

# Stretton Grandison Group Neighbourhood Plan

Site Assessment

Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council

December 2018

## Quality information

### Prepared by

Emily Pugh  
Senior Planner

### Checked by

Jesse Honey  
Associate Planning  
Consultant

### Verified by

Jesse Honey  
Associate Planning  
Consultant

### Approved by

Una McGaughrin  
Associate Planning  
Consultant

## Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
V1	01/08/18	Draft	EP	Emily Pugh	Senior Planner
V2	10/08/18	Draft Review	JH	Jesse Honey	Associate Planner
V3	31/08/18	Group Review	ET	Emma Thompson	Clerk to Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council
V4	11/10/18	Proofread	SF	Sarah Fiddaman	Project Administrator
V5	18/11/18	Additional Group Review	ET	Emma Thompson	Clerk to Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council
V6	06/12/18	Locality Review	JW	John Wilkinson	Neighbourhood Planning Officer

## Prepared for:

Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council

## Prepared by:

Emily Pugh  
Senior Planner  
T: 020 7061 7826  
E: emily.pugh@aecom.com

AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited  
2 Leman Street  
London  
E1 8FA  
UK

T: 020 7061 7000  
aecom.com

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## Abbreviations used in the report

### Abbreviation

DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DPD	Development Plan Document
Ha	Hectare
HC	Herefordshire Council
NA	Neighbourhood Area
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
PDL	Previously Developed Land
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance (MHCLG)
SGG	Stretton Grandison Group
SGGPC	Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

## Executive Summary

Site selection and allocation is one of the most contentious aspects of planning, raising strong feelings amongst local people, landowners, developers and businesses. It is important that any selection process carried out is transparent, fair, robust and defensible and that the same criteria and thorough process is applied to each potential site. Equally important is the way in which the work is recorded and communicated to interested parties so the approach is transparent and defensible.

Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the parishes of Canon Frome, Castle Frome, Eggleton and Stretton Grandison which fall within the administrative area of Herefordshire Council.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan is being prepared in the context of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011 – 2031. Policy RA2 sets out that the minimum growth target in each rural Housing Market Area will be used to inform the level of housing development to be delivered in the various settlements. Policy RA1 sets out that for Ledbury (in which the Neighbourhood Area is located) the indicative housing growth target is 14% which equates to 18 homes for the Neighbourhood Area over the Plan period. Herefordshire Council have confirmed that the net housing requirement for the Stretton Grandison Group Neighbourhood Plan is 14 homes (following three completions and one commitment).

Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council undertook a 'call for sites' exercise which concluded on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018 and identified 12 sites within the Neighbourhood Area. In addition, one site was identified as suitable, available and achievable in the Herefordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2015) which has also been considered.

Sites submitted to the call for sites exercise were assessed using the pro-formas included in Appendix A. All sites were visited to verify the rationale for their discounting or the findings of the desktop appraisal.

From the assessments undertaken it is considered that Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council have a number of options in terms of the how the housing requirement of 14 homes could be distributed through the Neighbourhood Area; one option would be to allocate all of the housing on one site and the other would be to distribute the growth amongst a number of sites.

The advantages of concentrating growth on one site relate primarily to planning gain including the provision of affordable housing and/or open space, although these opportunities depend on the specific site and scheme as well as viability. On the basis of the available information it is considered that there are three sites which could each individually



accommodate the total housing requirement for the SGG NDP: Site 11, Site 12 or Site 13. Site 12 is considered to be potentially the most constrained of these sites.

Alternatively, the Group could decide to split their allocation across a number of smaller sites within the Neighbourhood Area. The allocation of a number of smaller sites across the Neighbourhood Area may reduce the visual impact and highways network impact because the scale of each allocation would be smaller and the impacts spread across a wider area. However, there would be a smaller opportunity to capture planning gain through Section 106 Agreements as financial viability may be more of an issue.

On the basis of the available information it is considered that there are five sites which could in combination accommodate the total housing requirement for the SGG NDP: Site 1, Site 5, Site 6, Site 8 and Site 10.

Site 8 relates to an existing community which is owned by a co-ownership housing association and it is their intention to create up to eight affordable housing units to be part of their community. It is considered that the site does not represent an appropriate allocation for housing if this housing were to comprise typical market housing to be sold off. However, the landowner's have stated an interest in providing affordable housing to be occupied in connection with their existing community. Site 8 could therefore be considered a rural exception site. HC's Policy H2 supports proposals for affordable housing schemes in rural areas which would not normally be released for housing subject to three criteria.

Points of further consideration have been highlighted in relation to each site for Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council to consider before making their decision.



