





## Executive Summary

- This Study assesses the rural settlements within the District in terms of sustainability. For simplicity, this has been split in to two main categories - services and facilities within a settlement (e.g. post office and school), and accessibility to other services (e.g. employment and hospitals). This study updates the previous version carried out in 2011 and is the first to be undertaken since the adoption of the Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029.
- Four settlements score highly in both categories due to a higher number of services and facilities within the settlement and a half hourly bus route serving wider needs. These settlements are Armitage with Handsacre, Shenstone, Fazeley and Little Aston.
- Four settlements score highly in terms of services and facilities within the village, but did not score as highly in accessibility due to the lack of a half hourly bus service. These settlements are Alrewas, Fradley, Whittington and Stonnall. In the previous study, Whittington received higher scores due to a half hourly bus service, however the timetable has been altered to hourly which significantly reduces its score in terms of accessibility. In the same way, following alterations to timetables announced in September 2015 routes serving Fradley, Alrewas and Kings Bromley, whilst still regular, can no longer be considered hourly throughout the day.
- The settlements of Hopwas and Streethay score highly in terms of accessibility due to their position on the edge of larger settlements and thus benefiting from a half hourly bus route. However, in terms of services and facilities within the settlement itself, they score poorly.
- It should be noted that this study captures a "moment in time" and some settlements are likely score more highly in the future as a result of new housing development. For instance, under the Local Plan Strategy, the Concept Statements for the Strategic Development Allocations at Fradley and Streethay include the provision of new services and facilities as well as improved public transport links. (See Appendices D-E, Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029).

1	Aims of the Study	1
2	Background to Rural Sustainability	2
3	Definition of Rural Settlements	7
4	Settlement Profiles	8
5	Definition of Rural Services	19
6	Delivery of Rural Services	21
7	Inter-relationship Between Rural Settlements & Urban Areas	22
8	Primary Services, Facilities & Jobs	24
9	Key Local Services & Facilities	26
10	Rural Accessibility	32
11	Sustainable Rural Settlement Summary	36
■	<b>Appendices</b>	
	Sustainability Matrix: Access, Services & Facilities	40



## 1 Aims of the Study

**1.1** This report has been prepared to assist in the development of policies designed to promote sustainable development within Lichfield District. Following the adoption of the Local Plan Strategy (2008-2029) in February 2015, this document will inform the preparation of the Local Plan Allocations Document which complements the strategy. In particular this may assist with the consideration of potential development locations within the District's rural areas, having regard to principles of sustainability.

**1.2** This is a revision to the Rural Settlement Sustainability Study published in July 2011, containing updates where relevant and amendments to local services and facilities if they have changed.

**1.3** Chapter 4 of the Local Plan Strategy (The Spatial Strategy for Lichfield District) states that new rural housing will be directed mainly towards five identified key rural settlements Arewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley, Shenstone and Whittington. Smaller villages, known as "other rural" areas will accommodate housing to meet local needs, mainly within identified village boundaries, unless supported as a rural exception site. Under the settlement hierarchy set out in Core Policy 1 (Table 4.1) the key rural settlements will take 16% of the district's housing needs including 440 yet to be decided by the Site Allocations Document. Fradley is identified as a key rural settlement, however it fits separately into the hierarchy, due to the Strategic Development Allocation (SDA) on the former airfield. This SDA alone will take 12% of the district's housing needs and subsequently Fradley will not take any of the 16% of housing allocated to the key rurals.

**1.4** Chapter 8 (Homes for the Future) contains more detail on housing delivery, in particular Core Policy 6 (table 8.1) which includes the projected housing numbers for key rural settlements as well as setting the policy context for development in "other rural" areas.

**1.5** The purpose of this study is therefore, to assess the sustainability of rural settlements within the District primarily using:

- Data available on key facilities and services present within settlements - i.e. post office, GP surgery, pharmacy, dentist, primary school, community hall, pub and shops;
- Accessibility to other key services and facilities by means of public transport;
- Accessibility to employment, leisure, retail locations and hospitals by public transport.

**1.6** In addition to providing evidence which will assist in the development of a spatial strategy for the District, this Study will also assist in the development of other strategies to improve the overall quality of life for the communities that live within them.

**1.7** In order to keep the process simple, a scoring system has been applied to settlements based on the presence of key services and facilities, as well as accessibility by public transport to other centres for employment, retail, health and leisure (see appendices). This scoring system has not been altered since the previous study and continues to recognise the importance of both of these elements.

## 2 Background to Rural Sustainability

**2.1** The concept of sustainability can encompass many elements, but in the context of this study it focuses on the ability of residents within Lichfield District's rural settlements to access employment, retail, health and leisure/entertainment facilities (within walking distance or public transport) and the extent to which certain key facilities, such as shops, schools, doctors etc. are present within the settlement themselves. This is based on the assumption that better access will minimise the need to travel, contribute to community life, and minimise social exclusion.

**2.2** It is also recognised that many other factors impact on rural community life in terms of quality of life and degree of sustainability of individual settlements, including quantity and quality of the local environment, incidental open space, green spaces and corridors, play areas etc. However, to keep the study manageable it concentrates on a number of key services and facilities. It is recognised that this study does not consider the quality of services or facilities: for example in terms of community halls, a score is awarded if such a building is present but there is no further assessment on quality, type and size of the building in relation to local community requirements.

**2.3** The work carried out as part of this assessment will assist in informing the potential locations for development outside the urban areas of Lichfield and Burntwood. In addition, it will inform considerations that impact on the sustainability of rural services and facilities and help to develop policies to improve them.

### National Framework

**2.4** In March 2012, the Government introduced the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which replaced the Planning Policy Statements cited in the 2011 update (PPS 4 - Delivering Sustainable Development and PPS 7 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth). Relevant sections of the NPPF include the following:

**2.5** Introductory section "Achieving Sustainable Development" Paragraph 7 states that there are three dimensions to sustainable economic development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles...

**2.6** Section 3 "Supporting a prosperous rural economy - Paragraph 28

**2.7** Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in

appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and

- promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

**2.8** Paragraph 55: To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

## County Level

### 2.9 Local Transport Plan (LTP)

**2.10** [The LTP 2011](#) seeks to enable growth and regeneration in rural communities in the following ways:

- Ensuring the transport network contributes to the attractiveness and vibrancy of villages
- Maintaining and expanding Staffordshire's public transport network including tailored services and travel incentives
- Reducing social exclusion faced by residents
- Maintaining socially important bus routes and minimum rural service levels (where budgets allow)
- Improving bus services by working with operators to maximise integration of services via better timings and connectivity
  - Increase bus patronage and access to town centres
  - Support Public Transport Partnerships and where feasible create new ones

**2.11** [Our County, Our Vision: A Sustainable Community Strategy for Staffordshire 2008-2023](#) has been prepared by the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership. It is a fifteen year vision to improve the quality of life for all our people, by increasing economic prosperity, improving local services, and developing partnership working. A number of priorities relate directly to the sustainability of rural settlements:

- Improving access to everyday facilities for all communities but particularly for those without access to a car;
- Reducing the reliance on the car by encouraging the use of public transport (also an objective of the Lichfield Strategic Partnership)

- Empowering the County's older people to live independently and have greater choice of and access to the services they need and want
- Every community (both urban and rural), will be able to make use of an effective, accessible and affordable transport network,

### 2.12 Staffordshire Rural Strategy

**2.13** The Staffordshire Rural Strategy follows on from the Rural Declaration, which is a multi stakeholder agreement signed in March 2013 (the District Council was one of the signatories). It identifies that residents are concerned by losses in rural services, the availability of housing to meet their circumstances and in some cases, increasing levels of isolation through poor public transport. The strategy comprises three overarching thematic areas: Environment, Economy and Communities

**2.14** The Communities Section seeks to deliver "vibrant, thriving and resilient rural communities in which key services are accessible to all; and standards of living, wellbeing and quality of life are high". This will involve the following actions:

- Support the use of local services such as shops, post offices and GP surgeries in order to ensure their viability and, where necessary, consider alternative means of local delivery
- Provide opportunities for residents to physically access services, whether that be taking them to the point of access, or bringing the services to them
- Expand awareness and use of services and facilities that can be accessed remotely, promoting independent living and ensuring that the needs of vulnerable residents are taken into account

### District Level

**2.15** [The Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029](#) (adopted 17th February 2015) was prepared in accordance with the NPPF and community plans to help shape the way in which the physical, economic, social and environmental characteristics of Lichfield District will change up to 2029. Based on robust and up to date evidence, it sets the strategic context for development and will be complemented by the Local Plan Allocations Document, which will be informed by this document. Its overarching Spatial Portrait (Core Policy 1) directs growth towards the most accessible and sustainable locations, beginning with the urban centres, followed by the "Key Rural Settlements" (namely Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Fradley, Fazely, Shenstone,Whittington) and the areas defined as "Other Rural" which includes the remaining 15 settlements identified in this study.

**2.16** In terms of housing growth, CP1 allocates 16% of the housing requirement (10030 dwellings) between the Key Rural Settlements, with the exception of Fradley, which will take 1250 homes on the Strategic Development Allocation (SDA). The Local Plan Allocations Document will allocate a further 440 homes between the six settlements. With regard to local services, CP1 seeks to make the Key Rurals a focus for rural employment creation and to retain local services and facilities to meet the needs of the local population as well as outlying villages. The smaller villages will

accommodate housing to meet local needs, mainly within identified village boundaries, unless supported as a rural exception site. They will be the focus of rural employment diversification but will look to key rurals for local services and facilities.

**2.17** A number of other policies are also of relevance to this study including the following:

- Strategic Priority 2: Rural Communities
- Core Policy 3 Delivering Sustainable Development
- Core Policy 4: Delivering our Infrastructure
- Core Policy 5: Sustainable Transport
- Core Policy 10: Healthy and Safe Lifestyles
- Policy Rural 1: Rural Areas
- Policy Rural 2: Other Rural Settlements

### **Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document**

**2.18** The draft Rural Development SPD (2015) provides further detail to the Local Plan Strategy policies relating to development within the rural areas of the district and further supports its drive towards rural economic growth and the long term sustainability of its settlements. Its chapters cover the most pertinent issues facing rural communities in the current climate, namely Housing, Services and Facilities, Economy and Tourism and Recreation and Leisure. Chapter 3 highlights the correlation between the retention of key services and the health and well being of rural communities. In planning terms it makes the requirement that Changes of Use which result in the loss or reduction of a service or facility will need to be justified in line with its guidance section. In cases where the loss or reduction of a service is considered unavoidable then innovative ways of delivering altered services will be considered acceptable where these are justified and have no detrimental impact on the functioning of the settlement. This may take the form of a relocation of the post office to within the adjacent general store, where the opening times and accessibility is retained (as seen recently in both Alrewas and Shenstone).

