

Neighbourhood Plan
Shenstone | Stonnall | Little Aston



Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Draft Scoping Report

February 2015

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report sets out the scope for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the emerging Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan. It is for consultation with the relevant statutory authorities and other interested stakeholders.

1.2 SEA is a requirement of the EC Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the impacts of certain plans and programmes on the environment. It is implemented in England through the 'Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004'.

1.3 The objective of the 'SEA Directive' is:

'To provide for a high level of protection to the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of the plans...with a view to promoting sustainable development' (Article 1, Appendix 1)

1.4 The requirement for an SEA emerges from Schedule 10, paragraph 8(2)(f) of the Localism Act which states that a draft Neighbourhood Development Order (or Plan) "meets the basic conditions if the making of the order does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations". In this case, the relevant EU obligations are represented by the SEA Directive.

1.5 This SEA is in accordance with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations.

The Scoping Report

1.6 The Scoping Report has been developed in accordance with government guidance for undertaking SEA in compliance with the SEA Directive.

1.7 According to the guidance, the complete process has five stages resulting in the Environmental Report, which should be implemented in turn. Each stage comprises a number of subsidiary tasks, some of which should be implemented alongside each other and lead to the development of a specific output. The Scoping Report is the first stage of the SEA of the Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan associated with it. Stage A explains the process used in this Scoping Report and is presented below in Table 1.1. While the table may infer a sequential process, in practice, stages A1 to A4 inform each other, e.g. one has to have an understanding of the environmental issues (A3) to assess the relevant plans, programmes (A1) and requirements for baseline data collection (A2).

1.8 Consultation on the scope of the SEA is required under the SEA Directive and the Scoping Report guidance detailed above. It is a requirement that the Scoping Report is sent to three statutory Consultation Bodies with environmental responsibilities, as listed:

- The Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- Natural England

1.9 The consultation will seek to:

- ensure the methodology for the proposed SEA is comprehensive to support the Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan;
- provide an opinion on the suitability of the SEA objectives;
- advise on the key sustainability issues as far as they relate to SEA; and

- provide advice to ensure the baseline data is appropriate and sufficient.

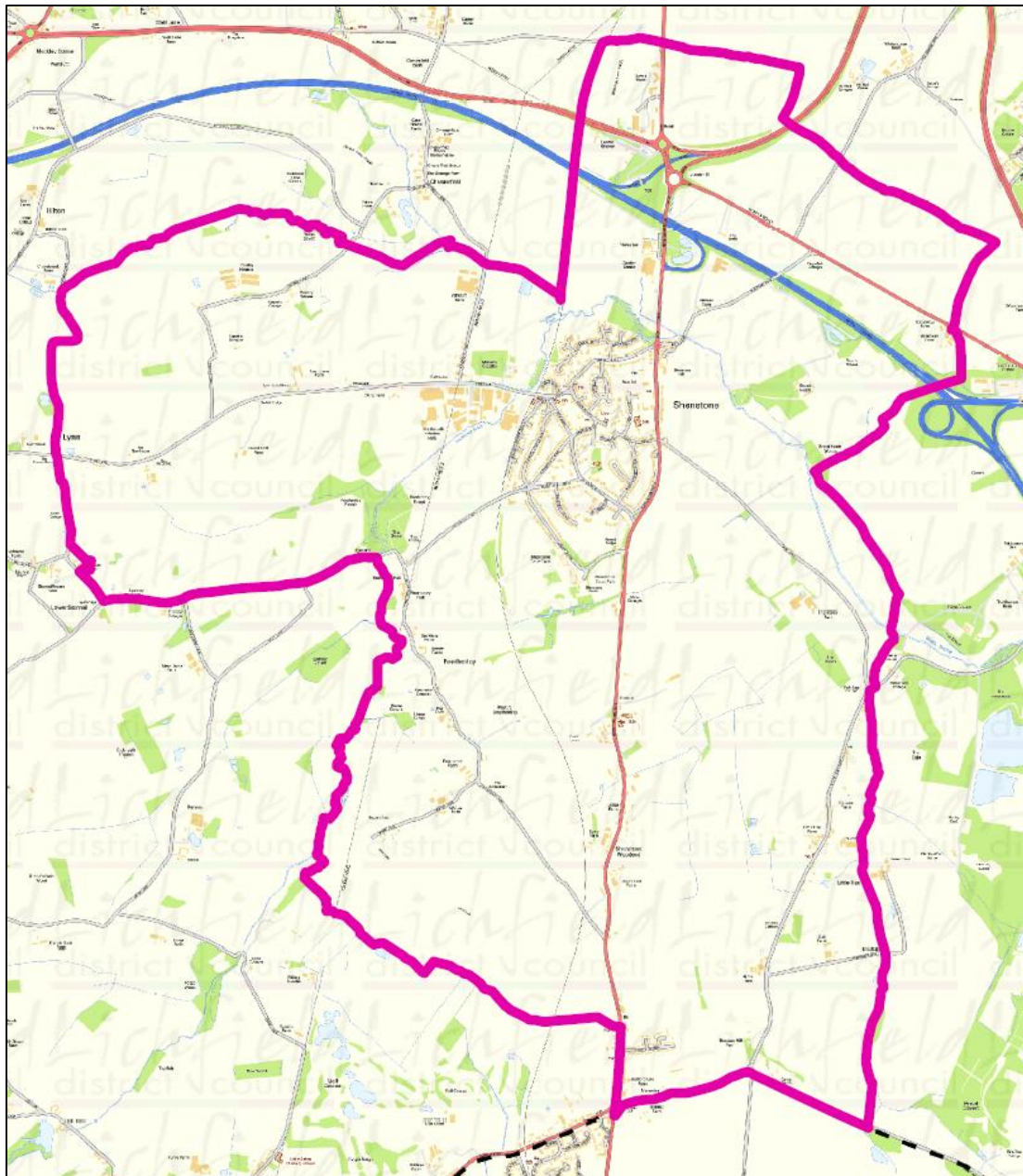
Table 1.1: Work Requirements for the Scoping Report

Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope			
Sub-Stage		Tasks	Key Outputs
A1	Identify links to other relevant plans, programmes and sustainability objectives	Defines how the plan is affected by outside factors and suggests ideas for how any constraints can be addressed	Assessment of requirements of SEA/ Collection and evaluation of key datasets
A2	Collect baseline/ environmental data	Provision of an evidence base for sustainability issues, effects prediction and monitoring	
A3	Identify sustainability issues/problems	Used to focus the SEA and streamline the subsequent phases, including baseline information analysis, setting of the SEA Framework, prediction of effects and monitoring	Assessment of requirements of SEA
A4	Developing the SEA framework	A process to enable the sustainability of plan to be appraised	SEA framework consisting of Sustainability Objectives (Table 4.1) based upon National, Regional and Local issues.
A5	Consulting on the scope of the SEA	Carried out with statutory bodies and other relevant organisations with social, environmental or economic responsibilities to ensure the appraisal covers the key sustainability issues	Revisions to Sustainability framework

Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.10 The Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan area is shown in Figure 1.1 and is contiguous with the ward boundary.

Figure 1.1: Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan designated area



- 1.11 The Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan is being developed through an extensive programme of engagement with the local community. The only settlement of any significant size is Shenstone village with the majority of the population living within its limits. Therefore the focus of the plan has been focused on the needs of the community within the village and the plan focuses plans and policies on that same area. Nevertheless, the plan does still recognise the needs of others living in the ward, particularly in Shenstone Wood End and seeks to address their needs where possible.
- 1.12 The Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by local residents, with the support of the Parish Council although an independent Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has driven the Plan forward. The Plan provides a vision for the development of the village and ward up to 2029:

'In 2029, Shenstone is still a quiet, desirable and attractive rural village which is popular with families but has a friendly community made up of a mix of generations. The village has continued to expand over time though a number of residential developments. This has enabled a significant number of residents with larger properties whose families have grown up and left the area to downsize and stay in Shenstone, moving to smaller properties within walking distance of the shops and services in the village.

New development has helped to provide smaller, affordable properties for first-time buyers, helping to keep more young people in the village. Improved access to rail services has helped them to access job opportunities in the larger centres of Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield and Lichfield.

Land at Birchbrook Industrial Estate has been developed for a mix of residential and employment uses. The residential development will provide excellent access to the countryside and people will also have step-free access to the station. The offices and light industrial uses provide jobs more aligned with the skills profile of the local community, meaning that more people live and work locally. The development has also meant that growth in the number of HGVs accessing the strategic road network through the village has been halted.