# 1. Introduction

## Background

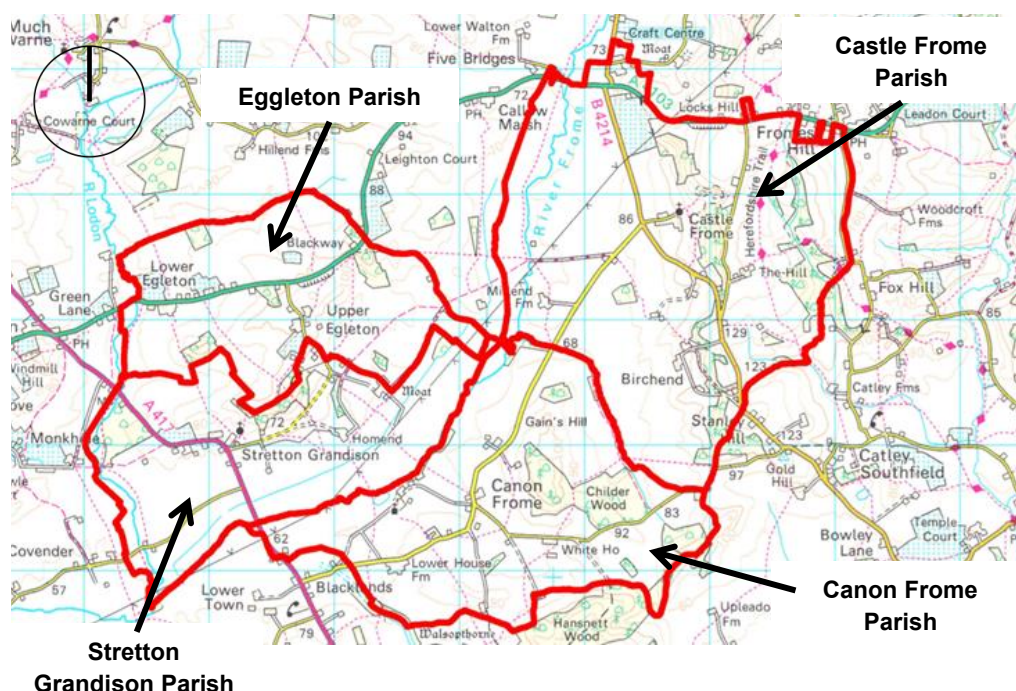
- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent site appraisal for the Stretton Grandison Group Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of Stretton Grandison Group Parish Council (SGGPC). The work undertaken was agreed with the Group and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in May 2018.
- 1.2 SGGPC is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for the parishes of Canon Frome, Castle Frome, Eggleton and Stretton Grandison which fall within the administrative area of Herefordshire Council (HC). The boundary of the Neighbourhood Area (NA) and SGGPC, as the qualifying body, were designated by HC in September 2015.
- 1.3 The Group Parish extends over 1697ha and had a combined population of 360 in 2011. The area lies about 10 miles to the north east of Hereford, and 8 miles North West of Ledbury.
- 1.4 The Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is being prepared in the context of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011 – 2031<sup>1</sup>. The Core Strategy was adopted by HC on 16 October 2015; it shapes future development and sets the overall strategic planning framework for the county. The Core Strategy balances environmental issues with economic and social needs to ensure that development is sustainable and does not cause irreversible harm to important resources and features.
- 1.5 HC are currently in the process of producing the Rural Areas Site Allocation (RASA) Development Plan Document (DPD); the Issues and Options document<sup>2</sup> was consulted upon during the summer of 2017. It is intended that the RASA DPD will contain the more detailed proposals to ensure the full delivery of the rural growth targets within the Core Strategy. However, the RASA DPD will not contain policies and proposals for growth in Core Strategy Policy RA2 settlements for which a NDP is being prepared (i.e. Lower Eggleton, Eggleton, Canon Frome and Stratton Grandison).
- 1.6 The adopted Local Plan is important in setting the framework for the development of NDPs, which are required to be in conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted development plan. NDPs add value to the development plan by developing policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. The intention, therefore, is for the Core Strategy to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Stretton Grandison Group Parish, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process. The Core Strategy supports the production of NDPs and the allocation of sites for development therein (Policy RA2) and it is the intention of SGGPC to plan for their identified need through the NDP.
- 1.7 Policy RA2 sets out that the minimum growth target in each rural Housing Market Area will be used to inform the level of housing development to be delivered in the various settlements. Policy RA1 sets out that for Ledbury (in which the NA is located) the indicative housing growth target is 14%. Lower Eggleton and Fromes Hill (both on the

<sup>1</sup> Available at: [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1788/core\\_strategy\\_sections\\_combined](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1788/core_strategy_sections_combined)

<sup>2</sup> Available at: [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/8524/rural\\_areas\\_site\\_allocation\\_dpd](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/8524/rural_areas_site_allocation_dpd)

edge of the neighbourhood area, and partly within other parishes) are identified as settlements which will be the main focus of proportionate housing development. Stretton Grandison, Canon Frome and Eggleton are identified as other settlements where proportionate housing is appropriate. On the basis of an indicative housing growth target of 14% the minimum level of growth for the NA has been calculated as 18 dwellings over the Core Strategy period to 2031.

- 1.8 HC confirmed in November 2018 that the net housing requirement for the NA is 14 dwellings for the Plan period to 2031 (taking into account three completions and one commitment).
- 1.9 SGGPC undertook a 'call for sites' exercise which concluded on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018 and identified 12 sites within the NA. In addition, one site was submitted to the Herefordshire SHLAA (2015)<sup>3</sup> and was considered to be of medium suitability for the allocation of housing.
- 1.10 In this context, PPC has asked AECOM to undertake an independent and objective review of the known sites.



**Figure 1. Stretton Grandison Group Neighbourhood Area (Source: Herefordshire Council)**

- 1.11 The purpose of this site appraisal is to produce a clear assessment of whether the identified sites are appropriate for the allocation of housing in the NDP, in particular whether they comply with both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the strategic policies of the adopted Core Strategy (2015).
- 1.12 It is anticipated that the neighbourhood planning site selection process, aided by this report, will be robust enough to meet the Basic Conditions considered by the Independent Examiner, as well as any potential legal challenges by developers and other interested parties.

<sup>3</sup> Available at:

[https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/181/strategic\\_housing\\_land\\_availability\\_assessment\\_2015](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/181/strategic_housing_land_availability_assessment_2015)

## Planning Policy and Evidence Base

1.13 As previously highlighted, the Neighbourhood Plan policies and allocations must be in accordance with the strategic policies of the development plan.

1.14 The key documents making up the planning framework for the Stretton Grandison Group Parish are:

- Herefordshire Core Strategy (adopted September 2015).

1.15 The relevant policies are highlighted below.

### Herefordshire Core Strategy

1.16 The Core Strategy plans for the years up to 2031 to deliver against the social, economic and environmental needs for the district.

#### Policy SS1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

1.17 Supports sustainable development in accordance with national policy.

#### Policy SS2 – Delivering new homes

1.18 Supports the delivery of 16,500 homes in Herefordshire between 2011 and 2031 to meet market and affordable housing need.