**2.19** The SPD also highlights the 2011 Localism Act which enables communities a greater opportunity to safeguard community assets, including a Community Right to Acquire, the Community Right to Build and the Community Assets Register. The Localism Act also introduced Neighbourhood Planning, which allows communities to shape new development in their local areas by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans or development orders which are locally distinctive. They will be able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built; have their say on what those new buildings should look like; decide which green spaces should be protected; or grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see through a new Neighbourhood Development Order. For more information visit [www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/communityrights](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/communityrights)

### **Enhanced Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Lichfield District 2012**

**2.20** [Joint Strategic Needs Assessments \(JSNA\)](#) produced by the Lichfield District Strategic Partnership. identifies the overarching issues in relation to health and wellbeing needs and inequalities in the local population. It recognises that large parts of the district are rural and people living in these areas may experience rural deprivation and have difficulty accessing services, and be at a greater risk of issues such as fuel poverty. Lichfield City and most of Burntwood are served

by fibre optic cable (super fast broadband) but many rural areas are served by old copper wire – variable speed and quality. ‘Slow spots’ are identified in parts of Whittington, Fradley, Alrewas, Shenstone Wood End and more rural areas .

**2.21** Broadband can impact on access to services and information, education, work opportunities as well as the need for travel. The Superfast Staffordshire project seeks to address this by delivering superfast broadband to 95% of premises by 2017. It's central objective is to boost the economy and ensure residents can access a range of goods and services, whether it be for work, leisure or health. This is why we are investing over £32 million (£8.06 million from Staffordshire County Council, £9.12 million from the Government's Broadband Delivery UK – BDUK and £14.77 million from BT). For those premises not included in the fibre footprint we are aiming to improve broadband speeds using alternative technologies.

### 3 Definition of Rural Settlements

**3.1** Although a wide range of population figures have been used by different government agencies for specific purposes, a review of urban and rural definitions undertaken for a consortium of government agencies in 2001 recommended the use of the 10,000 threshold and this has been upheld by the *The 2011 Rural-Urban Classification For Small Area Geographies* (DEFRA/DCLG). The distinction between a 'village' and a 'town' is also based on settlement form rather than just population size, economic function or historic role. Density profile rules in the document are cited from publication *Urban and Rural Area Definitions for Policy Purposes in England and Wales*: (Bibby and Brindley, 2013) which imply that where a dwelling forms part of a town there must be at least 500 other dwellings within 800 metres. Where property forms part of a village, there need only be another 35 dwellings within 800 metres (although there are likely to be far more). In the time elapsed between the 2001 and 2011 census, nationally, very few settlements changed from being in the village class to the town class.

**3.2** Having regard to the DEFRA classifications and Core Policy 1 of the Local Plan Strategy, Lichfield and Burntwood are considered the only two urban areas, with the rest of the District considered rural. However, it is recognised that some are closely linked and influenced by their location adjacent to urban areas and thus their characteristics are different. In particular, Fazeley exhibits close links with Tamworth, Streethay with Lichfield, and Little Aston with Sutton Coldfield and Birmingham. This is also recognised in the Local Plan Strategy.

**3.3** This study focuses on service and facility provision within settlements themselves and the availability of public transport to services, facilities, employment, retail and leisure locations as well as hospitals.

**3.4** During the preparation of previous Rural Sustainability Studies, all settlements where 50 or more dwellings were present were initially considered as part of the Study. However, it soon emerged early on in the process that in relation to some of the smaller settlements, it was not easy to define a clear boundary due to the dispersed nature of the housing. In addition, because the majority had few or no facilities, were not accessible by public transport, or had limited public transport available, they would score poorly in any event. This study is not intended to ignore other settlements and hamlets within the rural area in terms of addressing sustainability issues, but is focused on those settlements defined as having a settlement boundary in the Local Plan. These settlements vary in size from Armitage with Handsacre with 2,027 dwellings to Upper Longdon with 135 (2011 Census). Those settlements excluded from further study due to their size are Wall, Shenstone Woodend, Hints, Canwell, Whittington Heath, Chorley, Haunton, Farewell, Gentleshaw, Pipe Ridware, Mavesyn Ridware, Thorpe Constantine, Fisherwick and Weeford.

**3.5** Three of the District's larger, more complex settlements, Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley with Mile Oak and Bonehill and Little Aston with Streetly village, have more than one focus for local services and facilities. When walk time distances were applied to the individual service centres within these settlements, it was evident that the majority of the settlement was accessible within 5-10 minutes walk time. It was decided that these settlements should be considered as a single entity for the purpose of the Study.



## 4 Settlement Profiles

**4.1** All data is taken from the 2011 Census, and it is acknowledged that whilst this is largely up to date, a small element of change may have taken place in some areas since that time. Each profile is based on the Super Output layers, which provide the most localised census information on the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) website](#). The ONS areas are different from village boundaries so some outlying dwellings may be included, however these are usually only minor additions to the figures. For maps of the census areas used in these settlement profiles, please see the appendices.

### Demographic Changes and Economic Activity

**4.2** In all settlements a common trend is an ageing population (in line with national trends), and within the rural settlements there is a lower proportion of people between the ages of 16 - 29, something which may reflect the services and jobs on offer, as well as affordability of homes. However, it should also be noted that the definition of economic activity is increasingly open to interpretation and many people are working longer. The 2011 census includes the 60-64 age bracket specifically for analysis, which is reflected below, thereby constituting a move away from the previous RSSS methodology of combining the entire 60+ age range into one cohort. This is partly due to the extension of state (and employee pension) age thresholds with the state pension age (SPA) now 65 for men and in the process of being increased from 60 to 65 for women. The Pensions Act 2011 will raise the SPA to 66 for both men and women by 6 October 2020. Under the Pensions Act 2007, the SPA for both men and women will be raised to 68 between 2044 and 2046. Under the Pensions Act 2014, the Government brought forward the rise in State Pension age to 67 for both men and women to 6 April 2028. Furthermore, whilst the ONS presently recognises economically active population as being 16-64, it is also acknowledged that this may change and in any case many people will continue to work beyond pensionable age.

Alrewas		Age profile	
<b>Population</b>	2,582	<b>0 - 15</b>	18.6%
<b>Number of dwellings</b>	1,184	<b>16 - 29</b>	10.9%
<b>Housing tenure</b>	82.3% owner occupied	<b>30 - 44</b>	16.7%
<b>Average number of cars per household</b>	1.58	<b>45 - 59</b>	22.1%
<b>Transport links</b>	Adjacent to the A38 and A513 with good links to Lichfield and Burton, including Lichfield Trent Valley Station	<b>60 - 64</b>	8.45%
		<b>65+</b>	23.45%

**Profile:** Alrewas is the third largest rural settlement in the District, and is located to the north of Lichfield adjacent to the A38 between Lichfield and Burton on Trent. It is a historic settlement that also contains a wide range of services and facilities. It is the only rural settlement that contains a petrol station. According to the 2001 Census 25% of the population are over 60 years of age, however, there is a significant proportion of children aged 0-15 within the village. A large part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.



Alrewas	Age profile

Table 4.1

Armitage with Handsacre		Age Profile	
Population	4,880	0 - 15	17.8%
Number of dwellings	2,027	16 - 29	14.9%
Housing tenure	78.5% owner occupied	30 - 44	21.2%
Average number of cars per household	1.44	45 - 59	21.2%
Transport links	Good road links to Rugeley, Lichfield and Stafford	60 - 64	7.02%
		65+	17.8%

**Profile:** Armitage with Handsacre is the largest rural settlement in the District, after Lichfield and Burntwood. It is comprised of two settlements that have merged together over time so that the services and facilities serve both communities. A major local employer is Armitage Shanks (Ideal Standard) meaning that local people can walk to work. There is a more balanced population structure than in other villages and a lower number of cars on average. The canal corridor is covered by a Conservation Area.

Table 4.2

Colton		Age Profile	
Population	671	0 - 15	12.5%
Number of dwellings	280	16 - 29	12.8%
Housing tenure	78.2% owner occupied	30 - 44	14.6%
Average number of cars per household	1.85	45 - 59	27.3%
Transport links	Minor road link to Rugeley, and Rugeley Trent Valley Station	60 - 64	9.9%
		65+	22.9

**Profile:** Colton lies to the north of the District, in a rural surrounding with links to Rugeley, and a rail connection at Rugeley Trent Valley Station. Colton has the lowest proportion of children under 16. There is a relatively high car ownership as public transport links are poor. Part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.

Table 4.3

Clifton Campville		Age Profile	
Population	634	0 - 15	16.2%
Number of dwellings	257	16 - 29	12.9%
Housing tenure	71.2 % owner occupied	30 - 44	18.5 %
Average number of cars per household	1.77	45 - 59	24.3 %
Transport links	Minor road links to Tamworth and A42	60 - 64	8.5 %
		65+	19.6%

**Profile:** Clifton Campville lies to the east of the District in a rural surrounding. Tamworth is the closest larger settlement. As with many villages a considerable proportion of the population over 60 years of age. There is a relatively high car ownership as public transport links are poor. Part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area

Table 4.4

Drayton Bassett		Age Profile	
Population	1093	0 - 15	19.0%
Number of dwellings	467	16 - 29	12.2%
Housing tenure	77.8% owner occupied	30 - 44	18.8 %
Average number of cars per household	1.82	45 - 59	25.1 %
Transport links	Minor road links to Tamworth	60 - 64	6.9.%
		65+	17.7

**Profile:** Although there is a low proportion of 16 - 29 year olds, Drayton Bassett has a fairly high proportion of working age people and children under 15. Drayton Bassett is located to the south of Tamworth and Fazeley, and is poorly connected in terms of public transport with only a once weekly service operating on a Friday.

Table 4.5

Edingale		Age Profile	
Population	632	0 - 15	23.2%
Number of dwellings	243	16 - 29	10.1%
Housing tenure	79.8 % owner occupied	30 - 44	22.1%

Edingale		Age Profile	
Average number of cars per household	1.61	45 - 59	24.2%
Transport links	Minor road links to Tamworth, A38 and A42	60 - 85+	21.4%
<p><b>Profile:</b> Edingale lies to the north east of the District in a rural surrounding. Links can be made to both Lichfield and Tamworth however the settlement is fairly remote. There is a more balanced population structure in Edingale than in other rural settlements and a lower level of owner occupied dwellings. Again there is a relatively high car ownership as public transport links are poor.</p>			

Table 4.6

Elford		Age Profile	
Population	581	0 - 15	18.4 %
Number of dwellings	245	16 - 29	10.3 %
Housing tenure	84.4 % owner occupied	30 - 44	17.7 %
Average number of cars per household	2.02	45 - 59	26.1 %
Transport links	Adjacent to the A513 with links to Tamworth, Burton and Rugeley.	60 - 64+	9.9 %
		65+	17.6 %
<p><b>Profile:</b> Elford lies to the north east of the District in a rural surrounding adjacent to the River Tame. Car ownership within the village is high. Part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area</p>			

Table 4.7

Fazeley (Mile Oak and Bonehill)		Age Profile	
Population	4530	0 - 15	19.1%
Number of dwellings	2033	16 - 29	15.8%
Housing tenure	65.5% owner occupied	30 - 44	20.3 %
Average number of cars per household	1.1	45 - 59	21.6%
Transport links	Adjacent to the settlement of Tamworth. Links to the A5 and M42 strategic highway network	60 - 64	7.5 %