Development helped to fund improved access to the countryside and for cycling and walking generally. It has also funded the improvement of community infrastructure to provide for the range of needs of all the community. Shenstone has become a destination, where people can come to walk or cycle into the surrounding countryside and then return to enjoy a meal or a coffee in one of the eateries in the centre of the village.

In short, when compared to 2014, Shenstone has seen change as being 'more of the same' - a relatively small increase in housing and residents allowing the evolution of a successful place rather than a radical shift in being. This has helped to maintain the mix of generations while continuing to support a strong retail offer and community ethos.'

- 1.13 In order to deliver the vision, the Plan sets out to meet a series of objectives under four main themes:

Housing

- Provide for between 50 and 150 new dwellings over the period 2014 and 2029 in accordance with Lichfield District Council's Emerging Local Plan and ensuring that the overall quantum of development does not put an unacceptable strain on infrastructure capacity.
- Allocate the most appropriate sites to accommodate the levels of growth proposed.
- Ensure that new developments include a mix of housing to meet the needs principally of local people, taking into account the current and predicted social demographic of the ward.
- Ensure that new housing developments are designed to be in keeping with the existing character of Shenstone, particularly in terms of their design and the provision of private amenity space.

Environment and Community Facilities

- Protect and maintain existing green spaces of value to the community.
- Provide new and improved community facilities to address the needs of the local population.
- Enhance the village by improving the appearance and safety of the village centre.
- Protect the existing village facilities of value to the community.

Movement

- Minimise and ideally reduce the impact of commercial traffic movements through the village.
- Improve access and parking to Shenstone Railway Station.
- Improve movement by non-car modes (walking and cycling).
- Improve the level and quality of public transport services.
- Improve highway safety, both for vehicular users and pedestrians.
- Ensure that new commercial activity does not create parking problems.
- Improve the level and quality of signage in the village centre.

Commerce

- Protect Shenstone's existing services and facilities and support measures to maintain and improve them.
- Encourage the delivery of high speed broadband to the ward.

2 RELEVANT PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES (STAGE A1)

2.1 This section provides a summary review of the policy context relevant for the Neighbourhood Plan. Starting at the international level and working down in scale this covers the key policies that the Neighbourhood Plan should adhere to or consider. While it is common sense to ensure the Plan and SEA reviews these requirements, it is also a requirement of the SEA Directive which states that the Environmental Report should include:

"an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes"

"the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation"

[Annex 1(a) and (e)]

2.2 Within this context it is stated in the NPPF that work for Neighbourhood Planning is proportionate with the scale and ambitions of the plan. We have therefore considered a range of relevant policies and plans for this assessment considering international, national, regional (West Midlands), and local (County and District) plans and policies.

International context

Key objectives	Key targets/indicators	Key implications for NP and SEA
EU Habitats and Conservation of Wild Birds Directives (92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC)		
To conserve fauna and flora and natural habitats of EU importance by the establishment of a network of protected areas throughout the European Community. This was designed to maintain both the distribution and abundance of threatened species and habitats.	Identifies endangered habitats and species requiring protection and need for re-establishment of denuded biotopes. Protected areas should be created, maintained and managed.	Plans should take account relevant SPA and SAC sites. If negative impacts are anticipated appropriate assessments should be undertaken. Above protecting the integrity and interest of European sites, the NP should consider objectives to protect and if possible, enhance biodiversity.
EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)		
To expand the scope of water protection to all waters, surface waters and groundwater. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve 'good status' for all waters by 2015. • Water management should be based on river basins and a 'combined approach' of emission 	Prevent deterioration in the status of aquatic ecosystems, provide protection and improve ecological condition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achieve at least good status for all water bodies by 2015 (or later subject to specific criteria). • meet the requirements of WFD protected areas 	Plan should consider any significant hydrological / hydrogeological factors and ensure integration with existing catchment management plans. Plan should consider including objectives to protect and enhance water

Key objectives	Key targets/indicators	Key implications for NP and SEA
limit values and quality standards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water management should include the closer involvement of community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote sustainable use of water • conserve habitats and species that depend directly on water • progressively reduce or phase out pollutants that pose significant threats to the aquatic environment / groundwater • help mitigate the impacts of floods and droughts. 	resources, quality and ecological function.
EU Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC)		
Establishes limit values and alert thresholds for concentrations of key pollutants in ambient air including sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide / oxides of nitrogen, particulates. Maintain ambient air quality in areas where it is good and improve it in others.	Sets limit values and alert thresholds for concentrations of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead.	Plan should consider (where relevant) the levels of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead in ambient air. Plan should consider maintaining ambient air quality and including objectives with the aim of reducing air pollution and, where possible, enhancing air quality in respect of key pollutants.

National and regional context

- 2.3 In this section we summarise the most relevant regional and local plans and policies making the assumption that these include the relevant international and national sustainability objectives.
- 2.4 The Planning system is undergoing a period of change following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012.
- 2.5 This has heralded significant changes including to the planning and provides a greater emphasis on localism. European Regulations still apply as does much of the legacy planning guidance – until it is revised for the NPPF.
- 2.6 The NPPF stresses the importance of sustainability running as a ‘golden thread’ throughout plans and policies.

Key objectives	Key targets/indicators	Key implications for NP and SEA
National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)		
<p>Planning should drive and support sustainable economic development. It should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secure high quality design and good standard of amenity • take account of the different roles of areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside • support transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking account of flood risk and encourage the reuse of existing resources and encouraging the use of renewable resources. • contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. • encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed. • conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. • focus significant development in locations which are, or can be made sustainable. 	<p>Supports local and national targets with regard to biodiversity and geodiversity.</p>	<p>Plan should contribute to the objective of achieving sustainable development (social, economic and environmental). SA Objectives should reflect the core planning principles and policies set out in the NPPF. The Plan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to minimising impacts and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible • contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity – including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
The Waste (England & Wales) Regulations 2011		
<p>To encourage/ensure waste arises/is dealt with further up the waste hierarchy. Divert waste disposal away from landfill.</p>	<p>Target of 50% of household waste to be recycled.</p>	<p>Plan must have regard to the amended waste hierarchy. Policies and objectives should where possible encourage waste to be re-used, recycled or have value / energy recovery. If possible the Plan should discourage landfilling of waste.</p>
UK Climate Change Act 2008		
<p>The Act introduced a statutory target for reducing carbon emissions.</p>	<p>Target of reducing carbon emissions by 80 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050, with an interim target of 34% by 2020.</p>	<p>Planning can make a contribution to mitigating and adapting to climate change by influencing the location, scale and character of development. The plan should include policies / objectives that contribute towards achieving lower carbon emissions and greater resilience to the impacts of climate change.</p>
Flood and Water Management Act 2010		

Key objectives	Key targets/indicators	Key implications for NP and SEA
Improve the management of flood risk for people, homes and businesses. To protect water supplies.	Local Authorities to prepare flood risk assessments, flood maps and plans. EA to prepare Local flood risk management strategies.	Plan should take account of flooding and water management issues and strategies and consider the inclusion of policies / objectives to reduce flood risks and other impacts on the water environment.
Carbon Plan: Delivering our low carbon future 2011		
Government-wide plan for action on climate change at domestic and international levels.	Includes a range of sector-based plans and targets for low carbon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building • transport • industry • electricity • agriculture, land use, forestry and waste 	The Plan should include policies / objectives that contribute towards achieving lower carbon emissions.
Mainstreaming sustainable development 2011		
This refreshed vision builds upon the principles that underpinned the UK's 2005 SD strategy, recognising the needs of the economy, society and the natural environment, alongside the use of good governance and sound science.	Promises a new set of indicators from DEFRA that link initiatives and include wellbeing.	Plan should take account of climate change and promote sustainability through sustainable, low carbon and green economic growth.

County/local context

- 2.7 Staffordshire County Council prepares statutory land use plans for waste and minerals policy. In March 2013, it adopted a Joint Waste Local Plan along with the City of Stoke-on-Trent which covers the period to 2026 and is the most up-to-date statement of land-use planning policy for waste.
- 2.8 A key element of the plan is to achieve the target of zero municipal waste to landfill and the vision for the Plan is to ensure that communities, the environment, economy and special character of Staffordshire are protected.

