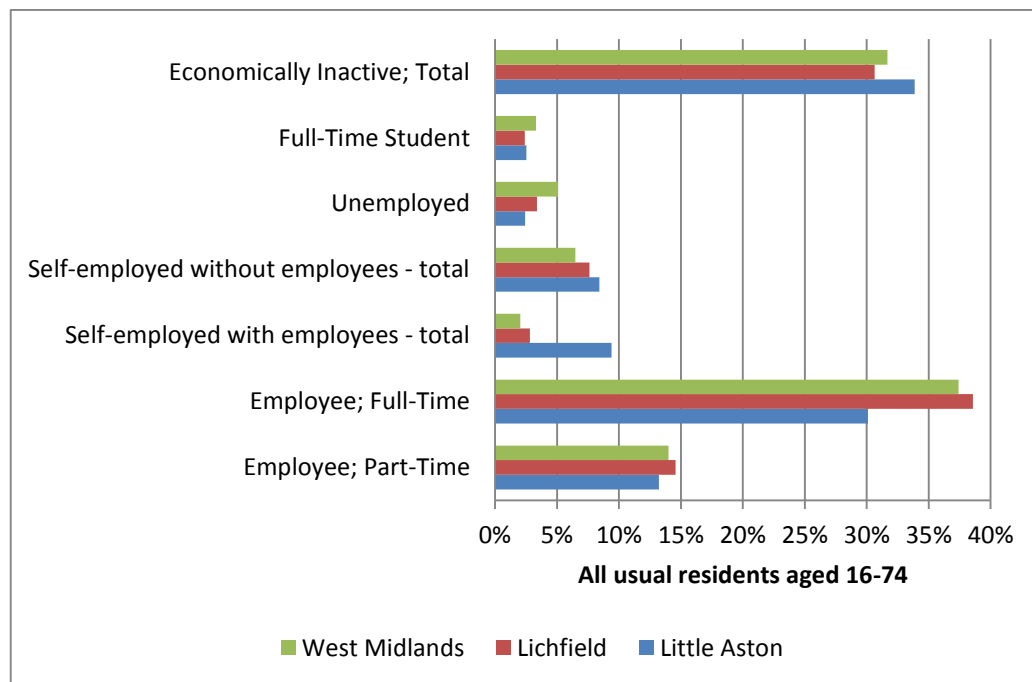
Work

2.15 What is noticeable about Little Aston’s population of working age (16 to 74) is that it has a comparatively low proportion of people in full-time employment. Those that are economically inactive are comparatively high, reinforcing the high number of retirees in the ward.

2.16 What Little Aston does have a strong representation in is self-employed people, both with and without employees. This demonstrates that there is a strong entrepreneurial aspect to the working population.

2.17 This is shown in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5: Economic activity, 2011

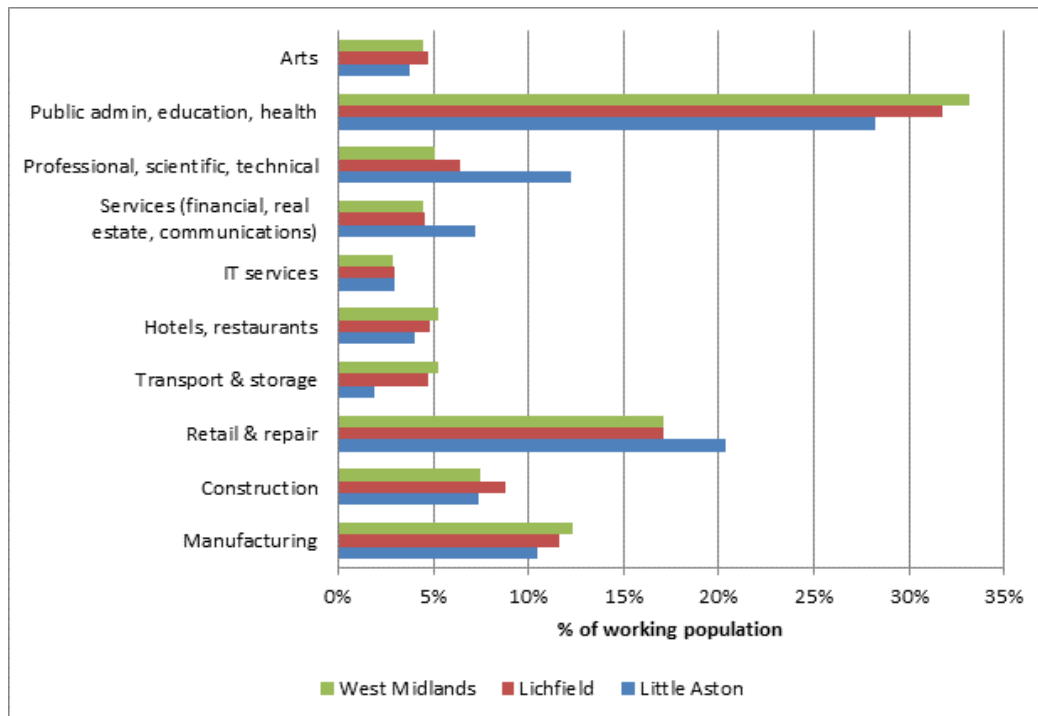


Source: 2011 Census

2.18 Little Aston is comparatively strongly represented in two very different sectors. The first is the professional, scientific and technical sector, which shows that Little Aston has a high proportion of people working in a number of highly skilled professions. The second is retail and repair which is comparatively lower skilled. Similarly it is well represented in the service sector which encompasses a range of different skills and professions.

2.19 This is shown in Figure 2.6.

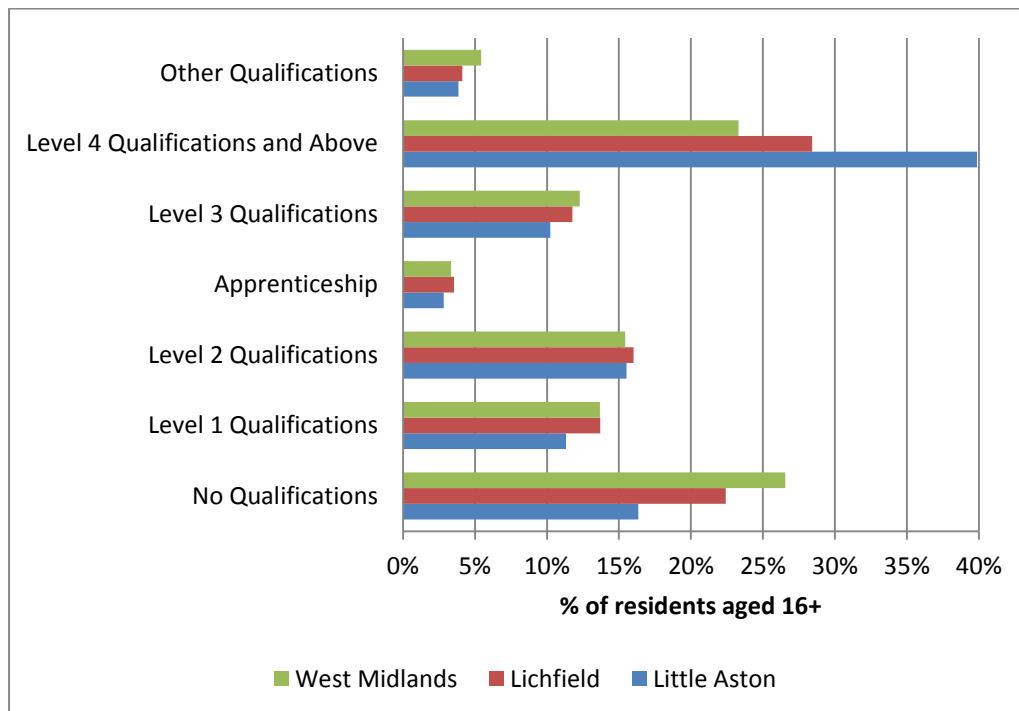
Figure 2.6: Type of industry, 2011



Source: 2011 Census

2.20 Figure 2.7 reinforces this, showing that 40% of the population is educated to Level 4 or above, i.e. degree level. By contrast, the proportion of those with no qualifications is well below the district average.