1.19 In the rural areas, including Stretton Grandison, new housing development will be acceptable where it helps to meet housing needs and requirements, supports the rural economy and local services and facilities and is responsive to the needs of its community. In the wider rural areas, new housing will be carefully controlled, reflecting the need to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

1.20 The use of previously developed land in sustainable locations will be encouraged. Residential density will be determined by local character and good quality design. The target net density across the county is between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare, although this may be lower in sensitive areas.

#### Policy SS4 – Movement and transportation

1.21 New developments should be designed and located to minimise the impacts on the transport network; ensuring that journey times and the efficient and safe operation of the network are not detrimentally impacted. Furthermore, where practicable, development proposals should be accessible by and facilitate a genuine choice of modes of travel including walking, cycling and public transport.

#### Policy SS6 – Environmental quality and local distinctiveness

1.22 Development proposals should conserve and enhance those environmental assets that contribute towards the county's distinctiveness, in particular its settlement pattern, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets and especially those with specific environmental designations.

#### Policy RA1 – Rural housing distribution

1.23 The county's rural areas are divided into seven housing market areas. The NA is located within the Ledbury housing market area which has been allocated a growth target of 14%.



## Policy RA2 – Housing in settlements outside of Hereford and the market towns

- 1.24 Sustainable growth will be supported in or adjacent to settlements outside Hereford and the market towns. Development must reflect the size, role and function of each settlement and be located within or adjacent to the main built up area; brownfield sites will be prioritised over greenfield sites.
- 1.25 Settlements within the NA which are the main focus of growth are Fromes Hill and Lower Eggleton; other settlements where proportionate housing is appropriate are Canon Frome, Eggleton and Stretton Grandison, see Figure 2.
- 1.26 NDPs can allocate land for new housing.

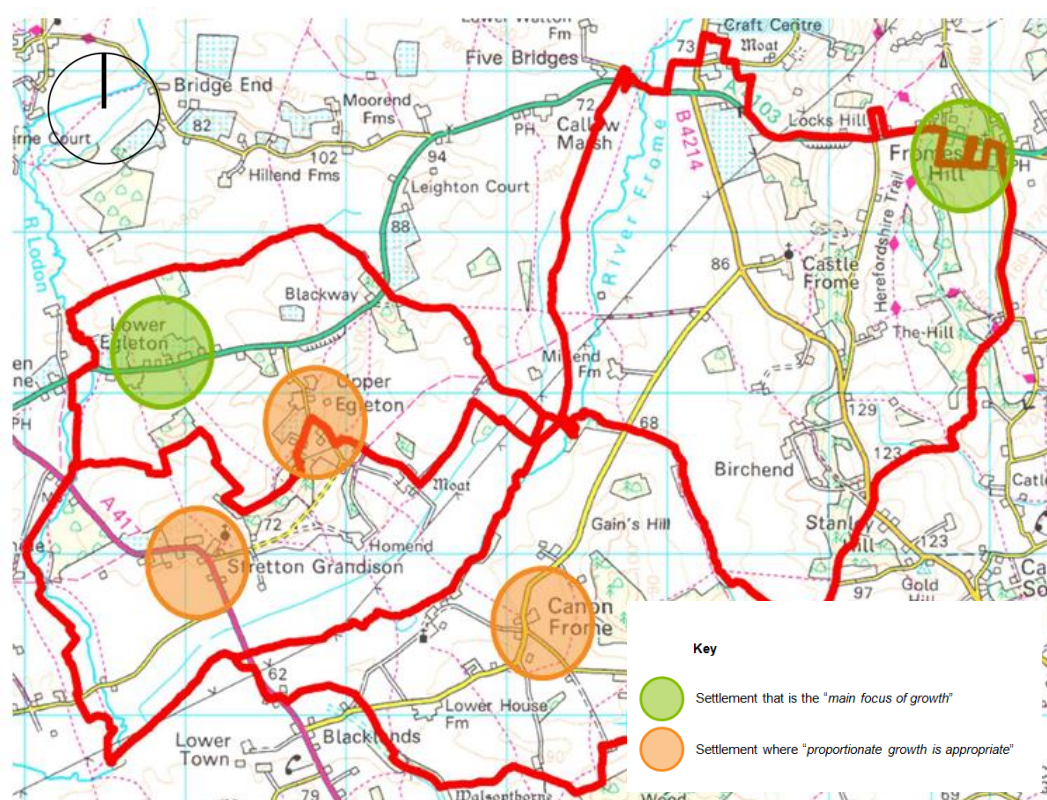


Figure 2. Rural Areas Settlement Hierarchy (Core Strategy Policy RA2)

## Policy RA3 – Herefordshire's countryside

- 1.27 In rural locations outside settlements, residential development will be limited to proposals that meet an agricultural or forestry need, support a rural enterprise, are replacement dwellings, involve the sustainable re-use of a redundant or disused building(s), are rural exception sites, are of an exception design or meets the need of gypsies or other travellers.

## Policy H2 - Rural exception sites

- 1.28 Proposals for affordable housing schemes in rural areas may be permitted on land which would not normally be released for housing subject to a series of conditions.

## 2. Site Assessment Method

- 2.1 The approach undertaken in the site appraisal is based primarily on the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (Assessment of Land Availability) published in 2014 with ongoing updates, which contains guidance on the assessment of land availability and the production of a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) as part of a local authority's evidence base for a Local Plan.
- 2.2 Although a NDP is at a smaller scale than a Local Plan, the criteria for assessing the suitability of sites for housing are still appropriate. This includes an assessment of whether a site is suitable, available and achievable.
- 2.3 In this context, the methodology for carrying out the site appraisal is presented below.

### Task 1: Identify Sites to be included in the Assessment

- 2.4 The first task is to identify which sites should be considered as part of the assessment. SGGPC undertook a 'call for sites' exercise which concluded on the 1st March 2018 and identified 12 sites within the NA. In addition, one site was submitted to the Herefordshire SHLAA (2015)<sup>4</sup> which was considered to be of medium suitability for the allocation of housing.
- 2.5 All sites included in the assessment are shown in Table 2 and Table 3 below.