Key objectives	Key targets/indicators	Key implications for Neighbourhood Plan and Sustainability Appraisal
Staffordshire Local Transport Plan 2011		
<p>To improve quality of life for the people of Staffordshire via three main transport-related objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting growth and regeneration. • Maintaining the highway network. • Making transport easier to use and places easier to get to. 	<p>Indicators include: congestion, mode of travel to work and school, cycling trips, accessibility, road traffic accidents, road and footway maintenance, street lighting, highway structures, road flooding, air quality and transport emissions.</p>	<p>The Plan should consider policies / objectives which contribute to transport sustainability. This should go beyond reducing carbon emissions to include economic growth, safety, pollution, traffic reduction and access to services.</p>
Staffordshire County Council – Leading for a Connected Staffordshire: Our Vision for 2014-18		
<p>This Strategy focuses on three key priority outcomes that address the vision of a connected Staffordshire, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth • Be healthier and more independent • Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community. 	<p>The Strategy contains information about why these areas are a challenge to the County and sets out actions and clear and challenging targets against each priority.</p>	<p>Plan should consider including objectives / policies to support reductions in carbon emissions, and consider adaptation to a changing climate and the efficient use of resources.</p>
Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan		
<p>Maintain and, where practicable, enhance the wildlife and habitats that provide the natural character and diversity of Staffordshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify priority habitats and species in Staffordshire • Set realistic and ambitious targets and timescales for priority habitats and species and to monitor progress towards them • Raise public awareness and encourage involvement in biodiversity action. 	<p>Staffordshire Biodiversity Record Centre inventory statistics for species and habitats e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rare Species Inventory • Biodiversity Action Plan Species Inventory • Pond Inventory. 	<p>Plan should include consider including policies/objectives to: enhance (where possible) the wildlife and habitats that give rise to Staffordshire’s natural character and diversity.</p>
Staffordshire Landscape Assessment, 2001		
<p>Assessment of the different landscape character areas and their key features of significance</p>		<p>Plan should be consistent and take into account assessment of landscape capacity</p>
Lichfield Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2013)		
<p>Identifies all areas of flood risk within the district as well as what the level of risk is</p>	<p>Flood zone</p>	<p>The Plan needs to ensure that new development avoids areas identified at risk of flooding and that the existing level of flood risk within and outside Shenstone is not exacerbated and, where possible, reduced.</p>
Lichfield Strategic Landscape and Biodiversity Assessment, 2007		

Key objectives	Key targets/indicators	Key implications for Neighbourhood Plan and Sustainability Appraisal
Identifies what is critical to the character of the District, what are the important characteristics that need protection from development and also where there is a need for investment in the landscape and biodiversity.		Plan should be consistent with the identified landforms and designations in the study.
Lichfield Historic Environment Character Assessment – Staffordshire County Council, 2009		
To identify areas or units of land based on their key historic landscape attributes.		The Plan should ensure that areas of historic landscape character are preserved and enhanced.
Lichfield District Ecological Assessment – Staffordshire Ecological Services, 2009		
A comprehensive ecological desk top study, and phase 1 habitat survey of proposed areas outlined for housing and employment development. This included potential development around Shenstone.		The Plan should ensure that areas of ecological sensitivity are protected.

District policy context

- 2.9 Shenstone is within Lichfield district for planning purposes. Lichfield District Council's (LDC) extant policies 'saved' from the 1998 District Local Plan make up the Development Plan.
- 2.10 The Development Plan also includes the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan.
- 2.11 The weight given to policies from the plans above will depend upon the degree to which they conform to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which in the event of any conflict will take precedence.
- 2.12 The Lichfield District Draft Local Plan was subject to Examination in Public which was completed in October 2014. It represents the emerging Local Plan for the period to 2029 and was accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating SEA) and a Habitats Regulation Assessment.
- 2.13 No revised timetable for the emerging Local Plan to move to adoption has been set out by LDC website. However, it is reasonable to expect that the plan, if found sound, will be adopted in the first half of 2015.
- 2.14 It should be noted that a number of other wards in close proximity to Shenstone are in the process of preparing neighbourhood plans. These are:
- Stonnall
 - Little Aston
 - Lichfield City
- 2.15 These plans could potentially have a residual effect on Shenstone ward.

3 BASELINE DATA AND KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES (STAGES A2 & A3)

- 3.1 The SEA Regulations require that certain environmental topics are included within the environmental baseline collected to inform the SEA. The topics required by the SEA Regulations are shown in Table 3.1.
- 3.2 The SEA Scoping Report summarises the current state of the environment and also identifies key trends and pressures for the future. The information is categorised under topics, although it must be recognised that many of the topics are interlinked.

Table 3.1: Topics and their relevance to the Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan

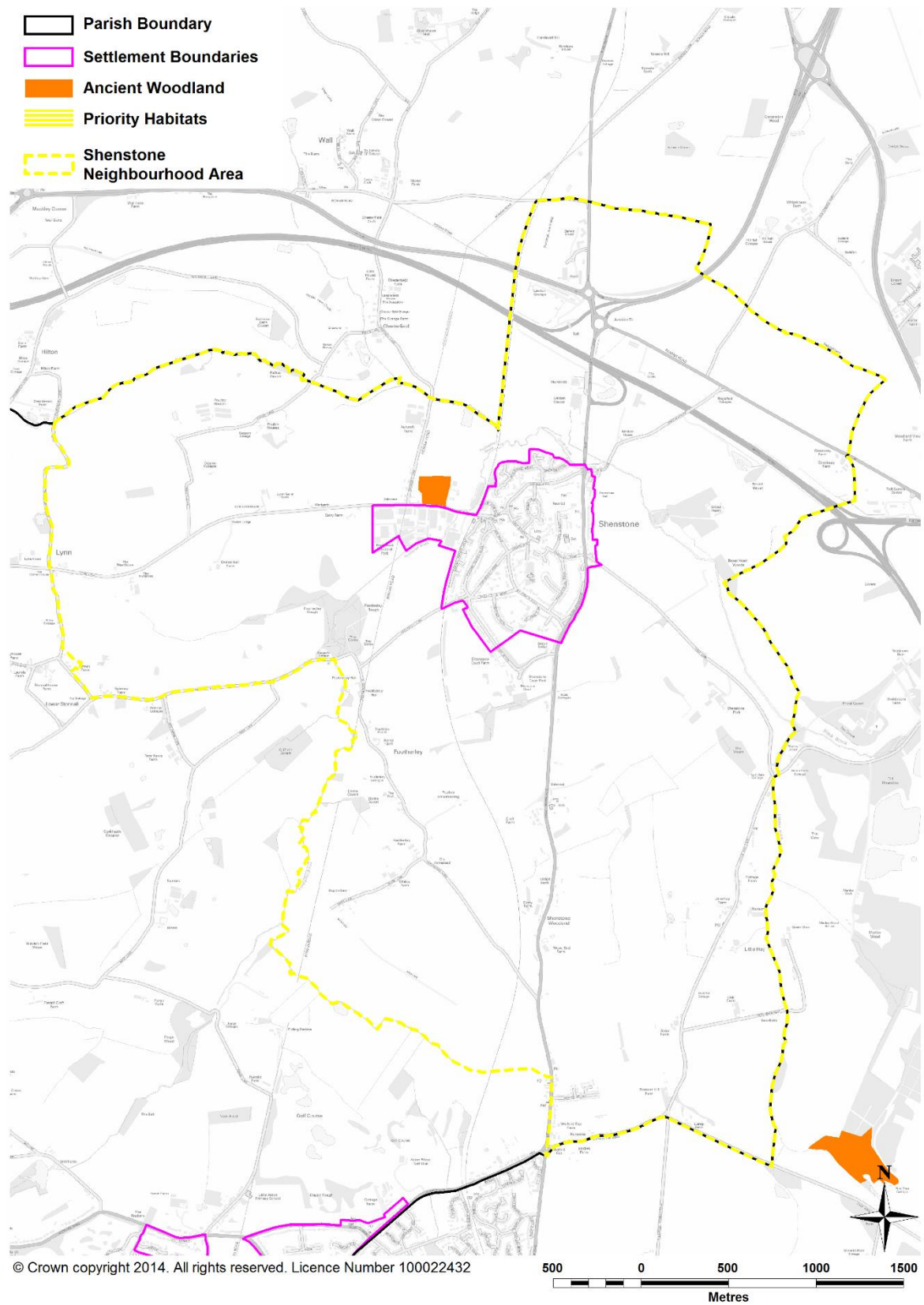
Topic	Relevance to the Shenstone NP
Nature conservation	Potential for new site allocations to impact on the habitats of species within areas of nature conservation value
Landscape	Potential for new site allocations to impact on the green belt
Water	Risk of flooding impacts on where people live and can impact on the economic prosperity of an area. The way in which water is drained off of land, including road and other hard surfaces, can be important to the level of flood risk experienced in an area.
Soils	Potential for site allocations and development to impact on best agricultural soils or important geological sites.
Heritage	Historic environment features can be vulnerable to damage and other impacts from neglect, decay or development pressures.
Air and Climate	Potential for new site allocations to create pollution through additional road congestion.
Human characteristics	Potential for the plan to impact on human health, particularly positively through improvements to walking, cycling routes, etc
Roads and transport	Development could impact on congestion on the road network, particularly the M6 Toll Road and the A5
Infrastructure	Development could have an impact on the infrastructure necessary to keep society running smoothly
Economic characteristics	Development could impact on the ability of communities to function effectively (in their interaction with services) and on the economic prosperity of an area.