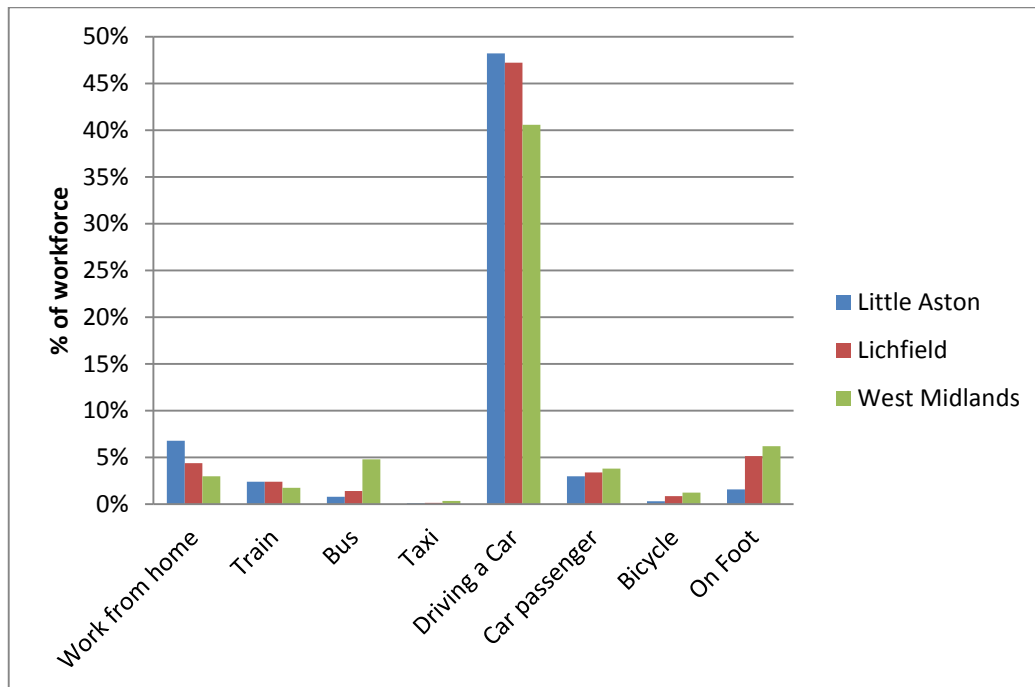
Figure 2.7: Qualifications of residents aged 16 and over



Source: 2011 Census

- 2.21 The large majority of those in work travel to work by car, and do so as the driver of that car. Whilst there are both rail and bus links serving the area, there is only one bus route and this does not link to Blake Street station, with the station itself being some distance from the main residential areas of Little Aston. As such, it is not surprising that the proportion of those who use the train or bus is lower than the district average.
- 2.22 The high levels of car usage are supported by Census figures on access to a car within households. On average, each Little Aston household has access to 2.1 cars. This compares to 1.5 cars per household in Lichfield district and 1.2 cars per household across the West Midlands. This represents very high levels of car ownership.
- 2.23 A significant proportion of people (7%) work from home, which supports the high proportion of self-employment amongst those of working age.
- 2.24 This is shown in Figure 2.8.

Figure 2.8: Mode of transport to work

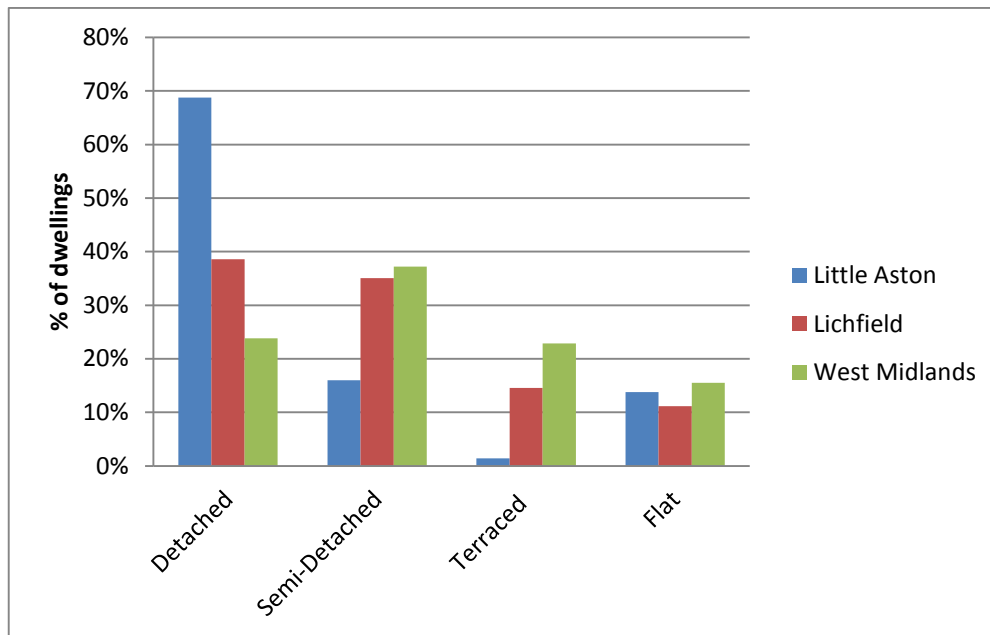


Source: 2011 Census

Housing

- 2.25 Little Aston is dominated by detached housing, representing nearly 70% of its housing stock. By contrast, the proportion of semi-detached and terraced housing is very low. The bulk of flatted development is mostly found in Lady Aston Park, within the Little Aston Park area.
- 2.26 This is shown in Figure 2.9.