### Task 2: Pro-Forma

- 2.6 A site appraisal pro-forma has been developed by AECOM to assess potential sites for allocation in the NDP. It has been developed based on the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance, the Site Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans: A Toolkit for Neighbourhood Planners (Locality, 2015) and the knowledge and experience gained through previous neighbourhood planning site assessments. The purpose of the pro-forma is to enable a consistent evaluation of each site against an objective set of criteria.
- 2.7 The pro-forma utilised for the assessment enabled a range of information to be recorded, including the following:
- General information:
    - Site location and use; and
    - Site context and planning history.
  - Context:
    - Type of site (greenfield, brownfield etc.); and
    - Planning history.
  - Suitability:
    - Site characteristics;
    - Environmental considerations;
    - Heritage considerations;
    - Community facilities and services; and

<sup>4</sup> Available at:  
[https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/181/strategic\\_housing\\_land\\_availability\\_assessment\\_2015](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/181/strategic_housing_land_availability_assessment_2015)

- Other key considerations (e.g. flood risk, agricultural land, tree preservation orders).
  - Availability
- 2.8 One pro-forma was completed for each site considered through this site assessment and is included in Appendix A.
- 2.9 The pro-formas were completed following a desk top assessment which draws upon a range of sources of information including Google Maps<sup>5</sup> and Google Earth<sup>6</sup>, the MAGIC map<sup>7</sup>, Historic England mapping<sup>8</sup> and the EA's Flood Map for Planning<sup>9</sup>. The desk top assessment was corroborated and verified following a site visit which allowed the team to consider aspects of the site assessment that could only be done visually. It was also an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the context and nature of the NA.

## Task 3: Consolidation of Results

- 2.10 Following the site visit, the desktop assessments were revisited to finalise the assessments and compare the sites to judge which were the most suitable to meet the housing requirement.
- 2.11 A 'traffic light' rating of all sites has been given based on whether the site is an appropriate candidate to be considered for allocation in the NDP. The traffic light rating indicates 'green' for sites that show no constraints and are appropriate as site allocations, 'amber' for sites which are potentially appropriate if issues can be resolved and 'red' for sites which are not currently suitable, available and/or achievable. The judgement on each site is based on the three 'tests' of whether a site is appropriate for allocation – i.e. the site is suitable, available and achievable.
- 2.12 The conclusions of the SHLAA were revisited to consider whether the conclusions would change as a result of the local criteria.

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<sup>5</sup> Available at: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps>

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://earth.google.com/web/>

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search?clearresults=True>

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

## Indicative Housing Capacity

- 2.13 This report includes a capacity analysis of each site where no information was provided by the site promoter. The capacity analysis is based on net housing densities and developable site area; the assumptions are detailed in Table 1 below. Policy SS2 sets out a target net density across the county of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare; the sites have therefore been assessed on the basis of 30 dwellings per hectare given the rural nature of the NA.
- 2.14 The indicative housing capacities have been calculated so that the sites can be compared and because it is useful to have an idea of capacity when planning to meet an identified requirement (in this case 14 homes).

**Table 1 AECOM Net Housing Density**

Area	Gross to net ratio standards	Net Housing Density
Up to 0.4 ha	90%	30
0.4 ha to 2 ha	80%	30
2 ha to 10 ha	75%	30
Over 10 ha	50%	30

- 2.15 If landowners/developers have identified a housing figure this has been stated.
- 2.16 Lower densities than suggested in this report may be appropriate to apply to the sites in the NDP (resulting in lower capacities) due to the rural nature of the NA. It is recommended that number of houses allocated per site is consistent with the existing density of the village's built up area and appropriate for the context and setting of the site, taking into account the site specific characteristic and constraints. The site capacities, which are based on the gross to net ratios above, stated are for illustrative purposes only.
- 2.17 Sites 11 and 12 are parts of much larger land holdings. The site promoter did not identify specific boundaries to be assessed within this report, but was interested more in establishing the principle of suitability or otherwise for housing. Given that there is no site boundary known at the current time the indicative site capacities have not been calculated. However, both of these sites individually are likely to be able to accommodate some, if not all, of SGGPC's housing requirement.
- 1.29 Some of the sites have indicative capacities which are in excess of SGGPC's identified housing need. Based on the conclusions of this report, and taking into account all other considerations, if it is decided that these site(s) should be allocated, SGGPC can either allocate the whole site for a set number of units (i.e. 14) or could allocate a smaller part of the site to accommodate 14 (or fewer units). This process could be undertaken in discussion with the relevant landowner(s).



## 3. Site Assessment

### Sites Considered through the Site Appraisal

3.1 The sites to be considered through this site appraisal have been identified through:

- The call for sites exercise undertaken by SGGPC; and
- A review of HC's SHLAA.

3.2 The sites identified are set out in the tables below.

### Stretton Grandison Call for Sites

3.3 A call for sites exercise concluded in March 2018 and 12 sites were submitted, please see Table 2 below.

**Table 2 Sites Identified in the Stretton Grandison Call for Sites**

Reference	Site Name/Address	Gross Site Area (ha)	Indicative Housing Capacity (AECOM calculation)	Indicative Housing Capacity (landowner information)
Site 1	Land at Townsend Barns, Stretton Grandison	0.4		4
Site 2	Land at The Hill Farm, Fromes Hill	1.6	38	Not provided
Site 3	Grain Store, Canon Frome	0.75	18	Not provided
Site 4	Land at The Bramleys, Castle Frome	0.27	6	Not provided
Site 5	Land at Vicarage Cottage, Canon Frome	0.1	3	Not provided
Site 6	Land at The Barn, Canon Frome	0.19	5	Not provided
Site 7	Rochester House, Canon Frome	0.68		4
Site 8	Canon Frome Court, Canon Frome	16* *Entire site, not area of site proposed for development		8
Site 9	Land east of Gospel Ash, Fromes Hill	0.76	18	Not provided
Site 10	Former Orchard area adjacent School Cottages, Stretton Grandison	0.21	6	Not provided
Site 11	Land east of A417 (south), Stretton Grandison	3.97	No site boundary identified, likely to be able to accommodate some, if not all, of SGGPC's housing requirement.	Not provided
Site 12	Land north of A4103, Eggleton	0.68	No site boundary identified, likely to be able to accommodate some, if not all, of SGGPC's housing requirement.	Not provided

## Herefordshire SHLAA

3.4 The 2015 Herefordshire SHLAA considered one site in Stretton Grandison and concluded it had medium potential for allocation for residential development.