- 3.3 The information was compiled from a wide range of information sources. Firstly information came from the draft Neighbourhood Plan and associated work conducted to support it. As part of the widespread consultation work to support the plan this has included feedback from a range of consultees. There are also a number of key reports relevant to the environment of the area and some of their key findings have been summarised here – they are referenced through the text, as are various data sources used to provide maps and statistics. This section presents topics relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan and while it seeks to be comprehensive only the key issues are included to keep the document manageable.

Nature conservation

- 3.4 The rural and relatively unspoilt landscape and the presence of a significant amount of ancient woodland provides the area with a rich conservation and biodiversity resource.
- 3.5 Figure 3.1 provides a map of the environmental features of the area.
- 3.6 The only environmental feature of significance in the neighbourhood plan area is the ancient woodland at Malkins Coppice. There is another ancient woodland outside the neighbourhood plan area to the south east.

Figure 3.1: Key environmental features



Species

- 3.7 There are two biodiversity alert sites in the ward. Malkins Coppice is a small pocket of ancient woodland and the Little Holmes is mostly a semi-improved grassland. Significant habitats within this area are mainly found within the two Biodiversity Alert Sites noted above. The following species are found there:

Protected species	Biodiversity Action Plan species
Common kingfisher	Sky Lark
Eurasian badger	
European water vole	
Whiskered/Brandt's bat	

Source: Staffordshire Ecological Services (2009) *Lichfield Ecological Study*

Natura 2000 wildlife sites

- 3.8 The ward is within 15 kilometres of the following Natura 2000 sites:
- Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Cannock Extension Canal
 - River Mease SAC
 - Humber Estuary SAC
- 3.9 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening was undertaken by LDC on the Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan. This found that there would be no significant effects upon the identified European sites as a result of the Plan. Therefore the further stages of Appropriate Assessment are not required for the Plan.

Landscape

- 3.10 Shenstone is a largely rural ward. The majority of the ward falls within the landscape character type 'Sandstone Estatelands in Cannock Chase and Cankwood'. The resulting landscape policy objective is 'landscape enhancement'. This area has also suffered erosion of strength of character and loss of condition of landscape elements, which has resulted in a landscape of medium quality. Development should be sustainably designed to a high quality with a requirement for environmental and biodiversity enhancement to maintain and improve the quality of the landscape.
- 3.11 The Lichfield Strategic Landscape and Biodiversity Assessment (2007) states at paragraph 5.17 that:

"In relation to the larger freestanding villages within the District, (ie. Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Whittington and Shenstone), with a degree of sustainability, the landscape and biodiversity considerations suggest that there are no 'showstopper' impacts that would prevent growth at all, however each has individual considerations that would limit the scale or direction of any peripheral growth. These include impact upon...parkland south of Shenstone. Such considerations suggest that whilst they would not

prevent a broad spatial strategy, for example of key settlement development from being able to be implemented, there could be factors that would direct growth in a specific direction or limit it to a specific scale.”

- 3.12 A large deer park, lying in the south eastern portion of the ward, was established in the mid-13th century and survived until the 17th century. However, its boundary can still be traced in the surviving field boundaries and lanes and it is associated with the Shenstone Park moated site, a scheduled ancient monument, which survives as an earthwork.
- 3.13 The landscape park associated with The Moss has also influenced the local landscape and, despite housing development in its northern portion and the loss of the country house, the parkland character largely survives. This is apparent in the number of parkland trees, shelter belts and carriageways around the site of the house as well as a number of surviving historic structures associated with the estate including the home farm complex and the walled garden.
- 3.14 The Staffordshire Historic Farmsteads Survey (2009) project identified 24 historic farmsteads within the ward which retain a degree of their historic plan form. These historic farmsteads contribute to the local rural landscape character of the ward. In fact, 77% of the identified historic farmsteads in the ward are recorded as having high significance, having retained more than 50% or more of their historic form.

Water

- 3.15 The high risk flood areas are shown in Figures 3.2 and 3.3 below. Of particular note is the area within flood zone 3 that passes through Shenstone village.