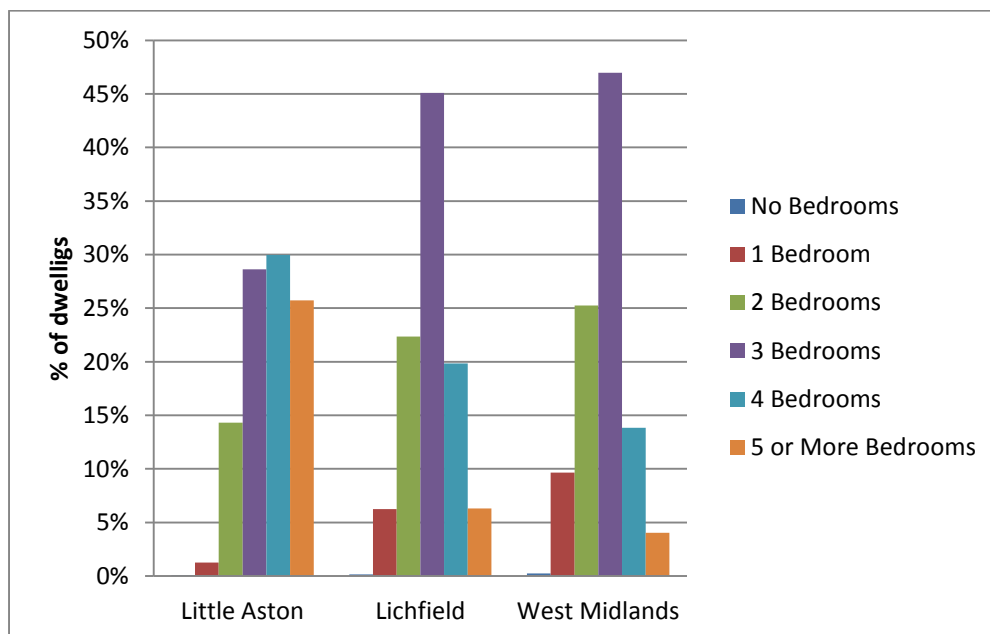
Figure 2.9: Type of dwelling



Source: 2011 Census

2.27 This is reinforced when looking at the number of bedrooms that properties in Little Aston have. Figure 2.10 shows that it has a far higher proportion of both 4- and 5+ bed properties than the district or across the West Midlands as a whole. By contrast, the proportion of 1-3-bed properties is much lower.

Figure 2.10: Number of bedrooms

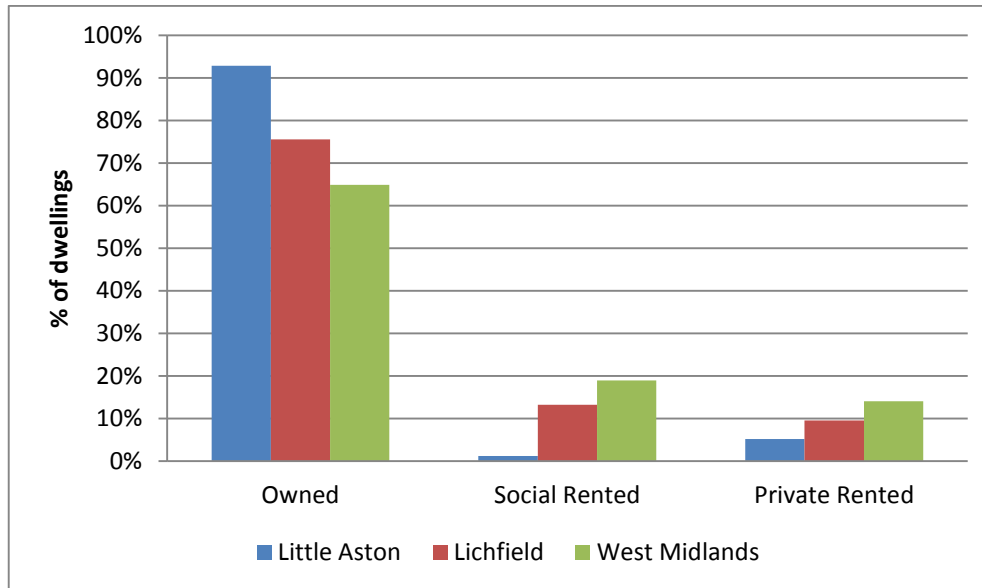


Source: 2011 Census

2.28 The ownership profile of these dwellings reinforces the profile of Little Aston as an affluent area. Figure 2.11 shows that a very high proportion of people own their property – in excess of 90%. By contrast, the equivalent proportion in Lichfield is just 75%. In fact, 56% of the properties in

Little Aston are owned outright with no mortgage on them, compared to just 39% across the district.

Figure 2.11: Ownership profile



Source: 2011 Census

- 2.29 By contrast, Little Aston has a very low proportion of social rented housing stock; just 1% of the stock compared to 13% across the district as a whole.

Local infrastructure

Education

- 2.30 There is only one school in the neighbourhood area, Little Aston Primary School. Figures from the Department of Education suggest that the school is close to capacity, however it is not thought that this has reached a critical situation and, given the expected levels of growth, is not likely to become a critical issue over the lifetime of the plan.
- 2.31 All secondary education is provided outside the neighbourhood area. There is a local school bus that picks up in Little Aston to take pupils into Lichfield. There are other local secondary schools in the neighbouring boroughs of Birmingham and Walsall.

Healthcare

- 2.32 There are no doctors' surgeries in Little Aston nor have there been any for the last 20 years. Most people are registered with practices in Birmingham. However, feedback from the community has not suggested access to a GP practice to be a problem. This is despite the fact that there have been instances recently of Birmingham practices de-registering Staffordshire residents as part of their list reconciliations¹.
- 2.33 There is one dental surgery in Little Aston. There is also the private Spire Little Aston Hospital that has 37 private beds and also provides some NHS treatments on behalf of Good Hope Hospital, Sutton Coldfield, which is the major hospital for Shenstone Parish and all surrounding areas.

¹ Lichfield District Strategic Partnership (2012) *Enhanced joint strategic needs assessment for Lichfield District*

Public Transport

- 2.34 There is only one bus route (Sutton Coldfield to Aldridge/Walsall) that passes through Little Aston.
- 2.35 The main Lichfield-to-Birmingham cross-city rail line stops at Blake Street rail station on the extremity of Little Aston, across the border in Birmingham. There is free car parking at the station but insufficient car parking spaces to meet peak demands.

Walking and Cycling

- 2.36 There are no cycle paths at present in the neighbourhood area. There are two public footpaths that pass through Little Aston - one that cuts across Little Aston golf course to the Chester Road and one that starts by the old forge in Forge Lane, running along the line of Ryknild Street to the Birmingham Road at Shenstone Wood End.

Road Networks

- 2.37 Throughout the Neighbourhood Plan process, traffic has been a major issue for the community. Concerns have been expressed at speeding traffic and at the high number of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) using the A4026 (Blake Street/Little Aston Lane) as a 'rat run'.
- 2.38 The particular concerns of the community are:
- Speeding traffic along Blake Street, Little Aston Lane and Aldridge Road along with the high number of HGV's using this route as a rat run.
 - The situation of Mill Lane as a derestricted road having no footpaths being used by fast moving traffic despite restricted visibility, bends and a new housing development.
 - The junction at Little Aston Park Road and Hardwick Road being impeded by a fence that restricts visibility for cars pulling out.
 - The entrance/exit from Little Aston Hospital being on the crest of a rise.
 - The need for a pedestrian crossing at the Blake Street traffic lights as well as a possible crossing near Blake Street Station.

Local Plan policy

- 2.39 The 2015 Lichfield District Local Plan covers the period to 2029. It identifies Little Aston as a 'rural settlement' and recognises that such settlements should be able to "adapt to accommodate their future needs and to become more locally sustainable without compromising the character of their village and its surrounding environment" (paragraph 17.93). Where a neighbourhood plan can identify and justify small scale growth that is desired and needed by the local community, then this will be permitted. This is reflected in Policy Rural 2 ('Other Rural Settlements').
- 2.40 Part of the neighbourhood area is within the green belt. Core Policy 1 ('The Spatial Strategy') of the District Local Plan states that:
- "Changes to Green Belt boundaries that do not have a fundamental impact on the overall strategy may be appropriate for all settlements within the Green Belt, with the precise boundaries of these changes being determined through the Local Plan Allocations document."*
- 2.41 This provides the opportunity for the Neighbourhood Plan to suggest potential revisions to the green belt boundary, subject to these complying with the requirements of the NPPF. These will then be considered through the Local Plan process.