Fazeley (Mile Oak and Bonehill)		Age Profile	
		<b>65+</b>	15.6%
<p><b>Profile:</b> Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill are located to the south of Tamworth and together they make up the second largest rural settlement in the District after Armitage with Handsacre. There are strong links with Tamworth and good public transport connections to Tamworth and Sutton Coldfield. There is local employment within Fazeley. The close proximity to Tamworth may account for a lower number of cars per household compared to other villages. Parts of Fazeley and Bonehill are covered by a Conservation Area</p>			

Table 4.8

Fradley		Age Profile	
<b>Population</b>	2818	<b>0 - 15</b>	23.8%
<b>Number of dwellings</b>	1040	<b>16 - 29</b>	15.8%
<b>Housing tenure</b>	78.2% owner occupied	<b>30 - 44</b>	26.6%
<b>Average number of cars per household</b>	1.79	<b>45 - 59</b>	19.1%
<b>Transport links</b>	Adjacent to the A38 with good access to Lichfield and Burton	<b>60 - 64+</b>	4.86%
		<b>65+</b>	9.86%
<p><b>Profile:</b> Fradley village lies to the north of Lichfield City and the area has seen a large amount of development on the former airfield in recent years. As there has been residential development in the early 2000s as well as employment, current population figures are likely to be higher than shown in the table. Fradley has the highest proportion of children under 15 years of age. There is a large area of employment at Fradley, within the area known as Fradley Park. The Local Centre at Fradley serves the needs of both local people and workers. Public transport at Fradley has declined due to a reduced bus service, however Lichfield Trent Valley Station is fairly close and there are good links by road using the A38. A Conservation area runs to the north of the village along the canal corridor.</p>			

Table 4.9

Hamstall Ridware		Age Profile	
<b>Population</b>	313	<b>0 - 15</b>	19.8%
<b>Number of dwellings</b>	127	<b>16 - 29</b>	8.3%
<b>Housing tenure</b>	78.7% owner occupied	<b>30 - 44</b>	22.4%
<b>Average number of cars per household</b>	1.91	<b>45 - 59</b>	29.1%

Hamstall Ridware		Age Profile	
<b>Transport links</b>	Minor road links to Rugeley and Lichfield	<b>60 - 64</b>	5.75%
		<b>65+</b>	14.65%
<p><b>Profile:</b> Hamstall Ridware lies to the north east of Armitage with Handsacre and Hill Ridware in a rural and remote location served by minor roads only. Services and facilities within the village are limited to a Church and pub. Part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.</p>			

Table 4.10

Hammerwich		Age Profile	
<b>Population</b>	1005	<b>0 - 15</b>	15.2%
<b>Number of dwellings</b>	396	<b>16 - 29</b>	11.1%
<b>Housing tenure</b>	84.1% owner occupied	<b>30 - 44</b>	17.4%
<b>Average number of cars per household</b>	1.73	<b>45 - 59</b>	22.1%
<b>Transport links</b>	Minor road access to Burntwood and A5 strategic highway network	<b>60 - 64+</b>	8.8 %
		<b>65+</b>	25.3%
<p><b>Community profile:</b> Hammerwich village is closely related to Burntwood, with Hammerwich Parish extending into part of Burntwood. Whilst Burntwood town is fairly close, services and facilities within the village are very limited, and public transport is poor.</p>			

Table 4.11

Harlaston		Age Profile	
<b>Population</b>	394	<b>0 - 15</b>	14.5%
<b>Number of dwellings</b>	162	<b>16 - 29</b>	11.2%
<b>Housing tenure</b>	80.2% owner occupied	<b>30 - 44</b>	14.2%
<b>Average number of cars per household</b>	1.86	<b>45 - 59</b>	30.5%
<b>Transport links</b>	Minor road links to Tamworth, A38 and A42	<b>60 - 64+</b>	7.1%
		<b>65+</b>	22.7%

Harlaston	Age Profile
<p><b>Profile:</b> Harlaston lies to the north east of the District in a fairly remote setting as per Edingale and Elford. The village has limited services and facilities and a very high car ownership reflects car dependency and poor public transport. The majority of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.</p>	

Table 4.12

Hill Ridware		Age Profile	
Population	857	0 - 15	16.6%
Number of dwellings	345	16 - 29	13.2%
Housing tenure	80.6% owner occupied	30 - 44	16.6%
Average number of cars per household	1.65	45 - 59	27.7%
Transport links	Minor road links to Armitage with Handsacre and Rugeley	60 - 64	9.21%
		65+	22.79%

**Profile:** Hill Ridware lies to the north of Armitage with Handsacre, and is served by minor roads to Armitage with Handsacre and Rugeley. Facilities within the village are fairly limited, and public transport links are poor.

Table 4.13

Hopwas		Age Profile	
Population	647	0 - 15	15.1%
Number of dwellings	268	16 - 29	12.4%
Housing tenure	78% owner occupied	30 - 44	18.4%
Average number of cars per household	1.74	45 - 59	25.3%
Transport links	A51 to Tamworth & Lichfield	60 - 64	7.8%
		65+	20.9%

**Profile:** Hopwas lies on the main route (A51) between Lichfield and Tamworth, and therefore benefits from a half hourly bus service. There are limited services and facilities within the village but an employment centre in the north west of Tamworth is walking distance away. Part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.

Table 4.14

Kings Bromley		Age Profile	
Population	999	0 - 15	12.9%
Number of dwellings	407	16 - 29	9.0%
Housing tenure	83.8% owner occupied	30 - 44	13.1%
Average number of cars per household	1.83	45 - 59	24.2%
Transport links	A515 and A513 provide links to Lichfield and Rugeley	60 - 64	11.1%
		65+	29.6%

**Community profile:** A significant proportion of the population are above 60 years of age, giving the highest proportion of older people within the rural settlements. There is also the second lowest proportion of 0-15 of all the settlements. Car ownership is fairly high within the village, which may be due to the lack of a half hourly bus service. Part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.

Table 4.15

Little Aston (incl. Streetly)		Age Profile	
Population	2670	0 - 15	16.4%
Number of dwellings	1082	16 - 29	13.7%
Housing tenure	92% owner occupied	30 - 44	14.6%
Average number of cars per household	2.05	45 - 59	23.8%
Transport links	Links within Birmingham and to the strategic highway network	60 - 64	8.39%
		65+	22.5%

**Community profile:** Little Aston is the fourth largest rural settlement and it has close links with the Birmingham conurbation including Sutton Coldfield. Little Aston has the highest level of car ownership in the District, and also the highest level of owner/occupied dwellings, perhaps reflecting the affluent nature of the settlement. Again, the population is largely above the age of 45, with a very low number of people between the ages of 16 and 29. Part of the settlement is covered by a Conservation Area.

Table 4.16

Longdon		Age Profile	
Population	573	0 - 15	15.2%
Number of dwellings	249	16 - 29	8.6%

Longdon		Age Profile	
Housing tenure	88.2% owner occupied	30 - 44	15.2%
Average number of cars per household	1.88	45 - 59	23.4%
Transport links	Minor road links to Lichfield and Rugeley	60 - 64	12.21%
		65+	22.5%
<p><b>Profile:</b> Longdon, like other rural settlements, has a higher proportion of older residents, with approximately 60% of the population over the age of 45. Longdon is poorly served in terms of public transport and benefits from only a small level of services and facilities.</p>			

Table 4.17

Shenstone		Age Profile	
Population	2220	0 - 15	16.1%
Number of dwellings	950	16 - 29	11.8%
Housing tenure	84.1% owner occupied	30 - 44	16.4%
Average number of cars per household	1.59	45 - 59	21.8%
Transport links	Lies on the A5127 to Sutton Coldfield and Lichfield. Close to the A5 and M6 Toll strategic highway network. Shenstone train station has links to Lichfield and Birmingham.	60 - 64	16.08%
		65+	17.8%
<p><b>Profile:</b> Shenstone lies to the south of Lichfield, and is well linked in terms of roads and rail, as it is the only settlement that benefits from a train station. There is local employment within Shenstone at Lynn Lane Industrial Estate adjacent to the train station, as well as a number of services and facilities. It is the fifth largest rural settlement. The centre of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.</p>			

Table 4.18

Stonnall		Age Profile	
Population	1,338	0 - 15	15.5%
Number of dwellings	575	16 - 29	11.0%
Housing tenure	91.3 % owner occupied	30 - 44	16.6%



Stonnall		Age Profile	
Average number of cars per household	1.81	45 - 59	23.0%
Transport links	Road links to Lichfield, Brownhills and Walsall	60 - 64	8.5%
		65+	25.4%
<p><b>Profile:</b> The post office in Stonnall has been closed, however a number of services and facilities remain in the village. Public transport connections are poor and this is reflected by a high car ownership. Again a high proportion of the population are above the age of 60.</p>			

Table 4.19

Upper Longdon		Age Profile	
Population	324	0 - 15	14.5%
Number of dwellings	135	16 - 29	7.7 %
Housing tenure	94 % owner occupied	30 - 44	9.2 %
Average number of cars per household	2.1	45 - 59	25 %
Transport links	Minor road links to A51 and Lichfield and Rugeley	60 - 64	9.2 %
		65+	35.2%
<p><b>Profile:</b> Within Upper Longdon there is a high level of car ownership, as the settlement itself is fairly remote and lies adjacent to the Cannock Chase AONB. A large proportion of the population are over 60 years of age, and Upper Longdon has the third lowest proportion of children under the age of 16.</p>			

Table 4.20

Wigginton		Age Profile	
Population	248	0 - 15	16.3%
Number of dwellings	101	16 - 29	12.09%
Housing tenure	84.5%	30 - 44	15.3%
Average number of cars per household	1.58	45 - 59	23.8%
Transport links	Minor road access to Tamworth	60 - 64	10.4
		65+	19.5%

Wigginton	Age Profile
<p><b>Profile:</b> Wigginton is a small settlement that lies just to the north of Tamworth. There are very limited services and facilities within the village and therefore the population would largely look to Tamworth to provide for their needs. There is a minor road link to Tamworth, but public transport is poor. Part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.</p>	

Table 4.21

Whittington		Age Profile	
Population	2063	0 - 15	17%
Number of dwellings	899	16 - 29	10%
Housing tenure	85.0% owner occupied	30 - 44	18%
Average number of cars per household	2.0	45 - 59	21%
Transport links	Minor road links to the A51, Lichfield and Tamworth	60 - 64	9%
		65+	25%
<p><b>Profile:</b> Whittington lies to the south east of Lichfield between Lichfield and Tamworth. The village benefits from being on a half hourly bus service, and also has a range of services and facilities within the village. Part of the village is covered by a Conservation Area.</p>			

Table 4.22

## 5 Definition of Rural Services

**5.1** There is no single national definition of rural services, however the two most widely used are those of Natural England and DEFRA. In terms of accessibility, DEFRA's targets include improving availability of services for those without access to a car, including the use of locally based community transport solutions, improving access to health care, post offices, banks and ATMs as well as improving accessibility to the internet.

