

## **Chapter 3 – Context**

- 3.1 This section considers the location, catchment, hinterland, population and economic activity of Stourbridge, and examines the current role and status of the Town Centre. Before starting to plan for the future of Stourbridge it is necessary to understand what the area is like now in social and economic terms and the physical characteristics.

### **Location, catchment & hinterland**

- 3.2 Stourbridge is located 10 miles to the west of Birmingham City Centre, 2 miles to the south-west of Brierley Hill Strategic Centre and 4.5 miles to the south-west of Dudley Town Centre. Halesowen Town Centre is located 4 miles to the east of Stourbridge.
- 3.3 Stourbridge Town Centre is enclosed by the A451 (Stourbridge Ring Road) Strategic Highway Network which forms a major highway route moving traffic efficiently past the town. The current strategic highway network provides for:- North-South (A491) (High Street/ Hagley Road), A451 (Worcester Street), and East-West (A458) (Enville Street/ Birmingham Street). The Town Centre is well served by rail.
- 3.4 The town centre is bordered by the wider urban area containing a number of neighbourhoods. Established residential communities particularly dominate land uses located to the north-east, south-east, west, and south-west of the Town Centre. Relatively modern industrial premises (employment land uses) are located to the north-east of the town centre within Mill Race Lane Trading Estate. Older industrial premises are located to the north of the town centre along Old Wharf Road. This area is also historically sensitive as it borders the Stourbridge Branch Canal designated Conservation Area and contains Listed and locally Listed Buildings.
- 3.5 The River Stour corridor and Stourbridge Branch Canal network located to the north of the Town Centre provides an important environmentally sensitive area which provides a green corridor allowing the movement of wildlife species through the heart of the heavily urbanised area. This area is designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) in Dudley Council's Adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (October 2005). This green corridor also provides an important outdoor recreational resource serving the needs of the local community.
- 3.6 The Town Centre and immediate surroundings remain heavily urbanised and the Town Centre remains dominated by the A451 (Stourbridge Ring Road) which severs the Town Centre from surrounding land uses. The Town Centre is important for the day-to-

day local shopping needs of the local community and provides a number of services.

## Current role and status of the Town Centre

- 3.7 Stourbridge town centre is a non-strategic centre identified to meet local needs, in particular convenience shopping (meeting day-to-day shopping needs), the provision of local services (such as banks, post offices, local healthcare facilities, sports centres, libraries and restaurants), and a limited amount of comparison shopping. Stourbridge is also a centre for culture, the arts and leisure activity. It is well known as a centre for night-time entertainment containing a number of bars and restaurants. A key defining role of the town centre comes from its current role as a market town within the borough and wider Black Country sub-region.

Figure 2 - Diagram showing the location of Stourbridge Town Centre with other centres located within the Dudley Borough and the wider Black Country sub-region.