3 VISION

Challenges for Little Aston

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address, as far as is possible, the challenges that face the community of Little Aston neighbourhood area. In summary these challenges are:
- An ageing population that has particular demands in terms of their accessibility to services.
 - A declining population of working age, with many unable to afford the high house prices which are partly a function of the stock of large, detached properties.
 - Maintaining Little Aston's identity as a distinct community that its residents enjoy living in.
 - Ensuring that development (particularly infill and backland development) maintains the character and density of the surrounding built form.
 - Addressing the problems caused by its busy, sometimes urban roads, particularly pedestrian safety and severance.

Vision for Little Aston

- 3.2 At the first public engagement event, the community was asked 'What will a future Little Aston feel like?' A range of words were presented as options for people to choose from. Out of this list of words, the most commonly used were:
- 'Rural'
 - 'Quiet'
 - 'Exclusive'
 - 'Distinctive'
- 3.3 It is evident that the community wishes for Little Aston to stay very much as it is today. Given this, the vision for Little Aston at the end of the plan period (in 2029) is as follows:

'By the end of the plan period in 2029, Little Aston will be much as it is today, an attractive, affluent suburb with high quality housing and a pleasant, leafy environment. Any new housing will have been restricted to infill developments and be of a similar density and character to neighbouring properties. Claverdon Park will have been incorporated into the Little Aston Conservation Area.

Plans for a Community Hub on the land to the North of Little Aston Lane have been developed and funding identified from a variety of local and national sources to allow development to proceed, incorporating new community facilities and spaces. This provides the community with a focal point whilst protecting the rural edge of Little Aston from unwanted development.

Whilst traffic flows continue to be extremely heavy throughout the neighbourhood area, crossing to reach the shops and Blake Street railway station has been made easier for pedestrians. Rat running and speeding traffic, both major threats to pedestrian, equestrian and cycle safety, have been reduced through the provision of effective traffic calming measures, a common speed limit throughout the neighbourhood area, effective enforcement and technological advances.

Meanwhile, improvements have been made to the network of pedestrian and cycle paths, both for access and leisure. A circular cycling/walking/jogging/horse-riding route encompassing Forge Lane/Mill Lane/Aldridge Road has been developed and is well used for recreational purposes, steps having been taken to minimise traffic flows and speeds along the rural lanes.'

4 GREEN BELT

- 4.1 Part of the Little Aston neighbourhood area is within the green belt which wraps closely around its western and northern boundary. The green belt has safeguarded the built-up area of Little Aston from the kind of sprawl seen elsewhere within the district and has contained development within the parkland setting or established street pattern.
- 4.2 It has, in the main, been successful in achieving the five main purposes of the green belt, as provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 4.3 The NPPF makes clear that the Government attaches great importance to green belts and these should only be altered in exceptional circumstances as part of the review of a local plan.
- 4.4 Core Policy 1 ('The Spatial Strategy') of the Lichfield District Local Plan states that:
- "Changes to Green Belt boundaries that do not have a fundamental impact on the overall strategy may be appropriate for all settlements within the Green Belt, with the precise boundaries of these changes being determined through the Local Plan Allocations document."*
- 4.5 This provides the opportunity for the Neighbourhood Plan to recommend potential revisions to the green belt boundary, subject to these complying with the requirements of the NPPF. These will then be considered through the Local Plan process.
- 4.6 Engagement with the community has demonstrated that protection of the existing green belt boundary is one of the most important ways in which Little Aston can protect its identity and function as a community. There is therefore no desire to see the Green Belt boundary be altered to any significant degree and the community considers its long term protection is important to preserve the character of the village and maintain the separation from neighbouring settlements (e.g. Shenstone Woodend and Aldridge).
- 4.7 Land north of Little Aston Lane, alongside the Church, south of Little Aston Road/Walsall Road and to the west of Little Aston Park should therefore remain within the Green Belt. These areas perform a key role in meeting the five purposes of Green Belt and there is no reason to release those areas from the Green Belt designation.
- 4.8 The one location within Little Aston that is considered suitable and appropriate to amend the Green Belt boundary is at Tufton Cottage, Roman Road.
- 4.9 Tufton Cottage is located to the south of Beech Gate, a private, gated driveway set behind the Grade II listed Beech Gate.
- 4.10 The Green Belt boundary is drawn along Beech Gate and includes a single dwelling, Tufton Cottage, within its boundary. Tufton Cottage clearly forms part of the street scene of Roman Road and thus part of the built environment. It is separated from the wider Green Belt by dense woodland and has strong, defensible boundaries. Having regard to paragraph 85 of the NPPF, the retention of Tufton Cottage within the Green Belt is considered unnecessary in order for the five purposes of

Green Belt to be maintained. Removing Tufton Cottage from the Green Belt would clearly distinguish the suburban environment of Little Aston Park from the more open countryside beyond and make right an existing anomaly.

- 4.11 The community therefore considers that it would be appropriate for Tufton Cottage to be brought within the settlement boundary and omitted from the Green Belt. The Green Belt should consequently be re-drawn to exclude Tufton Cottage, retaining the adjacent golf course wholly within the Green Belt. In doing so, it is considered that the five purposes of Green Belt are maintained. The precise boundaries that the Neighbourhood Plan recommends should be revised are shown on the Proposals Map. Consideration of this recommended change will then be made through the Local Plan process.
- 4.12 To further secure the character of the Conservation Area and the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed Beech Gate, it is considered that the plot should be included within the policy on density of development within Little Aston Park. This is addressed in Policy LAP1.

POLICY GB1: GREEN BELT BOUNDARY

In accordance with Core Policy 1 of the Lichfield District Local Plan, it is proposed that the green belt boundary should be amended to exclude Tufton Cottage, Roman Road. This should be undertaken through the Lichfield Local Plan Site Allocations process.

5 CANNOCK CHASE SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION

- 5.1 Part of the designated Neighbourhood Plan area is within 15 kilometres of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is a nationally important designation which reflects the considerable ecological value of the area and the need to protect it. Development within the 15km radius could increase the number of people wanting to visit the SAC area and therefore potentially have a detrimental impact on the sensitive ecological network.
- 5.2 It is therefore necessary to have a policy which recognises that all development must be capable of demonstrating that it will not have a detrimental impact.

POLICY SAC1: CANNOCK CHASE SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION

Before development is permitted it must be demonstrated that alone or in combination with other development it will not have an adverse effect whether direct or indirect upon the integrity of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) having regard to avoidance or mitigation measures.

In particular, any development that results in a net increase in dwellings within a 15km radius of any boundary of Cannock Chase SAC will be deemed to have an adverse impact upon the Cannock Chase SAC unless or until satisfactory avoidance and/or mitigation measures have been secured.

6 HOUSING

Residential infill and backland development

- 6.1 Backland development is defined as development on land behind the rear building line of existing housing or other development, and is usually land that has previously been used as gardens, or is partially enclosed by gardens.
- 6.2 Infill development involves the development of a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage. It usually consists of frontage plots only and often comprises side gardens of existing houses.