**5.2** This study assesses settlements in relation to the presence of certain facilities and services within them, along with the availability of public transport services to nearby facilities. A score has been awarded for facilities and services, but this study does not consider issues such as quality and size of the facility within the scoring system. It is recognised that provision and availability of other facilities and services also contribute to the sustainability of a community including play areas, open spaces, playing fields and sport clubs. However, these are not included within this study, as this could overshadow any deficiencies in quality and quantity. Also recognised, is the role of Churches within rural settlements, for community based events and often the provision of a Church hall for other groups and clubs. Whilst Churches are recognised as an important asset within a settlement, they have not been included within the scoring, as this would involve an assessment of the type of Church, additional facilities associated with the Church and degree to which they are used by other local organisations. In addition, most settlements within Lichfield District have a Church, and therefore scoring them purely on their presence, would have little impact on the scoring system.

**5.3** Within this Study, basic key rural facilities and services assessed are:

- Post Office
- Doctor's Surgery
- Dentist
- Pharmacy
- Primary School
- Community Hall
- Pub
- General Store

**5.4** In addition to services and facilities found within settlements, a score was also awarded in relation to access to employment locations (including accessibility by foot), retail, leisure and hospitals by frequent public transport services (half hourly or better service), along with a score based on the frequency of public transport serving the settlement.

**5.5** Retail, in relation to this study, refers to locations that include retail supermarkets, as well as a variety of local, regional and national retail outlets typically found in larger urban areas. Similarly leisure, in the context of this study, refers to those typically found in large urban areas and includes leisure centres, cinemas and evening entertainment for example.

## 6 Delivery of Rural Services

**6.1** Many of the facilities are provided by the private sector and therefore subject to commercial realities. In rural areas, post offices are normally run as commercial enterprises and in recent years, a number have been relocated into other shops or closed altogether. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 9 Key Local Service and Facilities.

**6.2** GP practices and doctors surgeries are generally under the control of and run by the Clinical Commissioning Groups, and whilst typically located in the larger settlements and towns, they serve a much wider area. Public houses are usually either provided as independent business or as part of a brewery chain. Other facilities are delivered either by the public sector, or in the case of some community development functions, via the voluntary sector. Community halls are commonly operated and owned by the local parish council, or other community organisations.

**6.3** Primary schools in the rural areas are most likely to be provided by the Local Education Authority, which in the case of Lichfield District is Staffordshire County Council. The delivery of primary education is affected by a number of factors including demographic changes. There are many primary schools within Lichfield District, each with a defined catchment boundary, however school admissions policies are complex and some resident school children travel to schools outside their immediate catchment, or even beyond the district boundary. It should also be noted that within the District a number of private schools and special schools also operate within the rural area, often serving catchments outside the District.

**6.4** Public transport provision in the rural areas of Lichfield District is through a mixture of private operators, public subsidies and community transport schemes. The largest operator of bus services within the District is Arriva. The District Council is involved in the provision of a community bus service, available to community groups upon booking. Public transport is considered in more detail in chapter 10 Rural Accessibility.

## 7 Inter-relationship Between Rural Settlements & Urban Areas

**7.1** Whilst it is acknowledged that there are links between the rural and urban area, quantifying the relationships between settlements and urban areas, and the influence that they exert on one another, is difficult.

### Edge of Urban Settlements

**7.2** Located on the south eastern edge of the District, **Fazeley** (including Mile Oak and Bonehill) has very close ties with neighbouring Tamworth, accessible by a short car journey and by frequent bus services to Tamworth. In addition to the variety of services, facilities and employment found within Fazeley itself, Tamworth provides a convenient location for employment, retail and leisure, along with access to train services.

**7.3 Little Aston**, located on the southern edge of the District, is bordered by the West Midlands conurbation, specifically Birmingham and Walsall, with which it has close links, similar to those of Fazeley with Tamworth. Similar to Fazeley, Little Aston has two local centres; the largest being that of Streetly village which has a range of services. Its location on a main road and associated passing trade contributes to maintaining the higher number of services and facilities.

**7.4 Streethay** lies on the north-eastern edge of Lichfield City and is a small settlement lying within the parish of Fradley with Streethay, however, in spatial terms it adjoins Lichfield City. Streethay has close links to Lichfield City and whilst it has no services of its own (other than a pub), residents are able to access all facilities within Lichfield City via a frequent bus service and train service. The lack of services present within the settlement itself result in Streethay performing less well in the sustainability scoring than settlements such as Fazeley and Little Aston, as there are no local facilities within easy walking distance of most residents.

**7.5** The services and facilities within Fazeley, Little Aston and Streethay are influenced by their proximity and links with large urban areas and whilst they are considered as rural settlements in terms of this study, they exhibit some of physical characteristics of suburban parts of larger towns, whilst still retaining local identities.

**7.6** Whilst not directly on the edge of the District, **Armitage with Handsacre** has strong links with Rugeley within Cannock Chase District. Armitage lies on a frequent bus route between Lichfield city and Stafford, and therefore unlike Fazeley and Little Aston, it has links via a direct bus service to services and facilities within Lichfield city as well as Rugeley.

### Other Settlements

**7.7** Most of the settlements within this study have common links with other settlements due to services that they offer, proximity to each other or existing transport links. This is the case in Lichfield District, but the linkages and strength of dependency on nearby settlements varies and is difficult to quantify. Certain settlements within the District have more obvious links with nearby urban areas largely due to proximity, such as Hammerwich with Burntwood, Hopwas and Wigginton with Tamworth, Stonnall with Aldridge and Colton with Rugeley. With the exception of Hopwas, all of these have less frequent public transport services than their neighbouring larger settlements.

### Isolated Settlements

**7.8** Settlements can appear more isolated in terms of their location away from main urban centres or lack of public transport. Even settlements close to some urban areas can seem isolated where no or infrequent public transport exists. Typically, the more isolated settlements within the District include those in the eastern areas (Elford, Edingale, Harlaston and Clifton Campville), some of the northern settlements (Colton, Hamstall Ridware, Hill Ridware and Upper Longdon) and in the south (Drayton Bassett and Stonnall). Such isolation is clearly experienced more strongly by certain groups within communities who are less mobile or have less access to private transport. It should be noted that whilst this study focuses on those settlements defined in the adopted Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029, there are many other smaller hamlets and more dispersed clusters of properties located throughout the rural area which also rely on services provided in some of the rural settlements. It is acknowledged that the access from the smaller villages and hamlets is primarily by car given the lack of available public transport services outside larger defined settlements.

## 8 Primary Services, Facilities & Jobs

### Employment

**8.1** As part of this study it is important to gauge the accessibility of employment destinations for the rural community, essentially by public transport. Employment locations within the District include those settlements with existing industrial estates:

- Lichfield
- Burntwood
- Fradley
- Fazeley
- Shenstone,
- Armitage

**8.2** Outside the District other employment locations include:

- Rugeley
- Tamworth
- Burton on Trent
- Derby
- Sutton Coldfield
- Birmingham
- Walsall (including Aldridge)
- Cannock,
- Stafford

**8.3** A 40-minute journey time was applied to the rural settlements and the number of destinations available from each settlement to those listed above was calculated. This time does not take into account time where a change in service is required but it gives a rough picture as to the locations accessible within a reasonable trip by public transport. Typically, those settlements located on the route of a frequent bus service or with access to a train station scored highly. In addition, it was considered that the presence of a large employment centre within or adjacent to a settlement that could reasonably be accessed by foot justified additional weight within the scoring system.



**8.4** It is accepted that access to the West Coast Mainline at Lichfield Trent Valley does provide opportunities for residents to travel to London. However, the overall numbers of residents travelling to London from Lichfield for employment is relatively low in comparison to other destinations. Likewise the station is most likely being reached primarily by car and it was therefore decided not to include this factor as part of this study.

### **Shopping and Leisure**

**8.5** The rural settlements within the District look to a number of towns for their major shopping and leisure facilities. Whilst most people access these by car, in terms of sustainability it is the pattern of bus services in particular that determines the principal larger service centre that individual villages look towards. Most villages in the eastern part of the District, for example, have bus services focused on Tamworth rather than Lichfield. The study does not specifically examine access to these 'higher order' centres for shopping and leisure, but the pattern in terms of accessibility would be similar to that for access to employment.

**8.6** Leisure in the context of this study is taken to include activities undertaken at leisure centres, and evening entertainment such as cinemas, theatres, and restaurants (typically those activities that are viable in larger towns and cities).

### **Hospitals**

**8.7** Hospitals are located within the larger settlements in and around the District, with Community Hospitals at Lichfield (Samuel Johnson) and Fazeley (Sir Robert Peel).

**8.8** Larger hospital services are located at Queens Hospital (Burton on Trent), Good Hope Hospital (Sutton Coldfield), The Manor Hospital (Walsall), Stafford Hospital and Cannock Chase Hospital. The need to access a particular hospital may not just depend on proximity, but on particular services on offer such as Accident and Emergency. There are also specialist hospitals within the District, such as The George Bryan Unit at Fazeley and St. Giles Hospice in Whittington.

## 9 Key Local Services & Facilities

**9.1** Certain facilities are considered to be important within rural settlements; these facilities are considered as key facilities for the purpose of this study. As stated earlier in the document it is accepted that other facilities can contribute to the sustainability of community, such as play areas and sports pitches. However, for the purpose of this study the focus is on those key facilities listed below:

- Post Office
- Doctors Surgery
- Dentist
- Pharmacy
- Primary School
- Village Hall
- Pub
- General Store

**9.2** District Councils are not directly responsible for the provision and delivery of any of the above services, however, they can influence key services through planning policies. The co-ordination of strategies (that seek to retain and promote rural services and facilities that are under threat from various influences, such as post offices, shops and health facilities), is an important part of spatial planning and therefore local planning authorities need to consider such policies within the Local Plan process. Ultimately, where services and facilities are operated on a commercial basis their viability is dependent on a certain threshold of continuing trade.

**9.3** This is recognised in Policy Rural 1 of the Local Plan Strategy which states that "Improvements to social, community and environmental infrastructure will be supported where these address the needs of the village and are sustainably located, and do not conflict with other Core Policies in this document". The Rural Development SPD (adopted 2015) considers that the loss or reduction in key services and facilities should not restrict the sustainable functioning (including health and well being) of that settlement or the wider rural hinterland which relies on it. Hence innovative ways of delivering altered services and facilities will be considered acceptable where these are justified and have no detrimental impact on the functioning of the settlement, e.g. the relocation of the post office to within the adjacent general store, where the opening times (accessibility) is retained. (Chapter 3: Services and Facilities).

### Post Office

**9.4** Post offices are important due to the range of facilities that they often provide in rural locations; from the typical traditional services such as bill payment and access to money to the sale of everyday general household items. The services and range of goods on sale is dependent on a variety of factors including the physical size of the building, the size of the immediate population

and sometimes they are also influenced by the availability of other similar services on offer locally. In addition, post office services offered may also be affected by its location in relation to the strategic highway network, which may generate passing trade.