**Table 3 Sites Identified in the SHLAA (2016) as suitable, available and achievable**

Reference	SHLAA Reference	Site Name	Yield (residential units)
Site 13	HLAA/241/001	Land south west of Wheatsheaf Public House, off A4103 Worcester Road	19



**Figure 3. Location of Sites to be considered (please note that Sites 11 and 12 do not have defined settlement boundaries)**

## Summary of the Site Assessment

3.5 The sites detailed in Table 2 and Table 3 have been assessed to consider whether they would be appropriate for allocation in the Stretton Grandison NDP.

3.6 Table 4 sets out a summary of the site assessments.

3.7 The final column is a 'traffic light' rating for each site, indicating whether or not the site is appropriate for allocation. Red indicates the site is not appropriate for allocation within the NDP. Green indicates the site is appropriate for allocation within the NDP without constraint. Amber indicates that the site is potentially suitable for allocation within the NDP subject to the mitigation of constraints.

3.8 All sites are considered to be available for development, as they were submitted through the Call for Sites or assessed as available in the SHLAA.

3.9 Table 4 should be read alongside the completed pro-formas presented in Appendix A.

Table 4. Site Assessment Summary Table

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Source	Gross Site Area	Indicative Capacity	Site Type	Conclusions	Traffic Light Rating
Site 1	Land at Townsend Barns, Stretton Grandison	SGGPC Call for Sites	0.4	4	Greenfield	<p>The site is located within Stretton Grandison where the HC Core Strategy notes that “proportionate housing is appropriate”.</p> <p>The site is currently used for agricultural purposes and has no planning history. The allocation of the site within the NDP would result in the loss of agricultural land.</p> <p>A new access would be required from the A417 to the site but this is considered to be achievable. The site is some distance from the nearest bus stops and services and facilities.</p> <p>There is limited potential for protected species given that the site is a working agricultural field.</p> <p>The site is not particularly visible and is surrounded by structures, buildings and infrastructure. Therefore, the site is considered to be of low to medium landscape value.</p> <p>The power lines at the west of the site may reduce the developable area of the site, and the overall site capacity.</p> <p>There are listed buildings in close proximity to the site and any development would need to consider their impact on these heritage assets and their settings.</p>	
Site 2	Land at The Hill Farm, Fromes Hill	SGGPC Call for Sites	1.6	38	Greenfield	<p>The site is currently used for agricultural purposes and has no planning history. The allocation of the site within the NDP would result in the loss of agricultural land.</p> <p>The ability to provide a suitable access to the site from the A4103 appears to be unlikely, and any opportunity highly constrained, given the width of the carriageway leading to the site.</p>	

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Source	Gross Site Area	Indicative Capacity	Site Type	Conclusions	Traffic Light Rating
						<p>There is some potential for protected species given the presence of hedgerows and vegetation at the east and north boundaries.</p> <p>The site is open with wide and long views to and from the surrounding areas. The site is at the top of prominent ridgeline and its development would likely have a disproportionate landscape and visual impact. The site is considered to be of medium to high sensitivity.</p> <p>The site is much larger than the existing urban grain within the vicinity of the site. The site is of an overall scale that would change the size and character of the settlement.</p> <p>In addition, the site is away from the existing settlement and its allocation would be contrary to Policies SS1, SS2, SS6, RA2 and RA3 of the HC Core Strategy which seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.</p>	
Site 3	Grain Store, Canon Frome	SGGPC Call for Sites	0.75	18	Previously Developed Land	<p>The site is located near Canon Frome where the HC Core Strategy notes that "proportionate housing is appropriate".</p> <p>The site currently accommodates an agricultural building and is therefore, at least partially, previously developed land. Policy RA3 supports the sustainable reuse of redundant buildings in the countryside.</p> <p>However, the use of the site for residential purposes is not considered to be sustainable as the site is remote from the existing settlement and its allocation would be contrary to Policies SS1, SS2, SS6 and RA2 of the HC Core Strategy which seek to direct development to sustainable locations.</p> <p>For this reason the site has been discounted from any further assessment.</p>	
Site 4	Land at The Bramleys, Castle Frome	SGGPC Call for Sites	0.27	6	Greenfield	<p>The site is located near Castle Frome which is not explicitly mentioned in the HC Core Strategy as a potential suitable location for residential development.</p> <p>In addition, the site is discreet from the existing settlement and its</p>	