Policy Justification

- 6.3 One of the particular issues raised by the community of Little Aston has been the over-bearing nature of some infill and backland developments. With the presence of the green belt across much of the neighbourhood area, new housing is predominantly to come through infill development. Moreover, with the density policy covering Little Aston Park (see Policy LAP1), the issue arises most acutely in the built-up areas within the remainder of the neighbourhood area. In the past there have been some infill and backland developments which have been permitted at very high densities, creating issues in terms of amenity for neighbouring properties. Adverse impacts can include the following:
- Loss of amenity, overshadowing, overlooking
 - Loss of sunlight/daylight
 - Noise
 - Loss of green links/trees/hedgerows/vegetation
 - Visual intrusion
 - Loss of space between buildings
 - Loss of parking
 - Single long driveways serving multiple properties²
 - Difficulties with recycling and waste collections/bin storage
- 6.4 Paragraph 53 of the NPPF states that:
- "Local planning authorities should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area."*
- 6.5 It is considered important that infill and backland development, whilst generally acceptable within the built-up area, must be designed so that it sits appropriately within its surroundings. It is acknowledged that, if development is of a different mix of housing, e.g. 2- and 3-bed dwellings in a predominantly 4- and 5-bed dwelling area, then densities may differ slightly. However, it is vital that the design of such developments does not have a negative impact on the amenity of existing residents in the neighbouring properties. In particular, it should be ensured that such properties have reasonably sized gardens, based on the size of the property.
- 6.6 The objectives of this policy are to ensure that:

² This has been observed on development in Little Aston Lane

- infill development respects and reflects the character of the area and the existing street scene;
 - backland development respects and reflects the character of the area;
 - safe and attractive residential layouts are promoted; and
 - local distinctiveness and identity are promoted.
- 6.7 The particular issues that must be considered in demonstrating that an infill or backland scheme is acceptable are as follows:
- 6.8 **Plot width** – plots must be of sufficient width to allow building(s) to be sited with adequate separation between dwellings. The width of the remaining and the new plot should be similar to that prevailing in the immediate area.
- 6.9 **Building line** – where the prevailing depth of existing dwellings is a feature of the area new development should respect that building line.
- 6.10 **Visual separation** – new dwellings must have similar spacing between buildings to that commonly found on the street frontage. Where houses are terraced the new development should normally adjoin the adjacent property(s).
- 6.11 **Building height** – new buildings should reflect the height of existing buildings. Where existing buildings are of a uniform height, new buildings should respect that height.
- 6.12 **Daylight and sunlight** – new buildings should not adversely affect neighbouring properties by seriously reducing the amount of daylight available through windows or by obstructing the path of direct sunlight to a once sunny garden or window. Blocking direct sunlight from reaching neighbouring properties can cause overshadowing and is not acceptable.
- 6.13 **Parking and access arrangements** – satisfactory arrangements will be required for parking and access. Generally parking areas to the front of the property using the front garden will not be acceptable unless, this is the prevailing pattern of parking in the locality.
- 6.14 **Boundary treatment** – boundary treatment along the frontage should reflect that prevailing in the area. Proposals for open frontages or the use of the frontage for parking will not be acceptable in areas where enclosed front boundaries prevail.

Policy

POLICY HSG1: RESIDENTIAL INFILL AND BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT

Outside of the Little Aston Park density policy area, as shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission for residential development proposals on infill and backland sites will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

- Proposals should reflect the character of the surrounding area and protect the amenity of neighbours. It should reinforce the uniformity of the street by reflecting the scale, mass, height and form of its neighbours.
- Proposals that would lead to over-development of a site or the appearance of cramming will be resisted. It should be demonstrated that development is of a similar density to properties in the immediate surrounding area.
- New buildings should not adversely affect neighbouring properties by seriously reducing the amount of daylight available through windows or by obstructing the path of direct sunlight to a once sunny garden or window.
- Development must not unacceptably reduce the level of private amenity space provision for existing residential properties.

This policy also applies to applications for two or more properties on a site previously occupied by a single property.

7 LITTLE ASTON PARK

- 7.1 With Little Aston Park being such a unique place within the wider Little Aston area as it meets the built-up area of Sutton Coldfield, it is considered important that its particular assets are maintained and enhanced. The Proposals Map shows the full extent of the entire Little Aston settlement area; the area of Little Aston Park extends to most of the density policy area, but does not have its own formal policy boundary.

Density of development in Little Aston Park

Policy Justification

- 7.2 The special character of Little Aston Park is determined by the extensive mature tree cover and low density and individual design of dwellings in large plots. It represents a high quality environment.
- 7.3 In recognition of this, the 1998 Lichfield Local Plan included Policy SA.6 in respect of Little Aston Park. Specifically this policy sought to protect the special character of the area by requiring all new dwellings to be accommodated within plots of at least half an acre. Saved Policy SA.6 was to be considered through the Local Plan Allocations process, however, the community of Little Aston has made it clear that it considers the policy should continue to apply and as such be addressed through the Neighbourhood Plan.



- 7.4 The Little Aston Rural Masterplanning Report³ stated at paragraph 105 that:

"This policy has been successful in retaining the 'leafy character' valued by most residents and its removal could in the longer term significantly erode that character. It is considered therefore that it is essential to retain the policy."

³ Lichfield District Council (2011) *Lichfield District Rural Planning Project: Little Aston*



- 7.5 It is therefore considered important that the policy is retained within the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that the existing character of the area is retained and in particular that the tree canopy of the area, which is important both from local and more distant viewpoints, is maintained.

Policy

POLICY LAP1: DENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT IN LITTLE ASTON PARK

The special character of Little Aston Park is determined by the extensive mature tree cover and low density and individual design of dwellings in large plots.

Development in the Density Policy area defined on the Proposals Map will only be allowed where the special character of the area is protected by the retention of all existing important established and mature trees and vegetation and by the provision of a rustic and pastoral setting for new and existing dwellings.

All new and existing dwellings within subdivided plots must be accommodated within plots of at least half an acre (excluding long driveways) and retain the existing relationship of dwellings to the woodland setting.

- 7.6 It should be noted that, as identified in the Green Belt chapter and in policy GB1 (Green Belt boundary), it is proposed that there should be an amendment to the green belt boundary to exclude Tufton Cottage, Roman Road, to be considered through the Local Plan Allocations process. Once this amendment has been made through the Lichfield Local Plan Site Allocations process, this land should be included within the Density Policy area as shown on the Proposals Map. This will help to further secure the character of the Conservation Area and the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed Beech Gate.

Design

Policy Justification

- 7.7 The nature of Little Aston Park as it has developed over a number of decades is for properties to be very large and detached, set down long driveways with significant screening and landscaping between neighbouring properties. The properties themselves, outside of their size, do not show a significant degree of uniformity, instead showing a range of styles and architectural features.
- 7.8 There are some members of the community, particularly within Little Aston Park, that wish to demonstrate innovation in architecture of new properties. This does not have to mean styles that

are wholly not in keeping with the surrounding properties but developments that show off some of the best features of modern architecture within what is a rural, leafy setting.

- 7.9 The opportunity for new or replacement properties to demonstrate innovative design is therefore encouraged. This must not be in such a way that it has a detrimental impact on the appearance of Little Aston Park, particularly if it is not well screened from neighbouring properties. However, the use of different designs and materials will be encouraged.