**9.5** Post offices are influenced and affected by policy at national level, and over the past ten years this has resulted in many post offices closing as part of a major review of postal services. This review, along with other factors, has impacted on the presence of post offices within Lichfield District. The majority of settlements no longer have a Post Office and there have been numerous closures over the past 5-10 years including Colton, Hill Ridware, Kings Bromley, Drayton Bassett, Edingale, Clifton Campville, Stonnall, Hopwas, and since the 2011 study, Little Aston.

**9.6** Post offices still remain an important service under threat and in rural areas the closures of such facilities affect the more vulnerable sectors of community; the worst affected include the elderly, disabled people, those on low incomes and those without access to a car.

### **Health (Doctors Surgery - Dentists - Pharmacy)**

**9.7** Access to health facilities for residents living within the District's rural areas can often be difficult, particularly for those residents within rural communities that are reliant on public transport. Doctors in particular, and to a lesser extent dentists, are important key services within a rural area; however these facilities are usually only found in the larger settlements. Within Lichfield District six rural settlements have doctors surgeries location within them; Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley, Shenstone, Whittington and Stonnall; and four have dentists; Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Kings Bromley, Shenstone and Little Aston. Whilst these surgeries will take patients from a wider catchment, some residents are registered with practices in Lichfield and Burntwood and others outside the District.

**9.8** The provision of doctors surgeries is currently under the control of the Clinical Commissioning Group (previously the Primary Care Trust). No new surgeries are currently proposed within rural areas although there is potential for such facilities should the need arise. The IDP (Aug 2015 version) states that Fradley requires a new 2 GP doctors surgery in view of planned residential growth. Furthermore, the provision of a health centre is also one of the planning obligations attached to the 2010 outline planning permission for 750 homes (ref 10/01498/OUTMEI).

**9.9** Access to surgeries by public transport can pose particular difficulties where services are infrequent. Whilst most of those located within Lichfield are located on frequent routes between the larger towns, they are not very accessible by those living in rural communities where public transport is too infrequent.

**9.10** Most rural doctors surgeries incorporate a pharmacy for use by those residents with no direct access to an independent pharmacy. However, pharmacies are also important aside from their direct prescription services; they offer other over-the-counter medication and expert advice on medical issues, as well as providing other general household products. Separate pharmacies are located within Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley, Shenstone, Little Aston and Whittington. The weighting applied to the scoring matrix gives slightly less weight to dentists and pharmacies than to doctors and GP surgeries.

### Primary Schools

**9.11** It is recognised that the presence of a primary school is an important element of rural life, providing easily accessible education for young children, often acting as a community focal point, with some schools offering use of the buildings and grounds for community use. The presence of a primary school is therefore given a high weighting in the scoring matrix.

**9.12** All settlements within this study, with the exception of Hamstall Ridware, Hammerwich, Harlaston, Streethay and Upper Longdon, have a primary school located within them or on the edge. Two of the larger settlements, Fazeley/Mile Oak and Armitage with Handsacre have two primary schools. Typically, some of those schools located close to the edge of the District take pupils from outside the District; equally some children will travel out to schools just outside the District. In addition, the District is home to a number of private and special schools which offer schooling for children of primary school age.

**9.13** Primary schools within the rural area vary in size, with relatively small schools in several of the smaller villages. Such schools have proven to be vulnerable to closure over the years, with closures taking place at Hammerwich, Hamstall Ridware and Harlaston. Local Authority-provided primary schools within Lichfield District are operated by Staffordshire County Council. Nationally school rolls are falling with the exception of certain areas where numbers have been boosted by residential development, and therefore new schools could be proposed as part of large scale future development.

### Community Halls

**9.14** Most settlements have a village or community hall located within them, with the exception of Hamstall Ridware, Streethay, Upper Longdon, and Wigginton.

**9.15** Village halls vary greatly in size and age, from small old buildings as seen at Clifton Campville to more modern buildings as seen at Armitage with Handsacre. In recent years new village halls have been built, at Fradley, Armitage with Handsacre and Colton (replacement), in part utilising contributions from developers of new residential development. Alrewas also has plans to extend and redevelop part of the village hall site. As expected, typically larger settlements often have larger halls.

**9.16** Village halls and other community buildings can be one of the principal focuses for village life. Halls vary in size, quality, ownership and management and include: rural community centres, Women's Institutes, British Legion halls, memorial halls, halls belonging to churches and chapels including innovative use of a separate part of the church building itself for community activities. Many are not just a place to meet for social occasions such as parties, wedding receptions, guides and scouts and other local clubs. In more recent years nationally, there has been a move towards their use as a venue for other activities such as local health facilities, farmers' markets, social clubs for older people and the provision of IT facilities.

**9.17** Within the District, community halls do not appear to be under significant threat in terms of suffering the loss of the facility to a community, however their need for maintenance and improvement may be a significant financial issue for many communities. Those owners and operators of existing community halls may have longer term aspirations to replace, modernise or extend existing facilities. In terms of this study's methodology, settlements are scored merely on

the presence of a community hall within them. Whether there are issues with size, limitations on the uses they can accommodate, the state of the physical fabric etc. in relation to the existing community hall, is not taken into account in the scoring system.

### Public Houses

**9.18** Pubs have long been established within rural communities and today still remain an important feature of rural life, not only providing a focal point for social interaction but also more recently the range of services that some provide is changing. Aside from employment opportunities, pubs can also contribute to the local tourist industry. For this reason, public houses were considered to be a key service within the rural community.

**9.19** In a [2015 Ministerial Statement](#), the Communities Minister recognised that pubs play an important role in our local communities. It cited evidence that they provide valuable local hubs that strengthen community relationships and encourage wider social interaction, with each pub also being estimated to contribute £80,000 to the economy annually. It should be noted that pubs (and other valued community facilities) were afforded extra protection by Government on 6 April 2015 where the nomination or listing of a pub as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) triggers the 'disapplication' of the national permitted development rights for the change of use or demolition for the period of listing. Consequently a planning application would be required.

**9.20** This study is primarily concerned with whether or not a settlement had a pub within it, and does not go into any further details in relation to the existing functionality of the pub and what services are available. Outside of the urban areas, two rural pubs have closed in both Whittington and Armitage with Handsacre, and other pubs have been granted planning permission for redevelopment such as in Stonnall. A research paper carried out in 2014 indicates that nationally there are on average 28 pub closures a week, owing to variety of reasons including the increasing land value for residential development and rising costs faced by landlords <sup>(i)</sup>. As a commercial operation, there remains pressure on the industry, and whilst this may not always result in closure, this is reflected for example in the residential development on part of the site of the Public House in Elford. In 2013, when faced with the prospect of losing the local pub to residential development, Edingale made use of the Localism Act by listing the Black Horse as an Asset of Community Value, which has remained open ever since.

**9.21** With the exception of Drayton Bassett, Hammerwich, Fradley and Little Aston, all settlements within the study have at least one pub and at Hamstall Ridware, the pub is the only key service within the village. It should be noted that a number of other public houses are located within the rural area outside of those settlements and are not considered as part of this study.

### General Stores

**9.22** As stated earlier, post offices often sell some general daily household items, though the range of products on offer tends to be limited. The presence of a separate general store or range of local stores is considered to be important in influencing the degree to which settlements are sustainable. Typically, general stores are found within the larger settlements where a variety of other shops are also present. Despite national trends over recent years, the District is seeing a reemergence of general stores in some settlements, for example in 2014 a new village shop opened in Hill Ridware and planning permission was granted in 2015 for a new Co-operative store

i (Public Houses:How councils and communities can save pubs, [CAMRA/LGIU March 2014](#))

in Kings Bromley. The latter, which will be sited in part of the car park at the Royal Oak, is also an example of a public house using part of its land assets for redevelopment whilst also maintaining the pub business.

**9.23** Those settlements near to urban areas located on busy routes, such as Little Aston and Fazeley, have numerous shops and services. These are as direct result of the increase in potential patronage due to the adjacent urban population and high levels of car borne trade due to location on a main highway.

**9.24** Other large settlements with a range of shops and services include Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Shenstone and to a lesser degree Whittington, Stonnall and Fradley (at the new local centre). Trade here is likely to be from a mixture of local residents; patronage from nearby settlements with no such facilities and through-trade dependent on the location of the settlement in relation to the highway network.

### Employment

**9.25** Although most employment is available within the larger urban areas, it is worth noting that there are exceptions of large scale uses that provide employment within the rural area. As well as designated employment sites at Fradley, Shenstone and Fazeley, some rural settlements have existing employment uses within or adjacent to them, such as Armitage Shanks in Armitage with Handsacre, Drayton Manor Park near Fazeley, the National Memorial Arboretum near Alrewas, St. Giles Hospice and the Barracks in Whittington and Spire Hospital in Little Aston. Depending on planning restrictions such as Green Belt, some of these uses may look to expand in the future, which could increase the level of employment in the rural area. Outside of these areas, and where public transport provision is poor, access to employment is largely dependent on the private car. This is especially evident for workers with irregular shift patterns, for example the operating hours of public transport services may prevent users accessing work.

**9.26** Across the District and also nationally, the level of homeworking is increasing. This is seen as a positive movement as it reduces the need to travel as well as potentially increasing patronage of rural business and services. An increased level of homeworking has been made possible in the last few years due to the expansion of superfast broadband (see section 2.21), improvements to 4G mobile internet and more flexible working arrangements. However, whilst improvements are taking place it is recognised that broadband/ mobile internet coverage may be slower or poorer in some remote areas of the District preventing effective homeworking from taking place. The potential benefits of homeworking are recognised in chapter 9 of the Local Plan Strategy (Economic Development and Enterprise).

### Housing

**9.27** Another factor which influences whether a settlement is sustainable, is access to housing and its affordability. Housing in rural areas is often larger, desirable and expensive, and there can be a shortage of affordable homes. This has been explored in more detail in the [Rural Housing Needs Survey](#).

## Churches

**9.28** As mentioned in section 5 of this study, it is also recognised within this study that Churches, and other related religious groups, play an important role in the community. They not only provide a community network in themselves, but also by often providing a building for external hire, or a meeting point for local groups. As most of the rural settlements have at least one Church within them it was not considered necessary to include the presence of a Church within the scoring system.

## Loss of Services and Facilities

**9.29** Over the years a number of changes to the types of services and facilities within rural settlements have occurred. These have resulted from a number of influences, most of which are national trends in retailing, financial services provision, and the economics of service provision.

**9.30** In several villages closures have occurred despite the construction of significant levels of additional residential development. It is acknowledged that development is just one contributing factor to the success of village services and facilities, and there are other influences such as such as the type of service, demand and accessibility.



## 10 Rural Accessibility

### Public Transport

**10.1** In Staffordshire, most bus services operating on major routes run on a commercial basis, with the company Arriva operating the majority of these services within Lichfield District. However, evening and Sunday services are subsidised, as are most rural services throughout the week and some early journeys on otherwise commercial services by Staffordshire County Council. Non-commercial services are made the subject of a tender exercise undertaken every 3 years in line with a review. Following budget cuts to local transport authorities, SCC cut subsidised services further in September 2015, resulting in some rural services being lost. These are covered in more detail below.