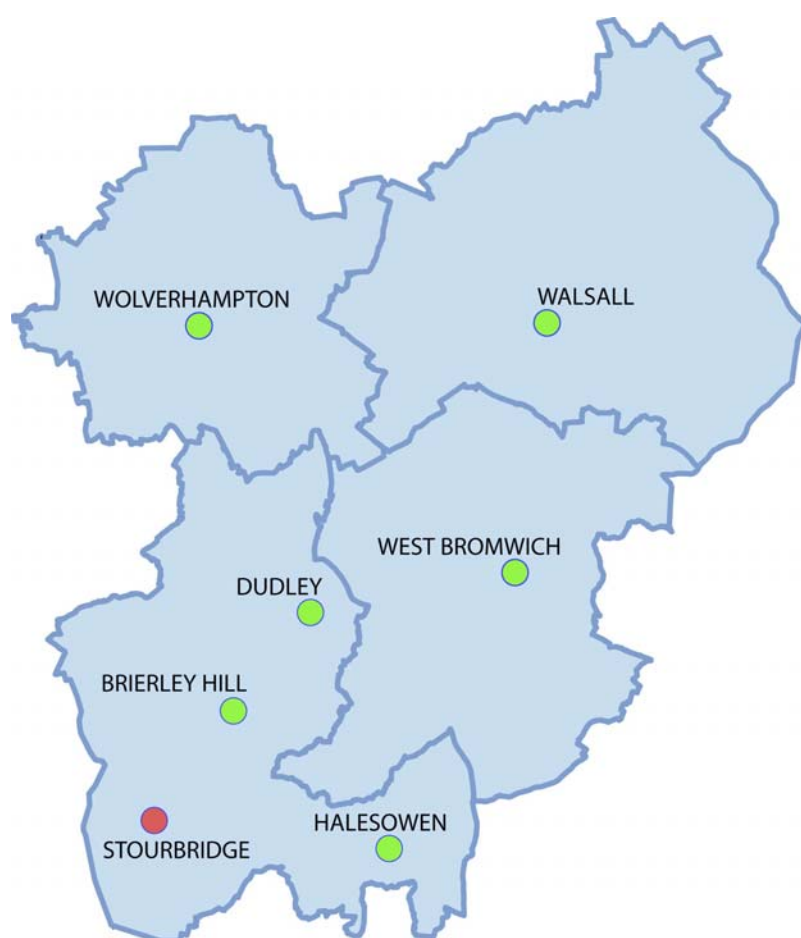
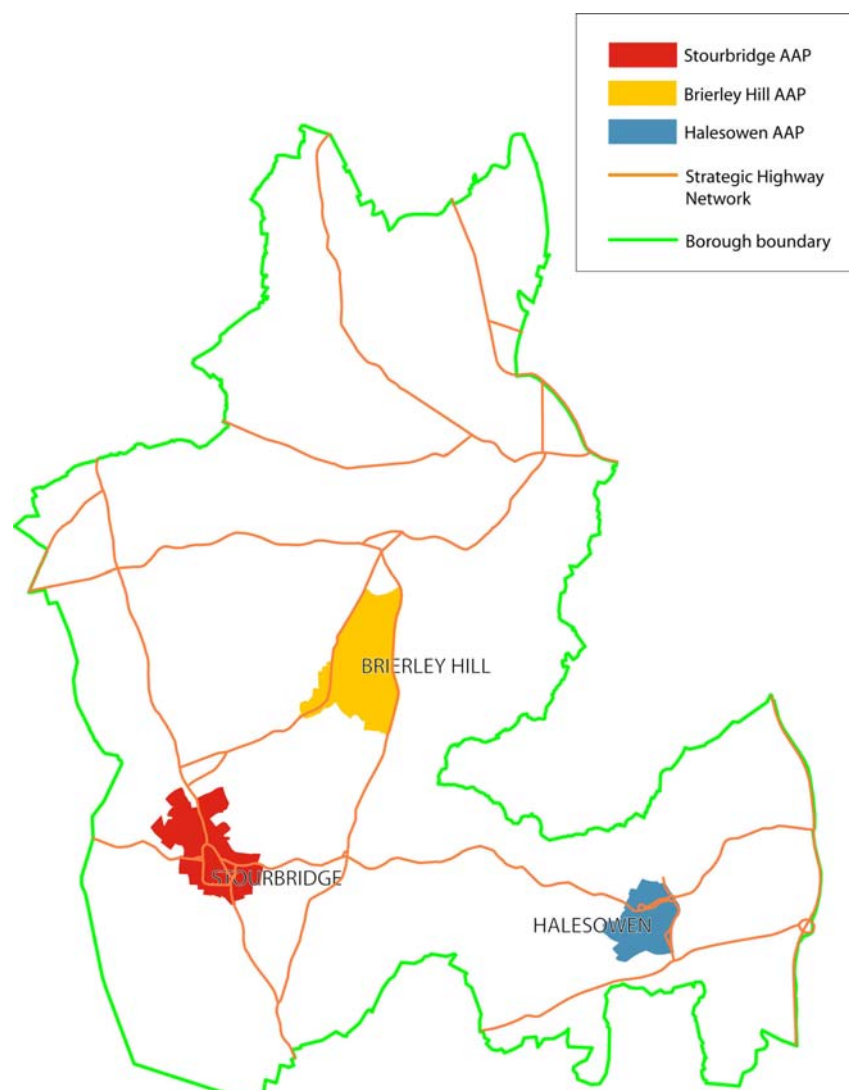


Figure 3 - Diagram showing the location of Stourbridge Area Action Plan to Brierley Hill AAP and Halesowen AAP located within the Dudley Borough.