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Source	Gross Site Area	Indicative Capacity	Site Type	Conclusions	Traffic Light Rating
						<p>allocation would be contrary to Policies SS1, SS2, SS6, RA2 and RA3 of the HC Core Strategy which seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.</p> <p>For this reason the site has been discounted from any further assessment.</p>	
Site 5	Land at Vicarage Cottage, Canon Frome	SGGPC Call for Sites	0.1	3	Greenfield	<p>The site is located in Canon Frome where the HC Core Strategy notes that "proportionate housing is appropriate".</p> <p>The site is currently used for domestic food growing activities and has no planning history, although see note in relation to planning history for Site 6 below.</p> <p>There is an access to the site from the highway which runs adjacent to the south boundary of the site. This would need to be upgraded to provide a suitable access for residential development.</p> <p>There is some potential for protected species given the presence of hedgerows and vegetation at the boundaries and within the site.</p> <p>The site is not widely visible, is adjacent to a dwelling and there are poly-tunnels to the north of site; the site is considered to be of low to moderate landscape value.</p> <p>Given the rural nature of the NA and the need to plan for 14 dwellings this site is considered to be relatively sustainable.</p>	
Site 6	Land at The Barn, Canon Frome	SGGPC Call for Sites	0.19	5	Greenfield	<p>The site is located in Canon Frome where the HC Core Strategy notes that "proportionate housing is appropriate".</p> <p>The site is currently used for grazing and in 2007 planning permission was refused for one residential dwelling because the site was outside of the settlement boundary in an unsustainable location. This decision was made pre-NPPF which requires each planning authority to plan to meet its own needs; this decision is therefore considered to be of negligible weight for</p>	

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Source	Gross Site Area	Indicative Capacity	Site Type	Conclusions	Traffic Light Rating
						<p>the purpose of this assessment.</p> <p>There is an access to the site from the highway which runs adjacent to the south boundary of the site. This would need to be upgraded to provide a suitable access for residential development.</p> <p>There is some potential for protected species given the presence of hedgerows and vegetation at the boundaries and within the site.</p> <p>The site is not widely visible, is adjacent to a dwelling and there are poly-tunnels to the north of site; the site is considered to be of low to moderate landscape value.</p> <p>Given the rural nature of the NA and the need to plan for 14 dwellings this site is considered to be relatively sustainable.</p>	
Site 7	Rochester House, Canon Frome	SGGPC Call for Sites	0.68	4	Previously Developed Land	<p>The site is located close to Canon Frome where the HC Core Strategy notes that “proportionate housing is appropriate”. The site currently accommodates a large detached house and outbuildings. The landowner has confirmed that the intention is to subdivide the existing dwelling into three units and erect two additional dwellings within the garden, resulting in a net increase in four units.</p> <p>The site is away from the existing settlement and its allocation would be contrary to Policies SS1, SS2, SS6, RA2 and RA3 of the HC Core Strategy which seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.</p> <p>For this reason the site has been discounted from any further assessment.</p>	
Site 8	Canon Frome Court, Canon Frome	SGGPC Call for Sites	16 *Entire site, not site propose for development	8	Previously Developed Land	<p>The site is located close to Canon Frome where the HC Core Strategy notes that “proportionate housing is appropriate”.</p> <p>The site is owned by a co-ownership housing association and it is their intention to create up to eight affordable housing units to be part of their</p>	

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Source	Gross Site Area	Indicative Capacity	Site Type	Conclusions	Traffic Light Rating
						<p>community.</p> <p>The site is a detached part of the existing settlement and its allocation would be contrary to Policies SS1, SS2, SS6, RA2 and RA3 of the HC Core Strategy which seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. However, Policy H2 supports proposals for rural exception sites which could apply to this site.</p> <p>There is an existing access to the site which appears to be acceptable.</p> <p>There is some potential for protected species given the presence of hedgerows, vegetation and empty buildings within the site.</p> <p>The site is considered to be of limited landscape value given the presence of the existing buildings and domestic structures within the site.</p> <p>Canon Frome Court is a Grade II listed building; therefore any development will need to minimise impact on the setting of the listed building.</p>	
Site 9	Land east of Gospel Ash, Fromes Hill	SGGPC Call for Sites	0.76	18	Mix of Previously Developed Land and Greenfield	<p>The site is located close to Fromes Hill which is one of the settlements the HC Core Strategy states is the "main focus of growth".</p> <p>The site is currently used for domestic food growing activities and has no planning history.</p> <p>The site does not have direct access to the A4103 which is south of the site and runs east-west. A suitable access would require the agreement of third party land owners as the site boundary does not reach the highway. In addition, the access would also be at a bend in the road on a steep gradient and there are some concerns about whether the required visibility splay could be achieved.</p> <p>There is some potential for protected species given the presence of hedgerows and vegetation within the site.</p>	



Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Source	Gross Site Area	Indicative Capacity	Site Type	Conclusions	Traffic Light Rating
						<p>The site is considered to be of limited landscape value given the presence of the existing buildings and domestic structures within the site. However, the site is also on the top of a prominent ridgeline so its development is likely to have disproportionate landscape and visual impact.</p> <p>The site is remote from the settlement and is larger than other plots within the area; it is also set back from the highway, extending deeper than neighbouring plots and its development would be unlike the prevailing pattern of development in the area. This site is considered to be contrary to Policies SS1, SS2, SS6, RA2 and RA3 of the HC Core Strategy which seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.</p>	
Site 10	Former Orchard area adjacent School Cottages, Stretton Grandison	SGGPC Call for Sites	0.21	6	Greenfield	<p>The site is located in Stretton Grandison where the HC Core Strategy notes that "proportionate housing is appropriate".</p> <p>The site comprises an area of scrub with no relevant planning history.</p> <p>There is no existing access to the site but there is potential for a suitable access to be provided to the site.</p> <p>There is some potential for protected species given the presence of hedgerows and vegetation within the site.</p> <p>The site is considered to be of limited landscape value given its location within an existing hamlet.</p> <p>There are heritage assets in close proximity to the site, any future development would need to be sensitive to the surrounding heritage context.</p> <p>Given the rural nature of the NA and the need to plan for 18 dwellings this site is considered to be relatively sustainable.</p>	