**10.2** The Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Staffordshire includes accessibility strategies and targets for accessibility improvements throughout Staffordshire. Objectives include improving accessibility to everyday facilities for those without access to a car, through improvements to public transport, pedestrian and cycle networks.

**10.3** Bus Strategies were referenced in previous studies however these are no longer produced following amendments to the Transport Act 2000. The County Council continues to subsidise services however it should be noted that rising costs in the bus industry have put increased pressure on its ability to replace withdrawn commercial services and extend provision. Operators are tending to concentrate their commercial activities on core urban and inter-urban routes, leaving the County Council to secure services for most rural and many urban fringe areas from limited resources.

**10.4** Bus timetables published by the service providers along with summary information from Staffordshire County Council cover bus routes within the District, and these were used to gather detailed information on routes and frequency.

**10.5** This study focuses on the potential accessibility of rural residents by sustainable (non car) means to centres of employment, retail, leisure and health services outside the settlement. In keeping with previous studies it was considered that accessibility via public transport required a 30 minute minimum frequency.

**10.6** When considering journey times it was decided that a maximum 40-minute journey time was acceptable for accessing employment, retail, leisure etc. In order to collect travel time information, journey times were calculated excluding any transfer time between connecting services where necessary. With this in mind, journeys with transfers are likely to be slower than the estimates used.

**10.7** Popular services, classed as frequent within this Study, operate every 30-60 minutes throughout the day including peak times (7.00 - 9.00 am and 4.00 - 6.00pm). In addition to these services there are a number of services operating on a less frequent basis, some operating a limited daily service or less. At the time of writing, some settlements within the RSSS study group are now limited to just 1- 2 services a week (Drayton Basset, Colton, Longdon & Upper Longdon). Meanwhile, Hamstall Ridware and Hill Ridware have no scheduled bus services at all.



**10.8** All of the available services have been categorised as part of the study to demonstrate the pattern of accessibility as a contributory factor to rural sustainability. As largely commercial services, they are subject to future changes and commercial operators are only required to give six weeks notice before reducing or cancelling provision altogether.

### Frequent Bus Services

**10.9** The most frequent routes operating every 30 minutes within the District;

- Sutton Coldfield to Walsall (**6**) stopping at Little Aston
- Tamworth to Lichfield (**X55**) stopping at Hopwas
- Lichfield to Stafford (**825/826**) - stopping at Armitage with Handsacre
- Tamworth to Birmingham (**110**) - stopping at Fazeley and Mile Oak
- Lichfield to Burton (**X12**) - express service stopping at Streethay (does not stop Fradley, Alrewas or Kings Bromley)

### Less Frequent Bus Services

**10.10** The central government spending cuts since the last study have resulted in significant changes with three settlements having no bus service at all (Colton, Longdon and Drayton Basset), whilst elsewhere the level of service varies greatly in terms of times and number of services throughout the day and week.

- Tamworth to Lichfield (**785/786**) - stopping at Hopwas and Whittington (following the removal of the 765 Whittington has lost its half hourly service)
- Lichfield to Birmingham (**X12**) - an approximately hourly service stopping at Shenstone.
- Lichfield to Burton (**7,7B**) - stopping at Fradley, Alrewas and Kings Bromley (Regular throughout the day though technically no longer considered hourly due to timetable alterations)
- Tamworth to Burton (**813**) - stopping at Elford (term time only)
- The majority of the settlements in the eastern part of the District (Wigginton, Elford, Edingale, Harlaston and Clifton Campville) are served by the same service between Monday and Saturday focused on linking with Tamworth. This service (**82**) operates in a loop stopping at all these settlements before heading to Tamworth at a frequency of approximately one bus every two hours during the day. Due to the nature of these locations and route taken, bus journey times tend to be lengthy.
- The **81** service operates five buses daily between Lichfield and Walsall (via Aldridge). From Lichfield the service stops at Wall, Shenstone and Stonnall before progressing on to Walsall.

- Lichfield to Burntwood (**15**) - stopping at Hammerwich (five times daily)
- Lichfield to Rugeley (**823**), stopping at Colton, Longdon, Longdon Green and Upper Longdon with one return journey on Tuesdays and Fridays.

**10.11** A summary map of bus routes which indicates frequency of services in the District can be found in the appendices.

### Community Transport Initiatives

**10.12** There are a number of community transport schemes, some of which are able to cover services which have been cancelled by commercial operators. Likewise Drayton Bassett has one bus per week operated by West Midlands Special Needs Transport under contract to Warwickshire County Council (Flexibus service), which has to be booked in advance.

**10.13** Lichfield District Council operates a Community Transport Scheme. This scheme does not run a regular time-tabled service but provides group transport and operates on a booking basis. Any non-profit making organisation based within the Lichfield District area can contact the scheme and book minibus transport. Two of the three vehicles are adaptable for disabled users. The drivers are volunteers so service provision is affected by their availability.

**10.14** At present the scheme is booked and used regularly for a number of groups including lunch clubs, shopping trips and social clubs, these groups are based predominantly within Lichfield City and Burntwood. However the scheme is used by groups in the rural areas, and in particular by groups in Fazeley/Mile Oak, Armitage with Handsacre, Whittington, Alrewas, Kings Bromley and Mavesyn Ridware.

### Train Services

**10.15** Within Lichfield District there are four train stations: Lichfield City, Lichfield Trent Valley, Shenstone and Rugeley Trent Valley. Tamworth station and Blake Street, whilst outside the district are relatively close to the boundary and therefore accessible to some residents. The service provided on the rail routes are:

- London Midland operates a frequent train service between Lichfield Trent Valley and Redditch passing through Birmingham New Street, via Lichfield City and Shenstone stations with several stops within Birmingham. Journey times from Lichfield to Birmingham New Street are around 40 minutes.
- Virgin Trains operate services between London and Glasgow via Lichfield Trent Valley on the West Coast Mainline. This direct service, taking approx 1 hour 15 minutes to London Euston has two outbound services in the morning and two return journeys in the evening.

- London Midland operates services between Liverpool Lime Street and London Euston via Lichfield Trent Valley on the West Coast Mainline taking approx 1 hour 40 minutes. A number of longer services are available changing at Northampton.
- London Midland operate an hourly service between Stafford and Birmingham via Rugeley Trent Valley station. This service takes 15 minutes to Stafford and 1 hour to Birmingham from Rugeley Trent Valley.

### Cycling

**10.16** It is recognised that cycling is an increasingly important form of sustainable transport, however cycle access to key services has not been analysed in this study due to the lack of available data. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this will be possible in future studies. A number of rural settlements now have cycle paths within them and also connect to designated cycle routes. Staffordshire County Council has produced a cycle map of the District which for formatting reasons cannot be included in the appendices however at the time of writing can be found on the Staffordshire County Council website. It can also be viewed via the following weblink <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/transport/walkingandcycling/maps/Cycling-in-Lichfield-including-Burntwood-Issue-5.pdf>

### Cars

**10.17** Car travel has not been included in this study, since the study concentrates on indicators of sustainability within rural settlements, with a particular objective of contributing to strategies that minimise the need for private car journeys and reduce their distance.

**10.18** Car ownership is an indicator of wealth and can also to a certain extent reflect the availability of accessible and frequent public transport. Generally within Lichfield District, car ownership is above the national average. However, there are some clear variations in car ownership levels and households with no car. Little Aston for example has an average car ownership level of above 2 cars per household, whereas Fazeley has 1.1 (Section 4: Settlement Profiles, provides information on car ownership levels).

**10.19** In those rural areas where public transport is infrequent, those with no access to the private car are severely disadvantaged in terms of access to employment, service and facilities. Similarly, a number of households with access to one car can also experience the same disadvantages where the only household car is used for work trips by one member of the household.

## 11 Sustainable Rural Settlement Summary

**11.1** Map 1.1 (Appendix A) shows the location of the key services and facilities identified within the settlements surveyed, together with their location in relation to the public transport network within the District.

### Sustainability Score based on Existing Facilities and Services within Settlements

**11.2** As shown in Table 1.1 and Map 1.2 at Appendix A, six settlements score particularly well, due to the presence of, and accessibility to, a range of shops, key services and facilities. These settlements are listed below with the corresponding scores. Whittington maintains a good score for services present, however its loss of a half hourly bus services has impacted on its overall score.

- Armitage with Handsacre (49)
- Shenstone (49)
- Fazeley (43)
- Alrewas (36)
- Little Aston (38)
- Whittington (30)

**11.3** Passing trade from through-traffic also contributes to the vibrancy of some service centres (particularly where these are accessible from the main roads). Likewise proximity to a larger urban area allows access to a wider population, particularly in the case of Fazeley and Little Aston.

**11.4** Settlements which scored moderately well were Stonnall, which has a small cluster of shops, a primary school and GP surgery, and Fradley, which has a post office and primary school, and more recently a general store, café and hairdressers at the Stirling Centre. Facilities are expected to increase further in the coming years with the delivery of the Strategic Development Allocation.

**11.5** Most other villages have three key facilities (with the exception of Longdon which has four) and their sustainability is limited by not being located on frequent public transport routes, making it very difficult to use public transport for employment, leisure and retail trips. Settlements with three key facilities include Clifton Campville, Colton, Edingale, Elford, Harlaston, Hill Ridware and Hopwas. Settlements with only two key facilities are Wigginton, Hammerwich and Drayton Bassett, which again are not located on frequent public transport routes. Hamstall Ridware and Upper Longdon each have only a pub, and again, neither are located on frequent public transport routes.

### Sustainability Score based on Accessibility by Public Transport to Employment, Retail, Leisure and Hospitals

#### Employment

**11.6** A simple scoring system was used to assess the relative sustainability of the rural settlements in respect of the above. In relation to employment, scores were awarded based on accessibility to employment locations, such as at Lichfield, Burntwood, Fazeley, Fradley, Armitage with Handsacre, Little Aston, Tamworth, Walsall, Aldridge, Sutton Coldfield, Burton and Birmingham. Where rural settlements have access to public transport, and especially to the rail network the choice of employment destinations increases. Scores were awarded dependent on the number of employment destinations accessible. If an employment location is within walking distance of a settlement, an additional score is awarded, as in the case of Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley, Fradley, Hopwas, Shenstone and Streethay.

### **Retail and Leisure**

**11.7** In terms of access to retail and leisure, this typically followed a similar pattern to that of employment locations in terms of the larger towns and cities. A similar scoring system has been applied with higher scores awarded to those settlements with greater choice of retail and leisure locations.

### **Hospitals**

**11.8** Hospitals are located at Burton, Stafford, Fazeley, Lichfield, Sutton Coldfield and Walsall. Whilst it is accepted that hospitals are not typically used frequently by the majority of the population on a regular basis, they are considered to be a key service.

### **Public Transport**

**11.9** Table 1.2 and Map 1.3 at Appendix A, considers and awards points based on the availability of public transport in terms of frequency of services. This additional score differentiates between those served by a half-hourly, hourly, limited daily service, weekly service and no service at all. In addition those settlements that have access to train stations within 20 minutes on an hourly or better service are also scored.