## **Social and economic Characteristics of Stourbridge**

3.8 Compared to Dudley Borough and national picture, in the wider Stourbridge area there are:

- A higher proportion of white British residents
- Fewer economically inactive people due to permanent sickness and disability
- Fewer lone parent households with dependent children
- A higher proportion of owner occupied homes

3.9 Compared to Dudley Borough, in the wider Stourbridge area there are:

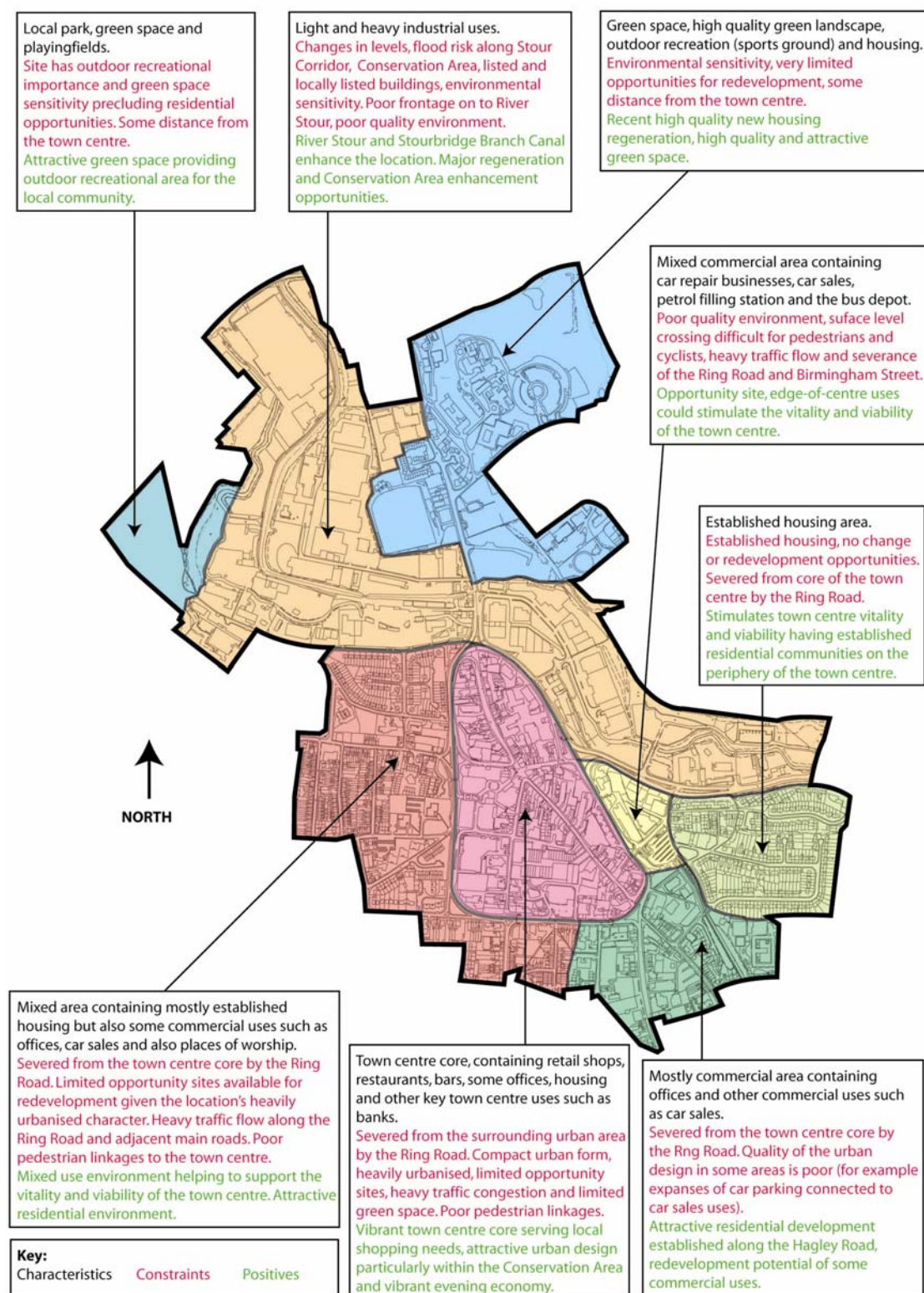
- More self-employed people and less unemployed people
- Fewer people with no qualifications
- Fewer homes rented from the local authority
- Between 2005 and 2009 crime levels have generally fallen within both Stourbridge and Dudley Borough
- Percentage of people employed in the service sector in Stourbridge (77.2%) is slightly higher than the figure for Dudley Borough (73.4%).
- Percentage of people employed within the manufacturing industry in Stourbridge (16.5%) is also lower than the borough figure (19.3%).

3.10 Whilst most of the wider Stourbridge area does not suffer from deprivation, there is a consistent region of deprivation around Lye town centre and to a lesser extent in Stourbridge town centre. There are also isolated pockets of deprivation in the wards of Amblecote and Pedmore / Stourbridge East. All of these localities are especially deprived in terms of income, employment and education, skills and training.