Figure 3.2: High flood risk areas in Shenstone neighbourhood plan area

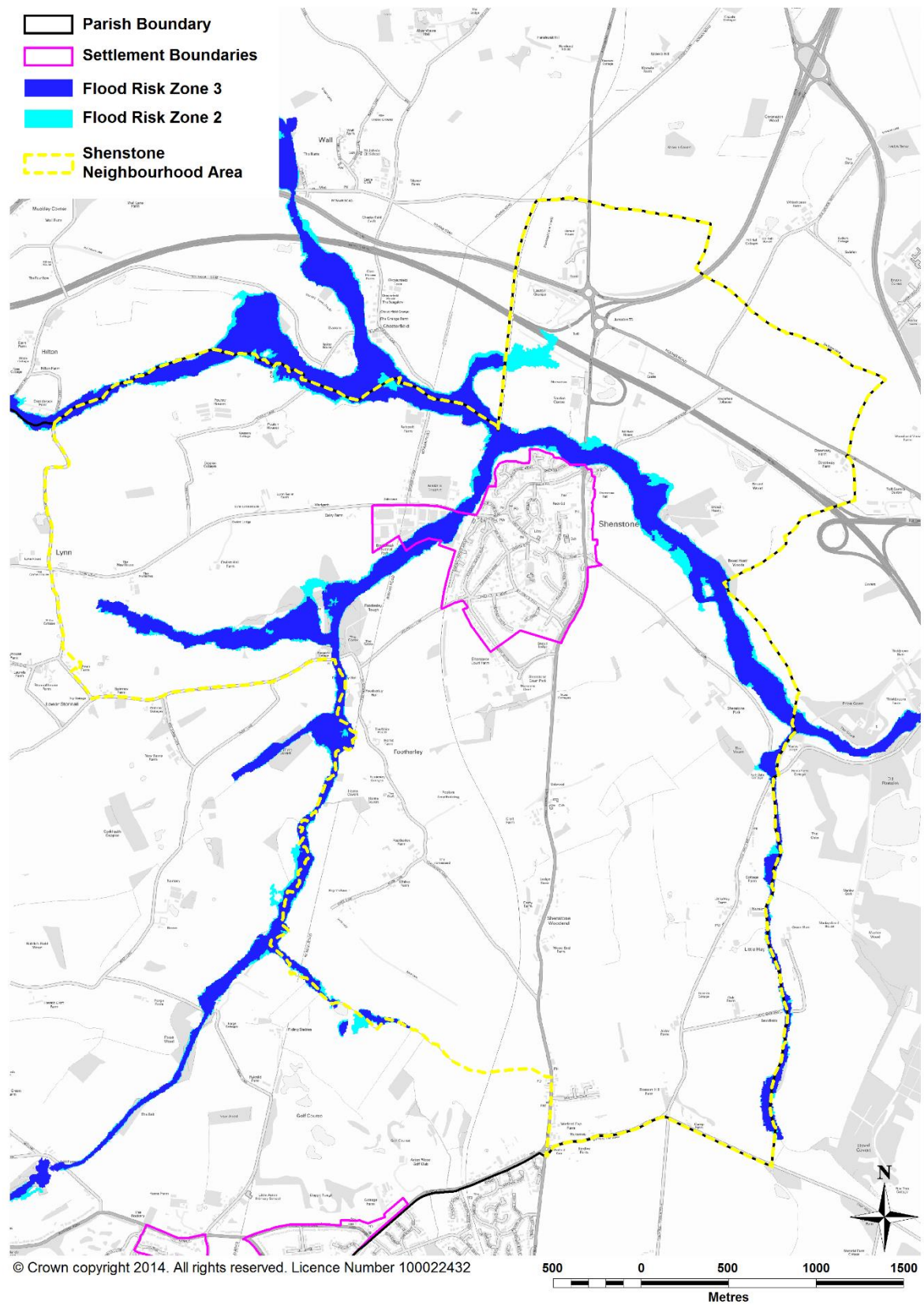
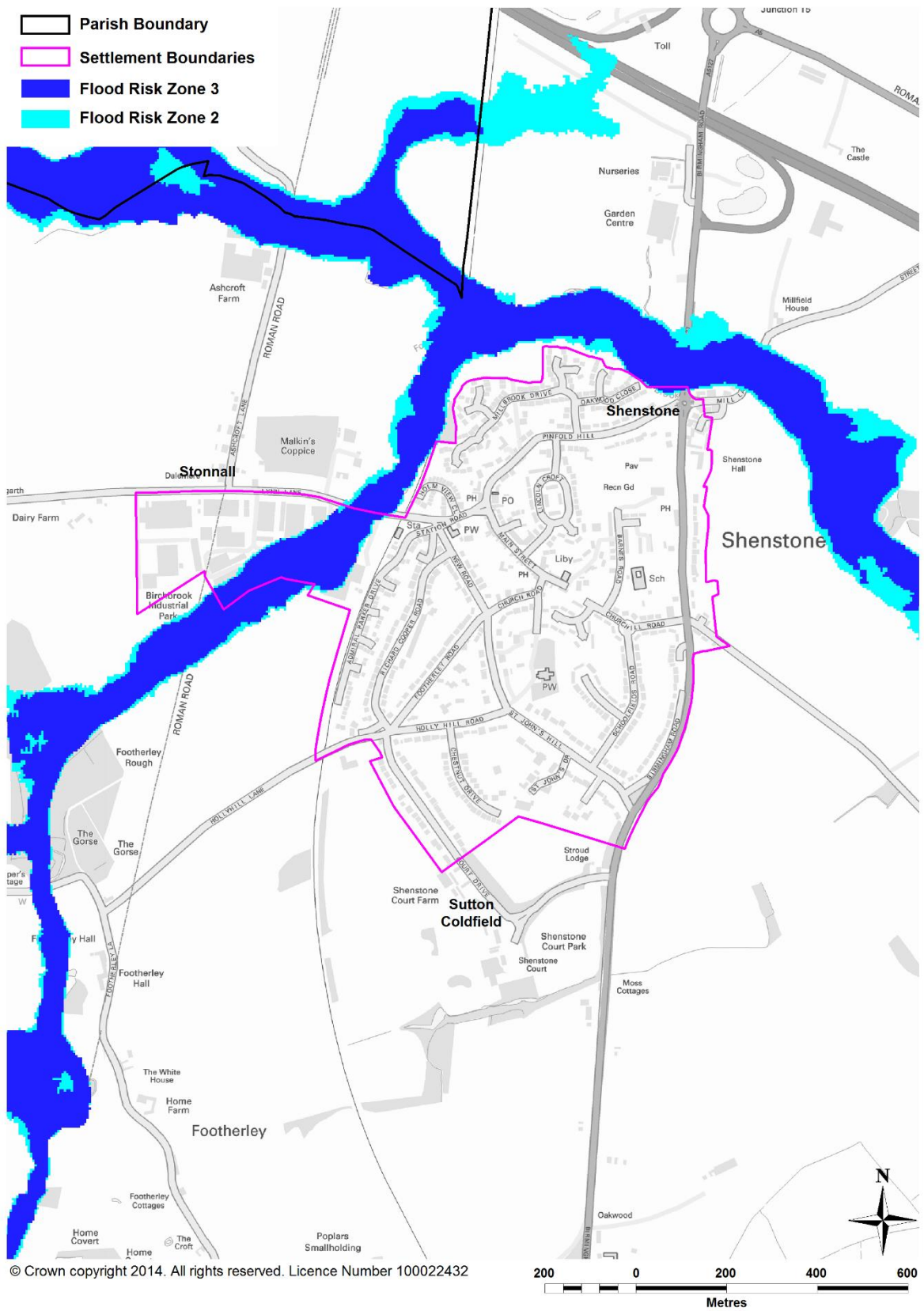


Figure 3.3: High flood risk areas in Shenstone village



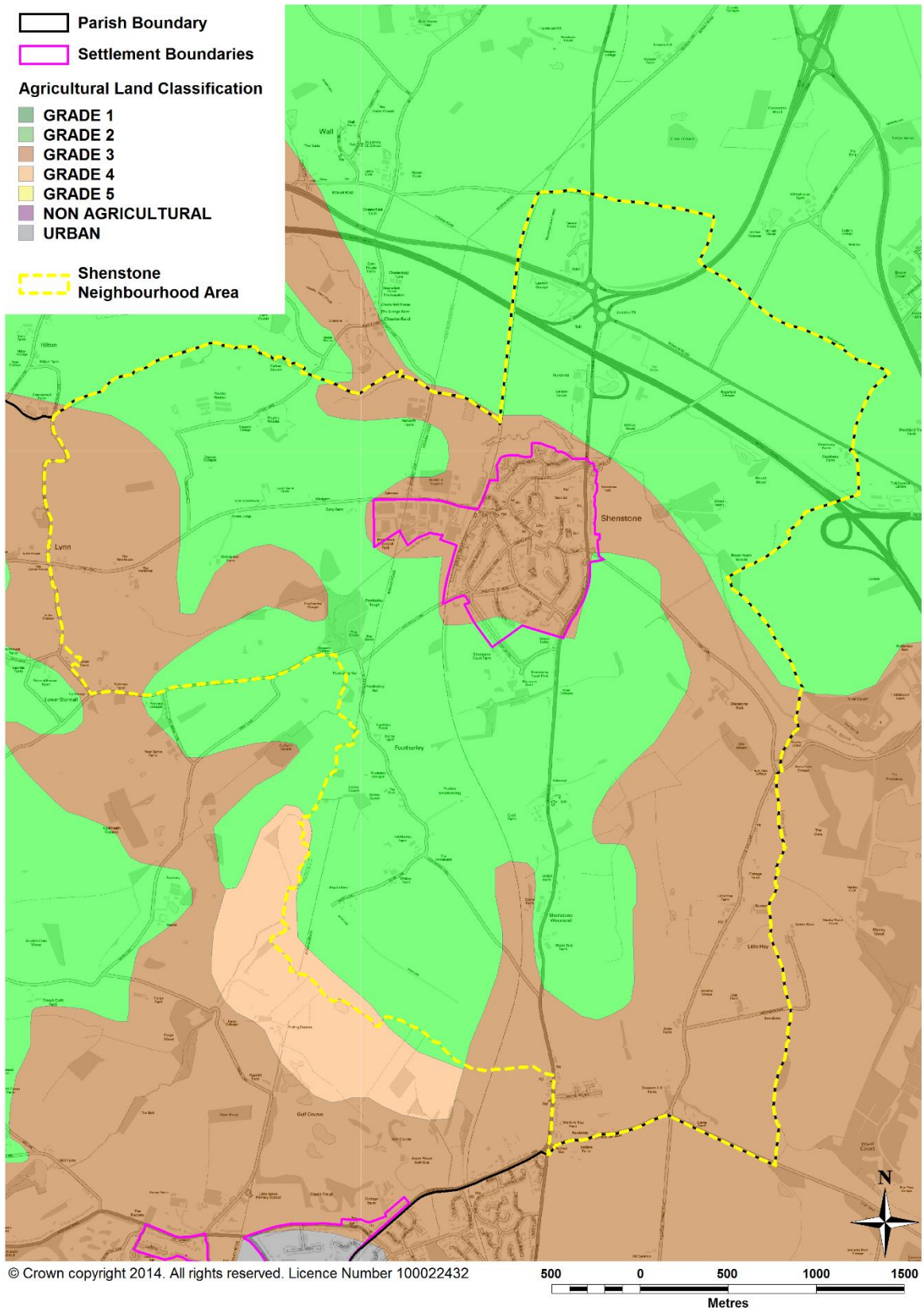
Soils

- 3.16 Much of the main populated parts and surrounding areas of Shenstone ward are characterised by freely draining, slightly acidic, sandy soils. These soils have low fertility¹. Farmed land is particularly vulnerable to leaching of nitrate and pesticides to groundwater.
- 3.17 The large majority of the more rural farmland in the ward has loamy and sandy soil with naturally high groundwater and a peaty surface. This has moderate fertility but shallow groundwater and marginal ditches to most fields mean that the water resource is vulnerable to pollution from nutrients, pesticides and wastes applied to the land.
- 3.18 A small section of land in the west of the ward is classified as freely draining, slightly acid, loamy soil. This has low fertility and is liable to experience groundwater contamination with nitrate.
- 3.19 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland to enable informed choices to be made about its future use within the planning system. Published by Natural England², the ALC provides a classification in 5 grades using a number of criteria including climate (temperature, rainfall, aspect, exposure, frost risk), site (gradient, micro-relief, flood risk) and soil (depth, structure, texture, chemicals, stoniness). The scales ranges from 1 (high quality) to 5 – poorest.
- 3.20 The NPPF (paragraph 112) states that relevant planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.
- 3.21 Figure 3.4 shows that the Shenstone neighbourhood plan area has a mix of predominantly grade 2 and grade 3 agricultural land. The Shenstone village area is almost entirely grade 3 land. It is notable that to the south of the village, the land is grade 2.