### **Score Summary**

**11.10** As shown in Table 1.2, seven settlements scored highly in terms of accessibility by public transport to services and facilities. These are listed below with their corresponding scores:

- Fazeley (31)
- Shenstone (31)
- Streethay (31)
- Hopwas (31)
  
- Armitage with Handsacre (29)
- Little Aston (26)

**11.11** The scores show that some of the smaller settlements that do not contain key services or facilities within them, score highly on the accessibility analysis due to their location on the edge of larger settlements on main transport links. This is apparent in the case of Streethay located on the edge of Lichfield City, and Hopwas located near to Tamworth.

**11.12** Since the previous study was undertaken, the bus routes serving Kings Bromley, Alrewas and Fradley have seen timetable alterations and can no longer be considered hourly throughout the day. This has obviously impacted on the accessibility by public transport to services and facilities from within these settlements.

### Final Summary

**11.13** The analysis finds that there are a group of larger villages within the District with characteristics in terms of accessibility and facilities that suggest a degree of local sustainability in the context of rural living. These villages are Shenstone, Armitage with Handsacre, Alrewas, Fazeley, Whittington and Little Aston.

**11.14** As stated previously, even within these more 'sustainable settlements' there are other factors which contribute to the presence of, and higher number of, services and facilities - this can be seen in relation to Fazeley and Little Aston where there is a clear relationship with adjoining urban areas. The other more sustainable settlements arising out of this study are typically the settlements with the larger populations in the District: Armitage with Handsacre (4,880), Alrewas (2,582), Whittington (2,063), and Shenstone (2,220), and as such are able to support a certain number of services. However, other influences are likely to arise from passing trade and potentially an element of tourist-related business particularly in terms of pub trade.

**11.15** The matrix has also highlighted four other settlements where the factors result in a positive score with the system used: Fradley, Hopwas, Streethay and Stonnall. It is acknowledged that Hopwas does in fact gain a higher score than Alrewas overall, due to the large amounts of points awarded in the study to access to public transport. Hopwas lies to the west of Tamworth on the main highway route between Tamworth and Lichfield, resulting in it benefiting from a frequent bus route, however the settlement itself has very few services (a primary school, community hall and two public houses). It is considered that although Alrewas has a less regular bus service than previously, the settlement itself does have a thriving service centre, including shops, butchers, primary school, dentist, GP surgery, post office, public houses, and is also the only rural settlement to contain a petrol station.

**11.16** It should be noted that measuring sustainability has its limitations and whilst the matrices are intended to be as accurate a portrayal as possible, any assessment system has to be treated with a level of caution. For example, with regard to the accessibility scores, bus services are subject to change, often at short notice and whilst some rural services have been lost, some settlements are likely to see improved provision in response to housing growth up to 2029. As a result, accessibility scores at the present time may not wholly reflect the settlement's long term potential throughout the plan period. In view of this, it is recommended that this document be revised biannually, with the next update due in 2018, by which time the potential impacts of some planned developments should become more apparent.

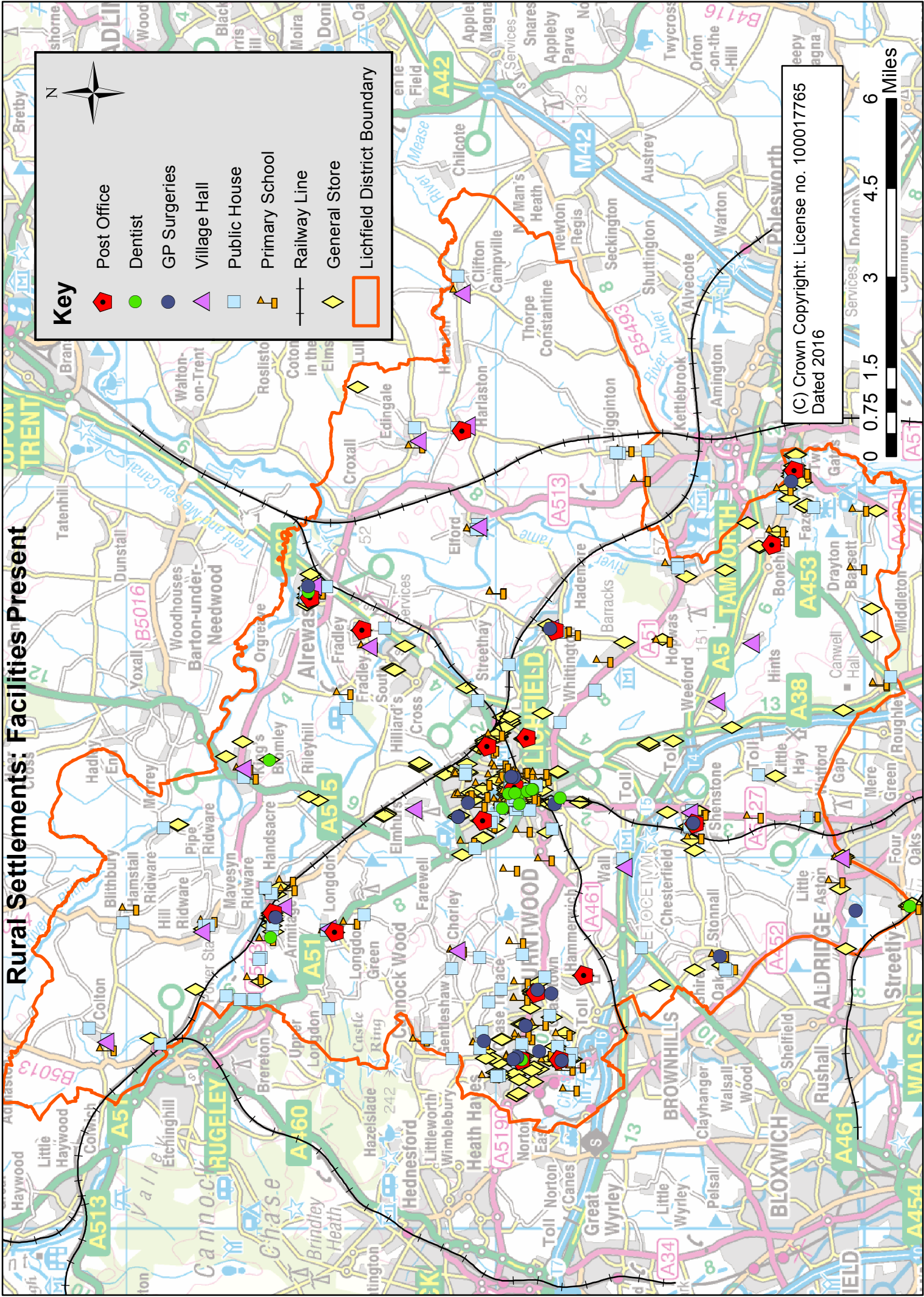




**Sustainability Matrix: Access, Services & Facilities**



# Rural Settlements: Facilities Present



Facilities  
Sustainability Matrix: Access, Services &

Service or facility	Post Office			GP Surgery			General Store			Pharmacy			Dentist			Primary School		Community Hall		Pub	Score within settlement	Score outside settlement	Total Matrix Score
	None	Present	Access to	None	Present	Access to	None	Present	Access to	None	Present	Access to	None	Present	None	Present	Present	Present					
Score	-5	5	3	-5	5	3	-5	5	3	-3	3	2	-3	3	2	-4	6	5	4	36	0	36	
Airewas		5			5			5			3			3			6	5	4				
Armitagewith Handsacre		5	3		5	3		5	3		3	2		3	2		6	5	4	36	13	49	
Colton	-5			-5						-3			-3				6	5	4	-6	0	-6	
Clifton Campville	-5			-5						-3			-3				6	5	4	-6	0	-6	
Drayton Bassett	-5			-5						-3			-3				6	5		-10	0	-10	
Edingale	-5			-5						-3			-3				6	5	4	-6	0	-6	
Elford	-5			-5						-3			-3				6	5	4	-6	0	-6	
Fazeley		5	3		5	3		5	3		3	2		-3	2		6	5	4	30	13	43	
Fradley		5		-5				5			-3			-3			6	5		10	0	10	
Hanshall Ridware	-5			-5				-5			-3			-3		-4			4	-21	0	-21	
Hammerwich	-5			-5				-5			-3			-3		-4		5		-10	-20	-15	
Hariaston		5		-5				-5			-3			-3		-4		5	4	-6	0	-6	
Hill Ridware	-5			-5					5		-3			-3			6	5	4	-6	0	-1	
Hopwas	-5		3	-5		3		-5		3	-3	2		-3	2		6	5	4	-6	13	7	
Kings Bromley	-5			-5				-5			-3			-3			6	5	4	-6	0	-6	
Little Aston			3	-5		3		3	3			2		3	2		6	5		25	13	38	
Longdon		5		-5				-5			-3			-3			6	5	4	4	0	4	
Shenstone		5	3		5	3		5	3		3	2		3	2		6	5	4	36	13	49	
Stonnall	-5				5				5					-3			6	5	4	14	0	14	
Streethay	-5		3	-5		3		-5		3	-3	2		-3	2		6	5	4	-21	13	-8	
Upper Longdon	-5			-5				-5			-3			-3					4	-21	0	-21	
Wigington	-5			-5				-5			-3			-3					4	-11	0	-11	
Whittington		5			5			5			3			-3			6	5	4	30	0	30	