Policy

POLICY LAP2: DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT IN LITTLE ASTON PARK

Development proposals for new or replacement dwellings in the Little Aston Park density policy area (Policy LAP1) that show innovative design will be encouraged.

Such design should ensure that the residential amenity of neighbouring properties is not impacted and that the extensive mature tree cover making up Little Aston Park's woodland setting is retained.

The design of new dwellings must comply with the requirements of Policy LAP1.

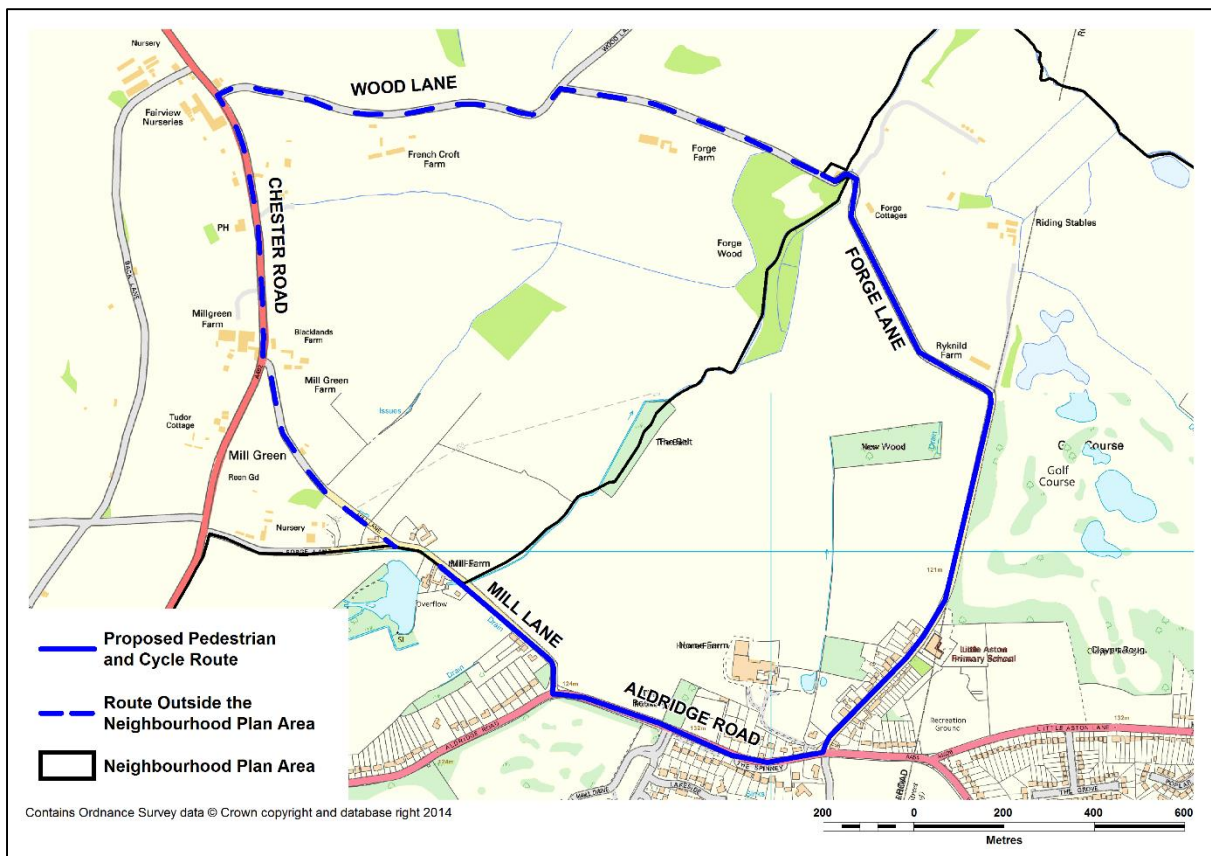
8 MOVEMENT

Walking and cycling

Policy Justification

- 8.1 The community has identified the need to improve pedestrian and cycle networks as important for Little Aston. The current dominance of the car (as shown in Figure 2.8) has resulted in significant safety concerns for those travelling on foot or by bicycle. This is both in terms of day-to-day access to school, work, services and public transport links but also for those wishing to walk/run or cycle for leisure purposes.
- 8.2 There is a specific scheme that has been identified by the community that will serve to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists, both for access and leisure. This is the creation of a circular cycle/jogging/walking route along Forge Lane/Mill Lane/Aldridge Road – this will provide a dedicated route for exercise totalling five kilometres in distance. It will also improve access into the countryside for residents of the built-up area of Little Aston.

Figure 8.1: Circular cycling/jogging/walking route



NB – Amended Figure 8.1 to reflect Modification 4 - The Key to figure 8.1 replace 'Ward Boundary' with 'Neighbourhood Plan Area'. Also reflects LDC recommended modification to key to replace 'Route outside the ward boundary' to 'Route outside Neighbourhood Plan Area'.

- 8.3 As shown in Figure 8.1, part of this route is outside the neighbourhood area boundary, it is shown for illustrative purposes only and is not affected by any part of this plan. However, the Parish

Council – which has jurisdiction over the area covering the whole route - is committed to working with landowner partners to deliver any improvements. In addition, Stonnall ward where the route runs has provided support for the scheme, albeit that it is not included in the Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan.

- 8.4 The provision of this link is likely to require funding to provide the necessary physical improvements for improved safety and ease if vulnerable road users. It is unlikely that the entire route will be capable of being provided away from car traffic. In these areas, signage (both on the roadside and on the road itself), or other acceptable measures, should be used to alert motorists to the presence of pedestrians and cyclists.
- 8.5 Funding will need to come from a number of sources. These include grants from organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, through the Local Transport Plan and other funding streams available through Staffordshire County Council (as the highways authority) and through developer contributions.

Policy

POLICY MOV1: PROVISION OF FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEPATHS

Proposals to provide dedicated footpaths and cyclepaths, and signage to alert motorists to the presence of pedestrians and cyclists along particular routes will be encouraged.

In particular, the provision of a circular cycle/jogging/walking route along Forge Lane/Mill Lane/Aldridge Road will be supported in order to provide improvements for access and leisure purposes.

Public transport

Policy Justification

- 8.6 Many people identified the fact that public transport services for Little Aston were poor. In particular, access to Blake Street Station from Little Aston is limited by public transport.
- 8.7 The improvement of bus services is a costly exercise and the limited levels of growth expected in Little Aston do not provide a mechanism to secure the levels of funding needed to expand routes or the frequency of existing services.
- 8.8 However, the specific need for a new bus stop on the north side of Aldridge Road, to serve Little Aston Hospital, was identified. This will help to improve access to the Hospital.
- 8.9 Any developer contributions will be used to fund the provision of a bus stop incorporating a full bus shelter at this location.

Policy

POLICY MOV2: PROVISION OF NEW BUS STOPS

Proposals to provide new bus stops and shelters along existing bus routes will be supported. In particular, the provision of a new bus stop on the north side of Aldridge Road will be strongly supported.