¹ Source: Cranfield Soilscape map

² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4424325>

Figure 3.4: Agricultural land classification



Heritage

- 3.22 The ward includes 25 listed buildings, of which 23 are grade II listed and 2 are grade II*. Of this total, 17 are in or adjacent to the Shenstone village settlement area, with the majority being inside the settlement boundary. This is shown in Figures 3.5 and 3.6.
- 3.23 The only listed building at risk is the tower of Old St John's Church, which is grade II* listed.
- 3.24 There is one scheduled ancient monument in the ward, the Shenstone Park moated site.
- 3.25 There are also 24 locally listed buildings.
- 3.26 Part of Shenstone village is subject to conservation area status. This was first designated in 1977, extended in 1989 (land enclosed by Fotherley Road, Holly Hill Road and St. John's Hill) and then again in 1999 (the Trinity Methodist Church and the east side of New Road). It covers the historic core of the village, centred on Church Road and Main Street. Its status is mostly based on the style and architecture of the buildings although the limited amount of public open space, including the trees and hedges, give it a green setting and rural feel.
- 3.27 The following features contribute to the particular character of the Conservation Area:
- Buildings are often vernacular, that is they are not designed by a known architect but are built in a traditional cottage style from locally sourced materials.
 - Buildings are often of two storeys with a horizontal emphasis and are often comparatively close to the roadway with little private frontage.
 - Where curtilage walls are found they are of red brick with blue half rounded coping stones. Historically, there was little ornamentation to the curtilage of most houses.
 - The most prominent building material is red brick; Staffordshire blue clay tiles are the most predominant roofing material.
 - Several types of eaves detailing are to be found including dentilled brick, saw tooth brick and projecting brick courses.
 - Rainwater goods are traditionally cast iron; windows and doors are traditionally painted timber.
 - Lower status houses have casement windows; higher status houses sashes; dormer windows are not a common feature of the village.
 - Lintel treatment of windows varies; stone, wood, and segmental and gauged brick are all to be found.

Figure 3.5: Listed buildings and Conservation Area in Shenstone ward

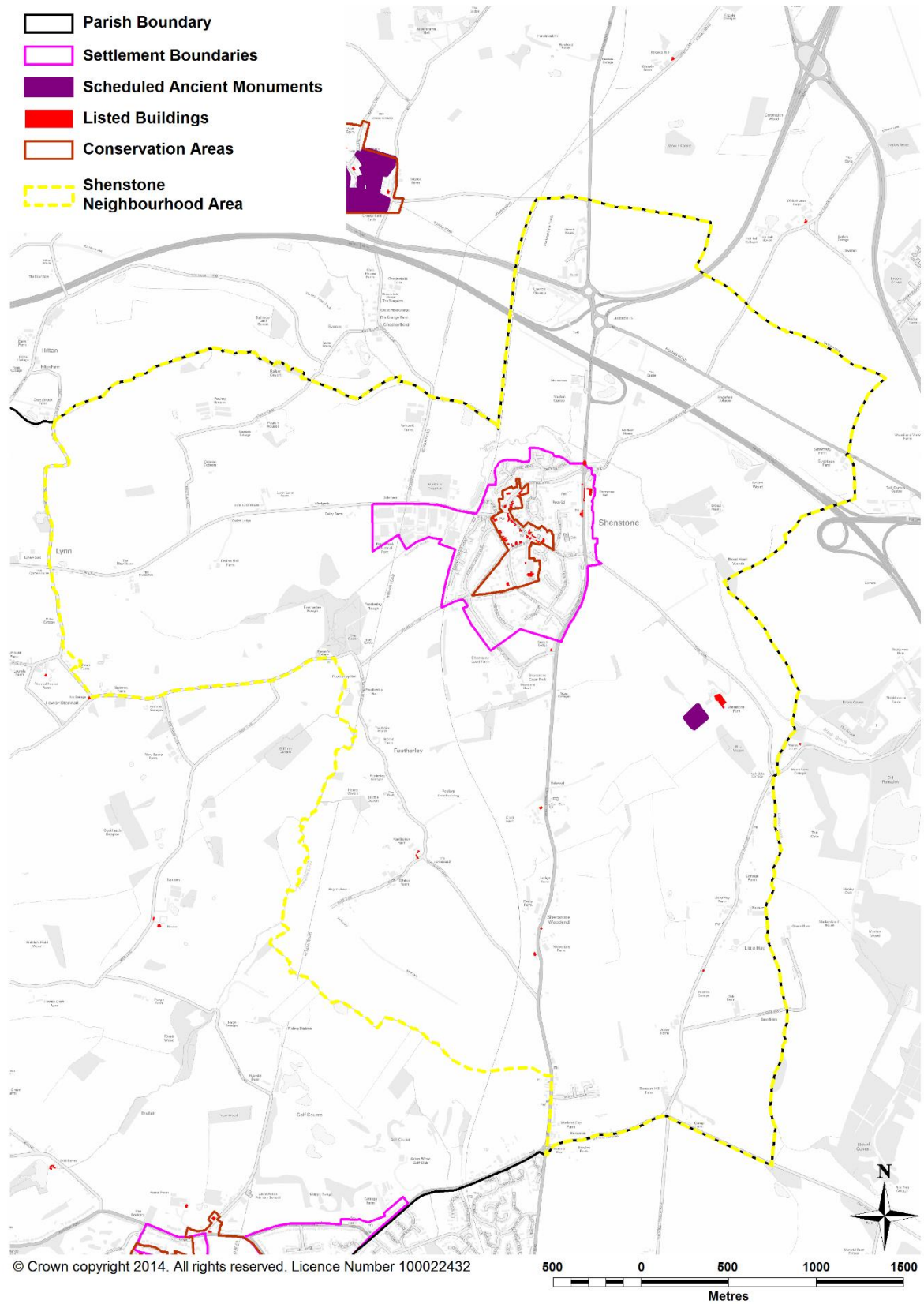
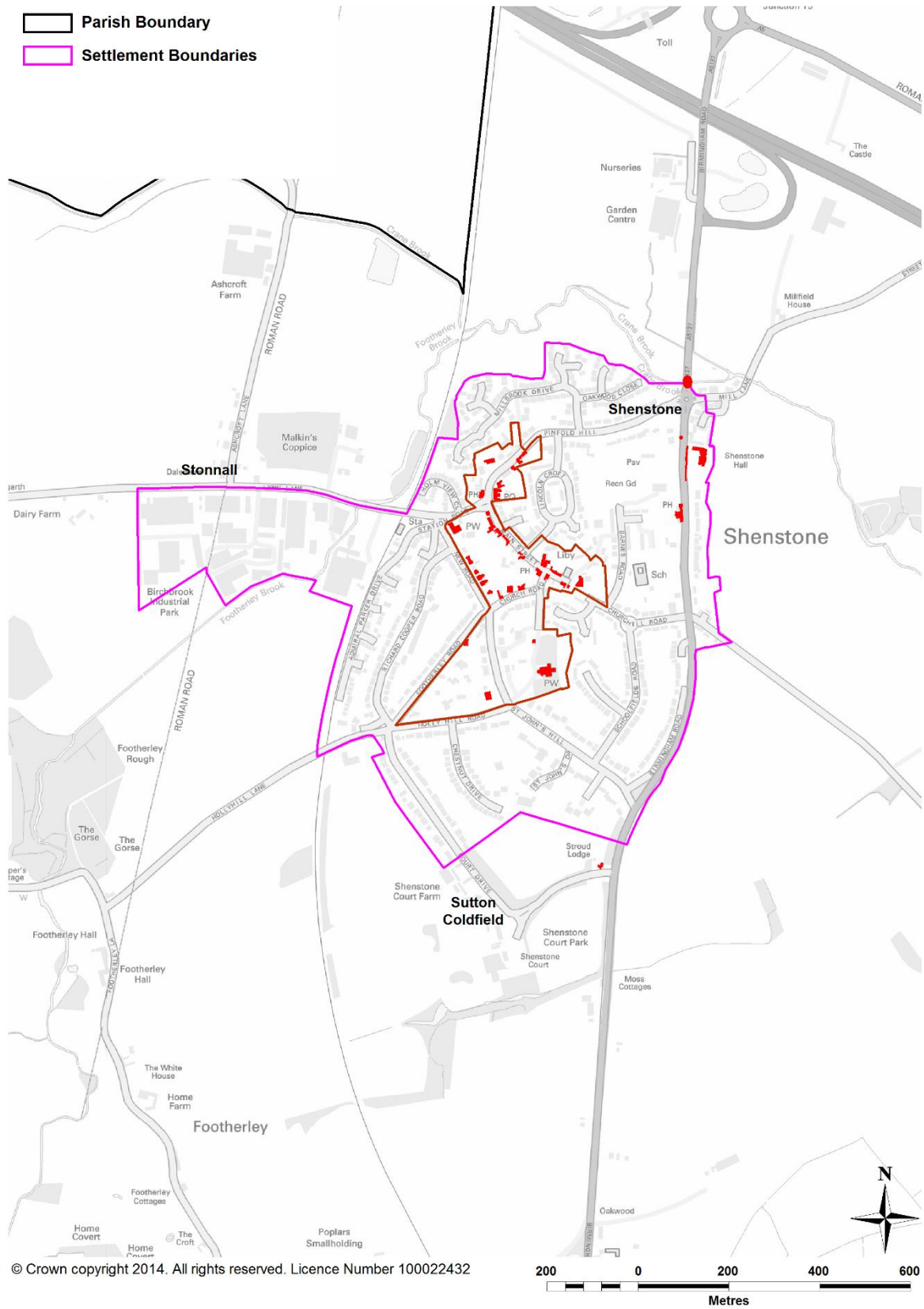