Table 1.1 Services and Facilities by Settlement



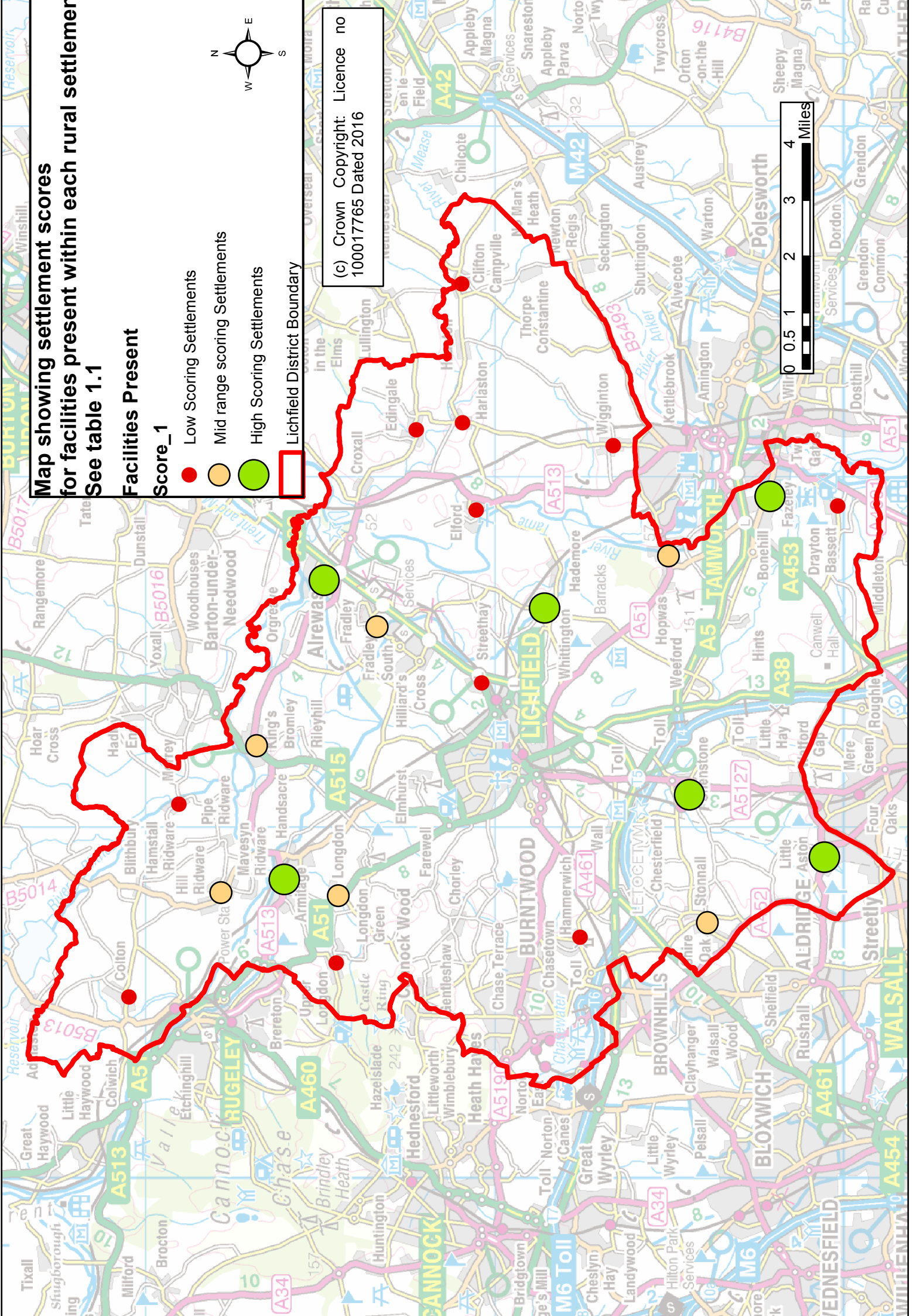
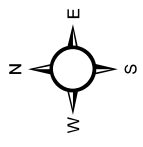
**Map showing settlement scores for facilities present within each rural settlement**  
See table 1.1

**Facilities Present**

**Score\_1**

- Low Scoring Settlements
- Mid range scoring Settlements
- High Scoring Settlements
- Lichfield District Boundary

(c) Crown Copyright: Licence no 100017765 Dated 2016

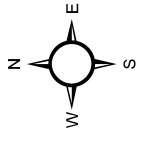




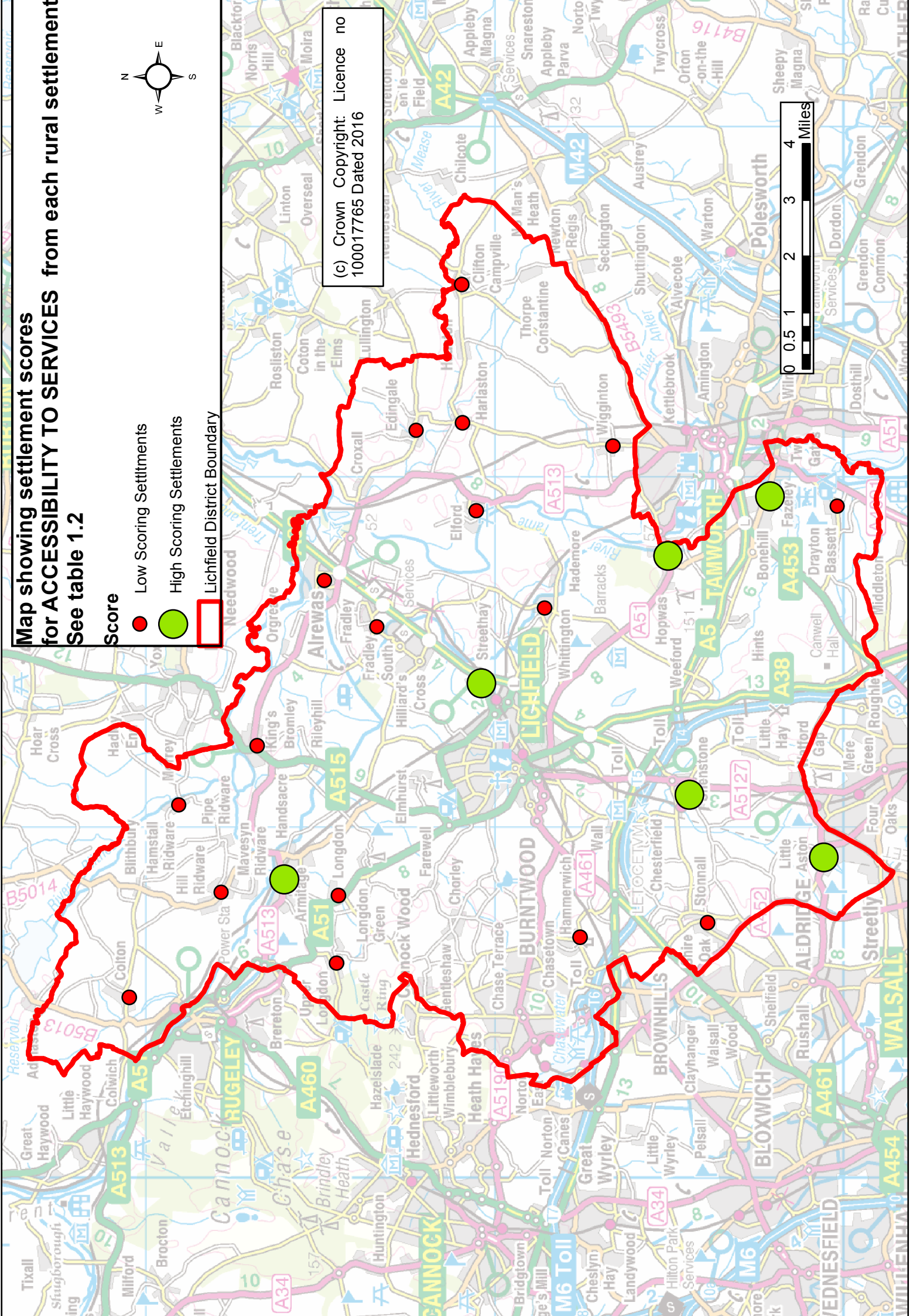


**Map showing settlement scores for ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES from each rural settlement**  
**See table 1.2**

- Score**
- Low Scoring Settlements
  - High Scoring Settlements
  - Lichfield District Boundary



(c) Crown Copyright: Licence no 100017765 Dated 2016





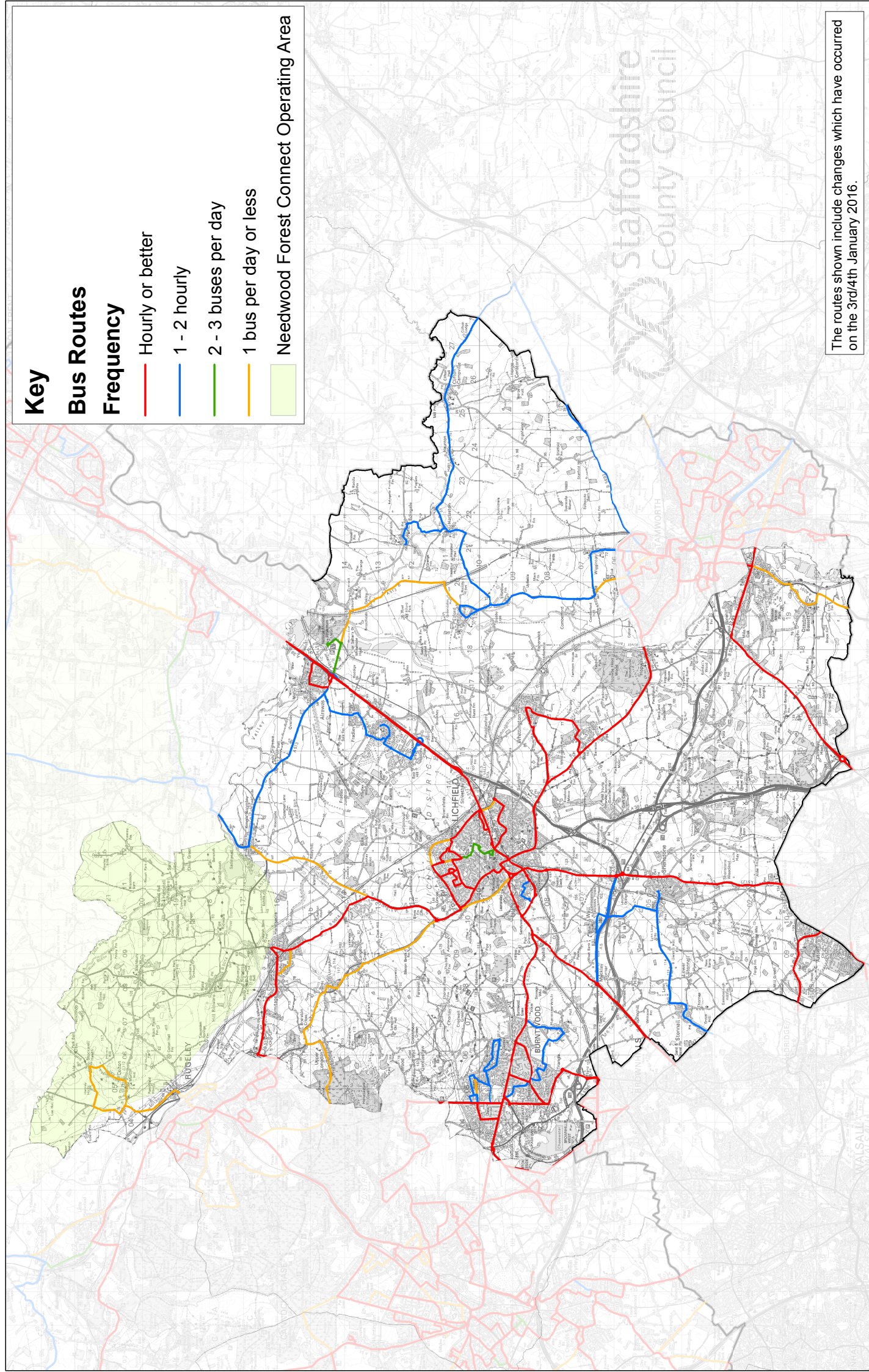
## Key

### Bus Routes

### Frequency

- Hourly or better
- 1 - 2 hourly
- 2 - 3 buses per day
- 1 bus per day or less

Needwood Forest Connect Operating Area



The routes shown include changes which have occurred on the 3rd/4th January 2016.

# Lichfield District Bus Routes - January 2016

(C) Crown Copyright and database rights 2016. Ordnance Survey 100019422.  
You are not permitted to copy, sub-license, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.  
Use of this data is subject to the terms and conditions shown at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/maps](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/maps)  
Produced by Staffordshire County Council, 2016.



Staffordshire  
County Council