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Source	Gross Site Area	Indicative Capacity	Site Type	Conclusions	Traffic Light Rating
Site 11	Land east of A417 (south), Stretton Grandison	SGGPC Call for Sites	No site boundary identified	Likely to be able to accommodate some, if not all, of SGGPC's housing requirement.	Greenfield	<p>The site is located in Stretton Grandison where the HC Core Strategy notes that "proportionate housing is appropriate". The site has the potential to accommodate the NDP's entire housing requirement.</p> <p>The site is currently used for agricultural purposes and has no planning history. The allocation of the site within the NDP would result in the loss of agricultural land.</p> <p>There is an informal access to the site at the northern boundary of the site. There is potential for a suitable access to be provided to the site.</p> <p>There is limited potential for protected species given that the site is a working agricultural field.</p> <p>The site is open with wide and long views to and from the surrounding areas. The site is considered to be of medium to high sensitivity.</p> <p>There are heritage assets in close proximity to the site, any future development would need to be sensitive to the surrounding heritage context.</p> <p>Given the rural nature of the NA and the need to plan for 14 dwellings this site is considered to be relatively sustainable.</p>	
Site 12	Land north of A4103, Eggleton	SGGPC Call for Sites	No site boundary identified	Likely to be able to accommodate some, if not all, of SGGPC's housing requirement.	Greenfield	<p>The sites are located on greenfield land within Eggleton which is one of the settlements the HC Core Strategy states is the "main focus of growth".</p> <p>The site(s) relate to parcels of agricultural land between existing residential developments.</p> <p>Each parcel would require its own new or upgraded access; whilst there is potential for suitable accesses the Highways Authority may have some concern about the number of individual accesses on to the road, particularly given the national speed limit of the road.</p>	

Site Ref.	Site Address	Site Source	Gross Site Area	Indicative Capacity	Site Type	Conclusions	Traffic Light Rating
						<p>There is some potential for protected species given the presence of hedgerows at the boundary of the site. The central site package only is likely not suitable on the grounds that it is a Priory Habitat: Traditional Orchard.</p> <p>The site is considered to be of limited landscape value given its location within ribbon residential development.</p> <p>There are listed buildings to the south east and south west of the site; any development, in particular at the westernmost site package, would need to consider the relationship with the heritage assets.</p> <p>The individual parcels that front the A4103 are of a scale that is in keeping with the existing urban grain.</p>	
Site 13	Land south west of Wheatsheaf Public House, off A4103 Worcester Road	HC's SHLAA (2015) Reference: HLAA/241/001	0.79	19	Greenfield	<p>The site is located at Fromes Hill which is one of the settlements the HC Core Strategy states is the "main focus of growth". The site has the potential to accommodate the NDP's entire housing requirement.</p> <p>The SHLAA concludes that the site has potential for development subject to acceptable access being achieved.</p> <p>It should also be noted that the site is at the top of prominent ridgeline and its development could have a disproportionate landscape and visual impact particularly in relation to the southern half of the site; this could be mitigated through careful site layout and design.</p> <p>There is also Grade II listed The Steppes to north west of the site, but any impacts on this heritage asset are likely to be limited given intervening development with appropriate mitigation through sensitive design.</p>	

## 4. Conclusions

### Summary of Site Appraisals

- 4.1 The sites assessed to consider whether they would be appropriate for allocation in the Stretton Grandison NDP. These included sites that were submitted to SGGPC's call for sites exercise and sites within the NA included within HC's SHLAA.
- 4.2 Table 4 provides a summary of each site assessment pro-forma included in Appendix A.
- 4.3 The final row of Table 4 is a 'traffic light' rating for each site, indicating whether the site is appropriate for allocation. Red indicates the site is not appropriate for allocation within the NDP. Green indicates the site is appropriate for allocation within the NDP with no or few constraints. Amber indicates that the site is potentially appropriate for allocation within the NDP subject to the mitigation of constraints.
- 4.4 All sites are considered to be available for development, as they were either submitted to SGGPC's call for sites exercise by landowners or were assessed as available in the SHLAA.
- 4.5 From the assessments that have been undertaken it is considered that whilst there are no sites in the NA which are entirely unconstrained, SGGPC have a number of options in terms of the how the housing requirement of 14 homes could be distributed through the NA. One option is to allocate all of the housing on one site and the other is to distribute the growth amongst a number of sites. The advantages and disadvantages of each of these options are discussed below.

### Concentrating Growth

- 4.6 The advantages of concentrating growth on one site relate primarily to planning gain including the provision of affordable housing; for example HC's Policy H1 of the adopted Core Strategy requires developments of 10 or more units (with a combined gross floor space of more than 1,000m<sup>2</sup>) to provide 40% affordable housing. If one site was allocated for 14 homes it would exceed this threshold and could deliver approximately five affordable homes, subject to viability. There is also greater potential when concentrating growth in one larger site for the delivery of community benefits such as open space but these opportunities would depend on the specific site and scheme.
- 4.7 On the basis of the available information it is considered that there are three sites which could each individually accommodate the total housing requirement for the SGG NDP: Site 11, Site 12 and Site 13.
- 4.8 Site 11, Site 12 and Site 13 have been identified as amber, with minor constraints that need further consideration or mitigation.
- 4.9 HC concluded that Site 13 has potential for development subject to acceptable access being achieved. It is not clear whether HC have sought the opinion of the relevant highways officers with respect to the potential allocation of this site and any access constraints; SGGPC should seek this clarification. In terms of the scale of the site

compared to the size of the settlement it is considered that Site 13 is the most proportionate and its development would have a lesser impact on the character of Fromes Hill.

- 4.10 In terms of Site 11 the most significant constraints for the site relate to landscape (the site is open with wide and long views to and from the surrounding areas; it is considered to be of medium to high sensitivity) and heritage (particularly the setting of the Church of St Lawrence (Grade I) and Church Cottage (Grade II)). In addition, the potential scale of the site and quantum of development could be disproportionate in terms of urban grain compared to the existing pattern of development of Stretton Grandison; however, there is potential for this to be mitigated through sensitive and careful design which would also need to respond to the landscape and heritage sensitivities identified. It is advised that the Group seek the opinion of heritage and landscape officers at HC for their thoughts on the potential allocation of this site.
- 4.11 In terms of Site 12 the most significant constraints related to access and landscape. It is likely that each parcel along this stretch of highway would need its own access and the Highways Authority may have some concern about the impact of several new accesses on the free-flow of traffic along the road. The views of the highways officers at HC should be sought in relation to the number of new accesses that would need to be created along this relatively short stretch of road. If suitable access cannot be provided then the Site's traffic light rating would change to red. In addition, whilst the parcels may 'infill' between existing dwellings this area is in a relatively elevated position in the wider landscape. There are also heritage considerations to be considered. Finally Lower Eggleton is not considered to be a particularly sustainable location for additional housing in comparison to other settlements within the NA, whilst acknowledging Policy RA2 of the Herefordshire Core Strategy.