Figure 3.6: Listed buildings and Conservation Area in Shenstone village



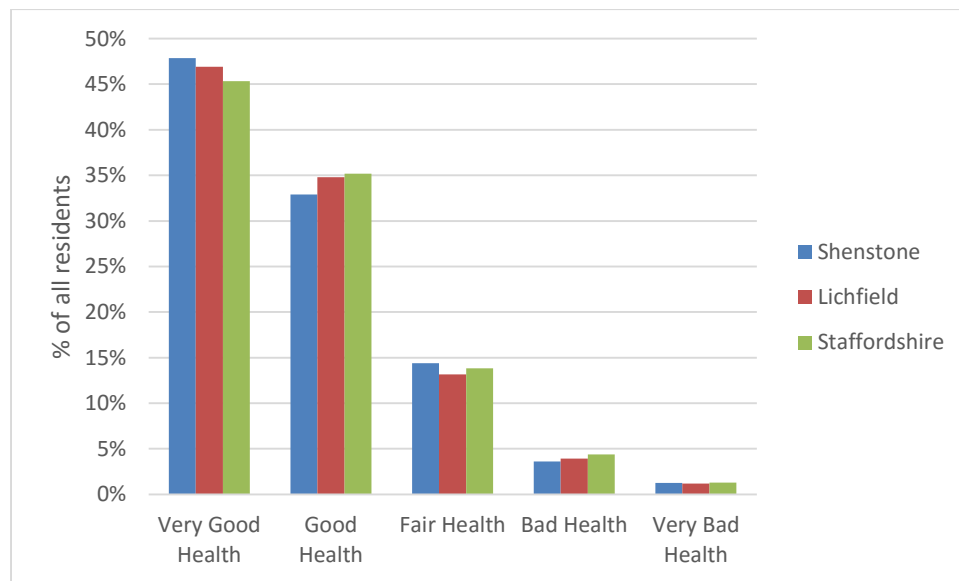
Air and Climate

- 3.28 Generally air pollution is low and most emissions are generated by traffic generated from the M6 Toll Road and the A5 that pass through the ward. There are no Air Quality Management Areas within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Human characteristics

- 3.29 Figure 3.5 shows that the general health of Shenstone residents is good. Those with 'very good' health are above the district and county averages which more than offsets slightly lower proportions of those with 'good' health. Those in bad health represent less than 5% of the population.

Figure 3.5: General health, 2011



Source: 2011 Census

Roads and transport

- 3.30 The local roads serving Shenstone village are small, roads that are inappropriate for carrying significant volumes of traffic.
- 3.31 The major routes through the ward are the M6 Toll Road and the A5. These routes run through the northern and eastern parts of the ward and are sufficiently distant from Shenstone village to have no detrimental impact by way of noise. Birmingham Road runs north-south through the ward and connects the A5/M6 Toll Road junction with Shenstone village and with the Birmingham conurbation to the south.

Infrastructure

- 3.32 Shenstone has the following community infrastructure assets:
- A primary school
 - Church
 - A recreational spaces used for formal and informal recreation
 - A number of pubs

- A local shopping/service centre
- A community hall

Economic characteristics

- 3.33 The 2011 Census recorded that the population of the Shenstone ward was 3,326 persons, living in 1,317 households. Since 2001, the population has grown by 120 persons, or 3.7%. Comparatively, the Lichfield district population grew by 7.4%. Over the same period, the number of households grew by 48 (3.8%) in Shenstone and by 9.9% in Lichfield district. This number will reflect the number of new houses built over the decade and also possibly the sub-division of existing properties into multiple households.
- 3.34 There has been a broad trend in the increase in population and number of households across the wider district but the rate of increase appears to be lower in Shenstone than in Lichfield district as a whole.
- 3.35 A potential barrier for access to housing is house prices – both in relative and absolute terms. In October 2014, the average price of a dwellings (all types) in the WS14 postcode area (covering Shenstone and the surrounding rural areas) was £283,600³. Based on a 95% mortgage, a couple would need a combined income of £89,800, or a single person an income of £77,000, to be able to buy such a property.

³ Source: www.home.co.uk

4 KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

SWOT analysis

- 4.1 Table 4.1 has been informed by the issues identified in the Neighbourhood Plan public workshops and consultation, and the baseline information collected in Section 3.

Table 4.1: SWOT analysis of issues facing Shenstone ward

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Low crime rate, valued school, conservation area, strong community spirit, good range of community activities, choice of pubs and shops, friendly church, access to Birmingham conurbation.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Traffic speed, volume and weight (particularly HGVs) and widespread parking issues, pedestrian vulnerability, infrequent public transport, limited health facilities e.g. doctors' surgery, limited activities for older children, high house prices, lack of affordable housing, poor residential design</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Improve pedestrian safety, implement traffic management, better balanced age distribution, improve contact and service to elderly, encourage use of renewable energy, encourage local businesses, expand community activities, improve network of footpaths</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Climate change, loss of biodiversity, drought or water interruption/contamination, danger from traffic on strategic roads, inappropriate development leading to loss of rural character, loss of services such as buses, shops, loss of agricultural land and local food self sufficiency, loss of local distinctiveness through cumulative loss of local vernacular</p>

Key issues

- 4.2 There are a number of sustainability issues and challenges facing the ward. While Shenstone ward offers a high quality environment to residents and local businesses, the Neighbourhood Plan will need to manage and seek to resolve a series of issues over its lifetime if the ward is to continue to be successful while respecting its rural setting and the 'feel' of Shenstone village.
- 4.3 In the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan (and as a consequence a lack of vision and strategy for Shenstone), there will be fewer opportunities to address the issues and challenges facing the ward, as well as contributing to a reduction in the potential benefit to the community.