Pedestrian safety

- 8.10 Throughout the Neighbourhood Plan process, traffic has been a major issue for the community. The specific issues of concern were identified in Section 2. Any solutions will obviously enhance pedestrian safety along the main roads identified.
- 8.11 Shenstone Parish Council is very aware of these concerns and had already contributed to specific traffic surveys undertaken by Staffordshire County Council Highways Department at selected 'hot spots'.
- 8.12 The results of these surveys were made available in September 2014 at a meeting of the Action Staffordshire Group. This is a Group recently created that consists of all the Parish Council chairpersons from the Lichfield Rural South Division together with District Councillors and interested individual representatives of groups (including any Neighbourhood Plan teams) for better communication on common issues and will tackle traffic issues across the whole area.
- 8.13 Concerns have been expressed at speeding traffic and at the high number of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) using the A4026 (Blake Street/Little Aston Lane) as a 'rat run'.
- 8.14 Additionally the Community would like to see an improved crossing at the traffic lights at the Blake St, Rosemary Hill/Clarence Road/Little Aston Lane junction. At peak times with traffic turning in all directions there is no break in the traffic light sequence to enable pedestrians (particularly those with young children/pushchairs or dogs) to cross safely. A simple All Red sequence would achieve this. This will be pursued via Action Staffordshire.
- 8.15 Furthermore the Community would like a pedestrian crossing across Blake Street opposite Station Approach. The footpath along Blake Street is only on one side of the road so everyone has to cross here over the busy road that is 40mph at this point. This would require improvements outside the neighbourhood plan area.
- 8.16 Action Staffordshire has a £30,000 budget from the Staffordshire County Council Highways Fund to deliver small and medium schemes over the period to 2016 and it will be up to the individual communities to prioritise with Action Staffordshire what is done and where and what is possible.
- 8.17 Action Staffordshire has acknowledged the Little Aston Park Road/Hardwick Road/Burnett Road junction as a priority issue and is actively looking at a solution.

POLICY MOV3: PROVISION OF PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Proposals to address issues of pedestrian safety that are of concern to the community will be supported.

Proposals which are likely to create unacceptable safety issues for pedestrian movement will be refused.

9 COMMUNITY HUB

- 9.1 A Community Hub is seen as highly desirable in terms of providing a physical location to act as a heart of the community. The preferred location is along the north side of Little Aston Lane, which would also serve to protect the rural edge of Little Aston from development that is out of keeping with the area that represents the link between the built-up and rural parts of the neighbourhood area.
- 9.2 Suggestions of possible uses at a Community Hub have included:
- a cricket pitch and nets;
 - a pitch-and-putt golf course;
 - a new Community Hall;
 - a skateboard park;
 - hard courts for netball, volleyball and basketball; and
 - extensions to the current highly-successful Recreation Ground.

Policy Justification

- 9.3 This represents an important aspiration for Little Aston. However, at the present time, the preferred location for such a facility, on the north side of Little Aston Lane, has not been secured. There will need to be ongoing negotiations with current landowners. If this is not successful then alternative locations will be considered although work on the Neighbourhood Plan has not identified any alternatives that are appropriate to provide a hub for the community in an easily accessible location.
- 9.4 Whilst a location is being identified, further work is required to identify and secure the necessary funding.
- 9.5 Meanwhile, subject to sufficient local support, drive and commitment, a Working Group involving all interested parties (e.g. Shenstone Parish Council, Little Aston Village Hall, Little Aston Recreation Ground, etc) should be set up to:
- canvass local opinion on the nature and scale of such a development;
 - draw up plans based on this research; and
 - seek out sources of funding to allow development to proceed.
- 9.6 It may be appropriate to secure such provision through the use of a Community Right to Build Order.
- 9.7 Any proposals which either create the opportunity to provide for such needs or potentially jeopardise this opportunity will be considered within the light of the aspiration for such provision at this location.
- 9.8 It should be noted that if a community hub building can be secured on the north side of Little Aston Lane, then its location in the Green Belt means that 'exceptional circumstances' must be proven, unless its use is as a facility for outdoor sport or outdoor recreation (NPPF paragraph 89). A community hall is unlikely to fit that description.

Policy

POLICY CMH1: PROVISION OF COMMUNITY HUB

Proposals which directly provide or assist in the provision of a community hub on land north of Little Aston Lane, shall be supported.

In accordance with national green belt policy and Core Policy 1 of the Local Plan Strategy any proposals must ensure that:

- the uses proposed do not conflict with the purposes of green belt land; and
- the openness of the green belt is preserved.

In respect of preserving the openness of the green belt, it must be ensured that any building is not excessive in scale and height and is designed in a way that minimises its visual impact. Unless the building is to provide appropriate facilities for outdoor sport or outdoor recreation then exceptional circumstances must be proven for its location in the green belt, in line with national planning policy.

Such proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have engaged with any working group or equivalent that has been set up in Little Aston to ascertain what facilities should be provided as part of any such community hub.

Proposals for the development of a community hub at an alternative location will be considered favourably if they are in a location that is generally accessible by foot and within or adjacent to the built-up area of Little Aston.

10 BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

- 10.1 The modern economy is changing and increasingly needs good communications infrastructure as a basic requirement. The 2011 Census highlights how people are working differently to a generation ago - in Little Aston ward, 7% of people work from home and 18% are self-employed. Of these self-employed people, 8% have no employees so effectively work for themselves with no support. Commonly this is in service activities that simply require access to a computer and a broadband connection.
- 10.2 The need for high speed broadband to serve Little Aston is therefore paramount. Broadband speeds are reported by residents to be poor and it is therefore a fundamental constraint to the continuing expansion of self-employed activity for those working from home or from a small office.
- 10.3 Government has recognised that there is a significant gap in availability of basic and superfast broadband, particularly in rural areas where British Telecom (BT) and other national providers have not invested in upgrades to the network and have allocated £530m through the Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme to deliver superfast broadband to 90% of premises by 2015 and have recently allocated an additional £250m to increase coverage to 95% of premises by 2017 and 99% by 2018.
- 10.4 In Staffordshire, Superfast Staffordshire is working on a roll-out programme to bring fibre-based broadband to 90% of premises by Spring 2016.
- 10.5 Whilst BT has an obligation to provide a landline to every household in the UK and developers are expected to want to facilitate high speed broadband provision otherwise their developments will be substantially less marketable, there have been instances where developers have not contacted Next Generation Access (NGA) Network providers early enough in the process for fibre and ducting to be laid, or they have a national agreement with a cable provider that is not active in the area, leaving new housing developments with little or no connections.
- 10.6 Policy BBD1 seeks to ensure that all new housing, community and commercial development in the neighbourhood area is connected to superfast broadband.

POLICY BBD1: HIGH SPEED BROADBAND

It is expected that all new properties should be served by a superfast broadband (fibre optic) connection. The only exception will be where it can be demonstrated, through consultation with NGA Network providers, that this would not be either possible, practical or economically viable. In such circumstances sufficient and suitable ducting should be provided within the site and to the property to facilitate ease of installation at a future date.

11 LIGHT POLLUTION

- 11.1 One of the identified issues in the Little Aston neighbourhood area is light pollution. In a relatively rural location, where the topography makes certain parts of the neighbourhood area highly visible, poorly designed and located lighting can have a disproportionate polluting effect.
- 11.2 The Little Aston Neighbourhood Plan recognises the guidance notes on the reduction of light pollution provided by the Institute of Lighting Engineers⁴. This guidance should be followed in seeking to comply with Policy EE1. Specifically, any development away from the built up area should accord with the guidance Environmental Zone E2 which covers appropriate lighting in rural or small village locations; within the built-up area it should accord with the guidance Environmental Zone E3 which covers appropriate lighting in small town centres or urban locations.
- 11.3 It will be a requirement of any form of development which proposes external lighting to minimise the amount of light that is visible from outside the property. Lighting in public areas, particularly street lights, should be provided in the form of downlighters which serve to minimise the amount of light that is visible away from the area of the street intended to be lit.