## Dispersing Growth

- 4.12 Alternatively, the Group could decide to split their allocation across a number of smaller sites within the NA. The allocation of a number of smaller sites across the NA may reduce the visual impact and highways network impact because the scale of each allocation would be smaller and the impacts spread across a wider area. However, there would be less opportunity to capture planning gain through Section 106 Agreements on smaller sites where financial viability may be more of an issue.
- 4.13 On the basis of the available information it is considered that there are six sites which could in combination accommodate the total housing requirement for the SGG NDP: Site 1, Site 5, Site 6, Site 8 and Site 10 with a total indicative capacity of 26 dwellings. Site 8 is discussed separately below.
- 4.14 All of the Sites highlighted in the previous paragraph have been identified as amber, with minor constraints that need further consideration or mitigation.
- 4.15 It is advised that further work is undertaken with the landowners of all of the Sites to accurately establish each Site's capacity; this is important to ensure that the Group allocate sites sufficient to meet their housing requirement of 14 dwellings as set out by HC. However, it is particularly relevant to Sites 1 (overhead powerlines may reduce the Site's developable area) and 10 (the Site's boundary is not clear and following the site visit it is felt unlikely that the site could accommodate six units as has been suggested).

- 4.16 It is advised that the Group seek the opinion of highways officers at HC in relation to the ability to provide suitable accesses to all of the Sites. Sites 1 and 10 are also in close proximity to listed buildings, the Group should liaise with HC's conservation or heritage officer to seek their views on the potential allocation of these sites for housing.
- 4.17 There is planning history which relates to Site 6 and also to Site 5. As highlighted in the pro-formas and summary table this decision was made pre-NPPF and is considered to be of little relevance to the planning context today. However, it is advised that the Group speak with the planning officers at HC to check if they would support the allocation of these sites for housing in the current planning context.

## Site 8

- 4.18 Site 8 relates to an existing community which is owned by a co-ownership housing association and it is their intention to create up to eight affordable housing units.
- 4.19 It is considered that the site does not represent an appropriate allocation for housing if this housing were to comprise typical market housing to be sold off. This is due to the Site's remote location in the countryside which is contrary to Policies SS1, SS2, SS6, RA2 and RA3 of the HC Core Strategy which seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- 4.20 However, the landowners have stated an interest in providing affordable housing to be occupied in connection with their existing community.
- 4.21 Rural exception sites are defined in the NPPF (2018)<sup>10</sup> as small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.
- 4.22 Site 8 could therefore potentially be considered a rural exception site. HC's Policy H2 supports proposals for affordable housing schemes in rural areas which would not normally be released for housing subject to three criteria.
- 4.23 With further work with the landowners the Group could allocate Site 8 as a rural exception site to support the delivery of affordable housing within the NA; this should be discussed with officers at HC.
- 4.24 If the Group decides to allocate Site 8 as rural exception site to deliver affordable housing this would help address the likely loss of affordable housing if the Group opted to allocate a number of small sites rather than a single larger site.

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<sup>10</sup> Available at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf)

## Next Steps

- 4.25 The next step is for the Group to decide whether to concentrate the growth in one larger site or disperse the growth across a number of smaller sites, and if the latter is pursued to decide the combination of sites to meet the housing requirement of 14 homes. The previous section has outlined the additional work and information the Group should obtain to help inform this decision.
- 4.26 The site selection process should be based on the following:
- The findings of this site assessment;
  - Discussions with HC;
  - The views and opinions of the local community;
  - The extent to which the sites support the vision and objectives for the NDP; and
  - The potential for the sites to meet identified infrastructure needs of the community.

## Viability

- 4.27 As part of the site selection process, it is recommended that the Group discusses site viability with HC. Viability appraisals for individual sites may already exist. If not, it is possible to use the Council's existing viability evidence<sup>11</sup> to test the viability of sites proposed for allocation in the NDP. This can be done by 'matching' site typologies used in existing reports with sites proposed by the group, to give an indication of whether a site is viable for development and therefore likely to be delivered. In addition, any landowner or developer promoting a site for development should be contacted to request evidence of viability; this is likely to be particularly relevant to Site 8.

## Proposed Settlement Boundaries

- 4.28 SGGPC have made AECOM aware through this technical support process that they are intending to define settlement boundaries through their NDP. Four draft settlement boundaries were consulted upon in 2017.
- 4.29 At the current time HC have not defined settlement boundaries for any of the settlements within the NA, and this is a material planning consideration in the assessment of sites.
- 4.30 There are unresolved objections/comments in relation to the draft settlement boundaries which have been previously published by SGGPC and they are likely to be further refined through the NDP preparation process and potentially also during the Examination.
- 4.31 In addition, the allocation of sites for housing should form part of the process of defining settlement boundaries to include in the NDP. There is a risk that the draft settlement boundaries could themselves determine suitability or otherwise of sites to

<sup>11</sup> Available at: [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directory\\_record/2080/economic\\_viability\\_assessment\\_2014](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directory_record/2080/economic_viability_assessment_2014)



an equal or greater extent than the criteria assessed in this report, and this risks sites being allocated on a relatively more arbitrary criterion.

- 4.32 Therefore, whilst the draft settlement boundaries are noted it is not considered appropriate for them to be given weight in this assessment relative to other criteria.