Table 4.2: Challenges and impacts of not having a neighbourhood plan

Challenges facing Shenstone ward	Effect of not having a neighbourhood plan
Problem of traffic speed, volume and weight coming through Shenstone village	Residents lives will be further blighted and safety will be worsened by HGV movements
Viability of primary school	School roll reduces and therefore the school faces the threat of closure
Scale of housing growth	District Plan policies are strategic in nature but do require growth of settlements such as Shenstone therefore could be exposed to speculative applications for major housing
Lack of affordable housing for residents	No suitable sites for housing for local people would be delivered
Supporting an ageing population	Potential issues of care/support/transport and a lack of local homes suitable for the needs of older people
Inadequate and potentially reducing public transport options	Increased dependence on the private car and increasing isolation for those unable to afford a car
Support and flexibility for local businesses	The needs of businesses to grow and change may be restricted by current policies
Infrastructure improvements such as roads, crossings, parking, community facilities	Funding for infrastructure requirements may not arise
Pressures for development in countryside	District Plan policies are strategic in nature but do require growth of settlements which could therefore be ad-hoc and unplanned
Loss of agricultural land to development	Could result in unnecessary loss of agricultural land due to unplanned development coming forward through speculative applications
Poor access to services and facilities	Increased dependence on the private car to access services and inability to do so for those unable to afford a car Could result in the loss of the shops in the local centre with no alternative convenience retail provision.
Need to maintain and enhance the high quality natural environment, wildlife networks and biodiversity of the parish	Could result in unnecessary impacts on biodiversity due to unplanned development coming forward through speculative applications
Need to protect and enhance the historic buildings and environment of the parish	Could result in unnecessary impacts on heritage assets due to unplanned development coming forward through speculative applications

5 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK (STAGE A4)

5.1 In order to undertake the Strategic Environmental Assessment process for the Neighbourhood Plan, it is necessary to identify environmental sustainability objectives and indicators to enable an assessment to be made of the emerging options and allow for recommendations and mitigation measures to be proposed. The environmental sustainability objectives have emerged through the following considerations:

- through the review of documents listed in Section 2
- as identified in the baseline section (Section 3)
- to help address sustainability issues known locally
- to help address the 'weaknesses' outlined in the SWOT analysis (Section 4)

5.2 The proposed sustainability objectives and indicators (SEA Framework) for the SEA of the Neighbourhood Plan are as shown in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1: Environmental sustainability objectives and indicators for the Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan

Sustainability theme	Objectives	Indicators
1/Env	To preserve and enhance the natural beauty of Shenstone in terms of its: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - geology, landform, water systems and climate - ancient woodlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area of Ancient Woodland within the parish. - Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. - Number of developments in 'highly vulnerable' or 'more vulnerable' flood risk areas. - Loss of any of these features through grant of planning consent.
2/Env	To protect and enhance the biodiversity of the parish, its wildlife habitats and species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area of priority habitats within the parish - Condition of ancient woodland in parish
3/Env	To protect the identity and local distinctiveness of Shenstone village and to enhance the village streetscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of listed buildings in built-up area. - Number of applications for listed building consent. - Number of applications in Conservation Area.
4/Env	To ensure that the community has access to high quality open space and recreation opportunities in order to facilitate a healthy lifestyle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Census figures on long term illness and general health. - Number/area of green spaces within walking distance of homes. - Number of formal recreation facilities within walking distance of homes.
5/Env	To protect the landscape setting of Shenstone village through use of land that does not impact on views of local significance and focusing development on previously developed land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of views of value, including Shenstone Church. - Development on previously developed land.

Sustainability theme	Objectives	Indicators
6/Env	To improve movement by non-car modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traffic movements through Shenstone village. - Number and distance of new footpaths/cyclepaths. - Number of rail passengers using Shenstone station. - Number of bus passengers accessing buses from Shenstone

5.3 The plan also has the following other sustainability themes:

Table 5.2: Social and economic sustainability objectives and indicators for the Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan

Sustainability theme	Objectives	Indicators
4/Soc	To ensure that housing firstly addresses the local needs of Shenstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mix of housing built by dwelling size. - Number of people with a local connection on the Housing Register that are newly housed. - Number of affordable homes completed.
5/Econ	To maximise the potential of existing employment and support the needs of local employers/service providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of businesses retained. - Number of new businesses in the parish. - Number of local start-ups. - Data on employment levels. - Number of businesses and dwellings with access to superfast broadband.
7/Soc	To ensure that the community has a high quality and healthy lifestyle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Census figures on long term illness and general health. - Number/area of green spaces within walking distance of homes. - Number of formal recreation facilities within walking distance of homes.
8/Econ	To improve safe movement around the parish and to key service centres by a range of modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levels of HGV traffic passing through Shenstone village. - Number and distance of new footpaths/cyclepaths. - Speed data from police. - Number of safe crossing points in the village.
9/Soc	To ensure that the community has adequate access to the key services it needs, including health facilities, convenience shops, and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distance the population of the parish live from key services. - Availability of regular public transport. - Number of shops in village.
10/Soc	To ensure the provision of a range of community facilities that provide for the needs of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of community facilities within the parish.

6 ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY OF SITE-BASED APPROACH AND POLICIES

Approach to deriving preferred spatial strategy for housing allocations

- 6.1 In the Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan process, the starting point for deriving the preferred spatial strategy for allocating housing sites was the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This identifies that there are three aspects to sustainability – social, economic and environmental – and that there is a need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:
- **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
 - **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 6.2 Whilst recognising that the SEA process requires only environmental impacts to be considered, it is important to consider the relative balance between all three of these roles and whether the resultant mix represents a sustainable approach.
- 6.3 A bespoke sustainability appraisal framework was assembled to assess the sites against recognised sustainability criteria that also encompassed the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. This appraisal has been applied to all of the sites submitted and the information presented to the community as part of the ongoing engagement process in order to understand which sites are the most sustainable and are best able to deliver against the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.4 Table 5.1 shows the proposed environmental assessment criteria. For each criterion, the assessment will give a score on the following scale:
- Dark Green – Strongly positive
 - Light Green – Slightly positive
 - Amber - Neutral
 - Light red – Slightly positive
 - Dark red – Strongly negative
- 6.5 A commentary will also be provided for each criterion on each site in order to provide more context to the ‘five-point’ assessment.

Table 5.1: Environmental sustainability criteria used to assess possible site allocations

Environmental objective	Assessment criteria
1/Env. To preserve and enhance the natural beauty of Shenstone in terms of its: - geology, landform, water systems and climate - ancient woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the site impact on any ancient woodland? Does the site result in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land? Sites within flood zone 3 should be eliminated. Sites in flood zone 1 should be prioritised over sites in flood zone 2 From local knowledge has there ever been flooding on the site?
2/Env. To protect and enhance the biodiversity of the parish, its wildlife habitats and species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the site impact on areas of environmental sensitivity, e.g. SSSIs, biodiversity action plan areas, local/county wildlife sites, TPOs?
3/Env. To protect the identity and local distinctiveness of Shenstone village and to enhance the village streetscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the site in or adjacent to a Conservation Area? Will the site impact on any scheduled ancient monuments? Are there any listed buildings on or very close to the site?
4/Env. To ensure that the community has access to high quality open space and recreation opportunities in order to facilitate a healthy lifestyle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there potential to accommodate community uses on the site, e.g. allotments? Has the promoter suggested this?
5/Env. To protect the landscape setting of Shenstone village through use of land that does not impact on views of local significance and focusing development on previously developed land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the site in open countryside/will it encroach unacceptably on open countryside? Is the site within the AONB? Will the site have a detrimental impact on the landscape? Will the site impact on areas of designations of value to the landscape, e.g. ancient woodland, TPOs? Is the site adjacent to, or separate, from, the existing settlement boundary? What is the existing use of the site and is it in a visually poor state? Would development have an impact on views from existing parts of the village? Is the site greenfield or brownfield? Is the site in an existing viable use?
6/Env. To improve movement by non-car modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the centre of the site within walking distance of the railway station? Is the centre of the site within walking distance of the nearest bus stop? Is the centre of the site within walking distance of the nearest shops (either village centre or Birmingham Road)? Will the site create access to footpaths/cycle paths that give access to services or open countryside? Will the site impact on any existing footpaths or other rights of way? Does a site, by virtue of its location, cause an unacceptable impact on congestion on the existing highway network? Could the access point create safety or congestion issues on the existing highway network?

Assessment

Strongly positive
Slightly positive
Neutral
Slightly negative
Strongly negative

Notes

* This is based on the following guidance provided by the Institute of Highways and Transportation:

	Distance from	
	Facilities - shops, bus stop, rail station	Commuting / school
Desirable	200 metres	500 metres
Acceptable	400 metres	1,000 metres
Preferred maximum	800 metres	2,000 metres

Source: Guidelines for Journeys on Foot (IHT 2000)

7 NEXT STEPS (STAGE A5)

- 7.1 This Scoping Report will be subject to consultation for a 5-week period. Following the close of consultation, all comments will be considered and will help influence the draft SEA Report.
- 7.2 As the Neighbourhood Plan is developed, the strategy and policies will be tested against these SEA objectives, to identify appropriate policies for inclusion in the Plan. All realistic policy options will be appraised against the SEA Framework set out in Section 5 of this report, in order to ensure that the policies chosen for the Shenstone Neighbourhood Plan are the most sustainable, given all realistic alternatives.