POLICY EE1: LIGHT POLLUTION

New development will be required to demonstrate how it has minimised light pollution created through its proposed use.

Where lighting of public places is proposed, the use of downlighters will be required.

There will be a presumption against development which will still create high levels of light pollution even after the above criteria have been addressed.

⁴ Institute of Lighting Engineers (2000) *Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Light Pollution*

12 NON-LAND USE ACTIONS

- 12.1 There are a number of issues that have been raised through the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan that are not directly related to land-use matters (although several indirectly relate to the use of land in some form). As such, they are not matters that can be addressed directly by the provision of a planning policy in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, this is not to say that these are not important matters and it is important that a strategy for dealing with these matters is assembled and taken forward. In doing so, this will help to achieve the vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 12.2 It is worth noting that Lichfield District Council is preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule and once adopted, with a Neighbourhood Plan in place, Shenstone Parish Council will begin to receive a proportion of the CIL receipts from development within the neighbourhood area. This new source of funding could be channelled towards infrastructure projects within the neighbourhood area as well as other sources of funding.

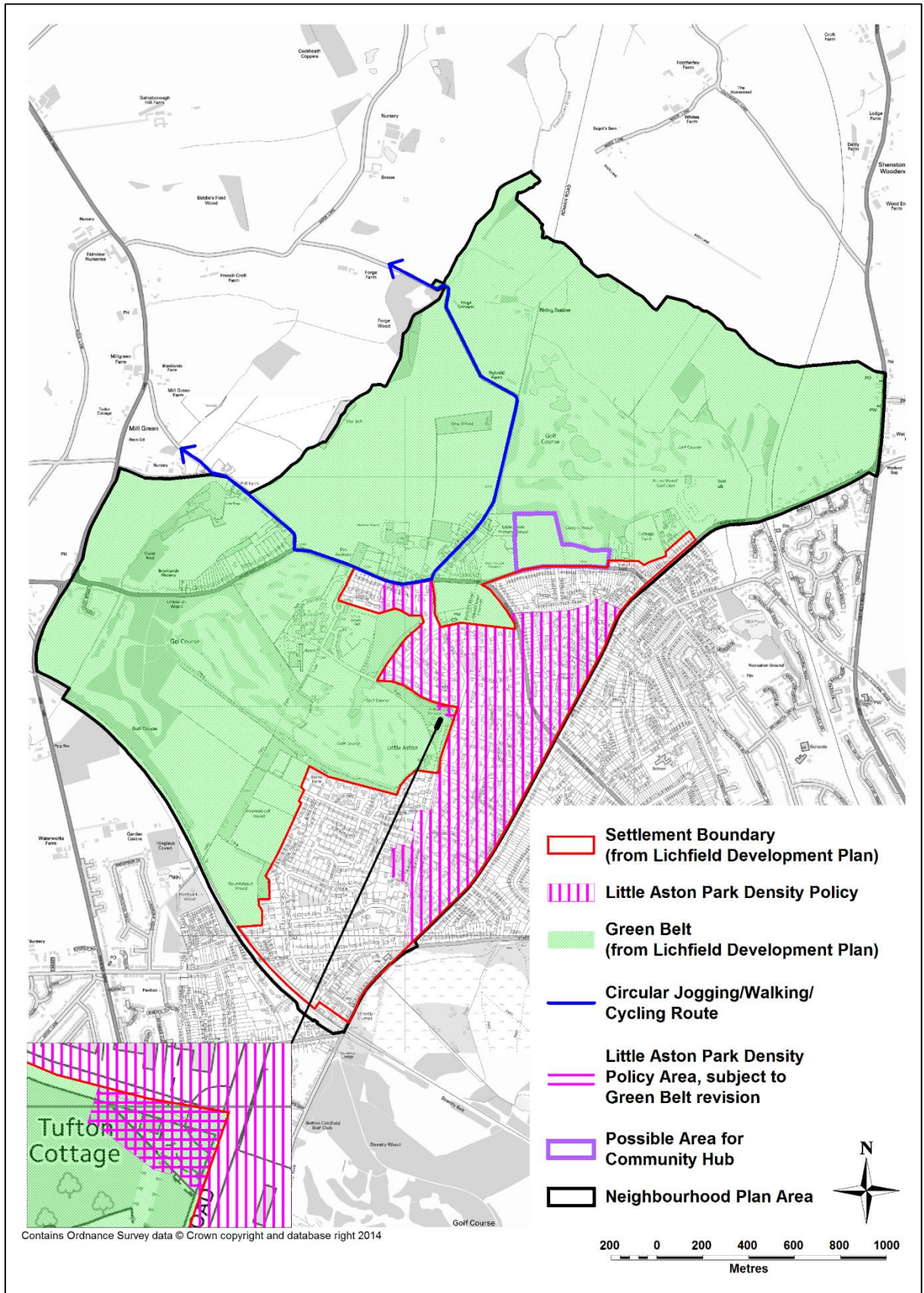
Extension to the Conservation Area

- 12.3 The existing Conservation Area covering Little Aston Park currently excludes an area immediately to the west encompassing Roman Lane, Alderhithe Grove, Barns Croft, Royston Chase, Fallow Field and Vercourt. This area is known as Claverdon Park.
- 12.4 In total there are 82 dwellings in Claverdon Park, comprising houses and bungalows built in the 1970s. The roads all have a distinct style and character and the owners of the properties are bound by restrictive covenants that are upheld by Claverdon Park Management Company Ltd. All properties are set in individual plots of land, the smallest starting from one-third of an acre and upwards. The whole aspect is open plan and indeed a significant part of Claverdon Park is only accessible via Little Aston Park which itself is within the existing conservation area.
- 12.5 It is considered by this part of the community that the area needs to be maintained and protected in its present form. It is considered to represent a similar type of area in character to Little Aston Park, therefore it is considered that the same restrictions on development should apply.
- 12.6 It is considered that Claverdon Park could represent an extension to the existing Conservation Area. It is not considered appropriate to take this forward as part of this Neighbourhood Plan but any future proposals to extend the Conservation Area to include Claverdon Park will be supported in principle.

Signage

- 12.7 Signage has been identified by many people as lacking on Little Aston. This is both to alert motorists to the most appropriate routes and also for tourists visiting the area. In addition it was felt by many that visually attractive signage (for example, finger posts) helps to make Little Aston a more attractive place.
- 12.8 It should be noted that there are statutory guidelines that have to be adhered to for signage placed in the public highway, therefore further consultation with the Highway Authority is necessary in such circumstances.
- 12.9 Support will therefore be given to the use of high quality signage around the neighbourhood area. Any developer contributions will be used, along with grant funding or direct provision by the highway authority, to ensure that any new signage is specific to Little Aston in its appearance.

PROPOSALS MAP



NB – Amended Proposals Map to reflect Modifications 5 and 9 – to remove the part of the circular route outside of the Neighbourhood Plan Area from the proposals map, to replace the term ‘Ward Boundary’ with ‘Neighbourhood Plan Area’ in the key and to make clear that the settlement boundary and Green Belt designation are taken from the Lichfield Local Plan.