3.11 Compared to the Dudley Borough, in the wider Stourbridge area there is:

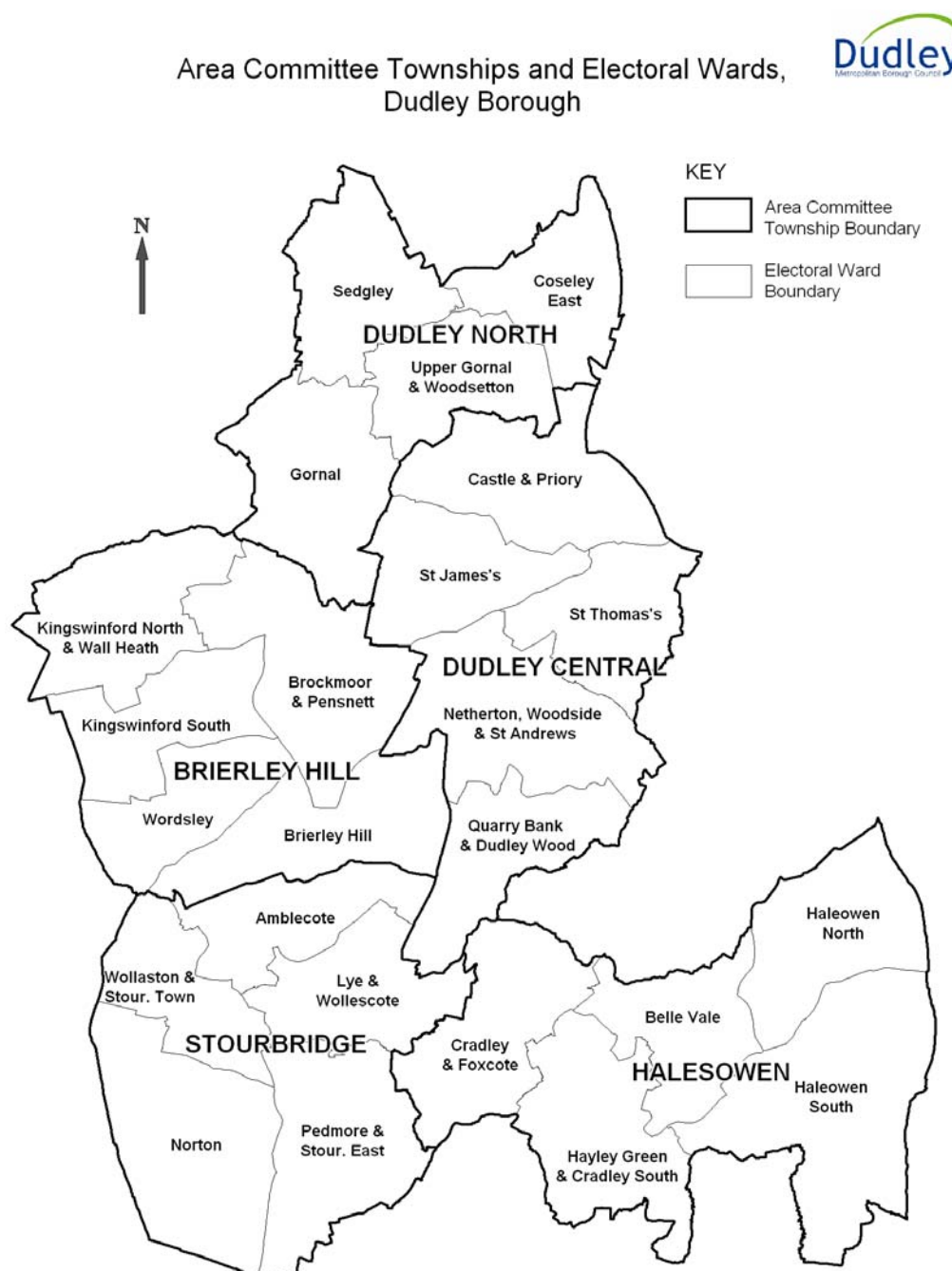
- A resident population of 61,875 people in the Stourbridge Committee Area based on the latest information from mid-year 2007 population estimates.
- Dudley Borough has a population of 305,300 people. This is the largest population of any of the four Black Country Local Authorities, and the 16<sup>th</sup> largest in England.
- The number of residents in the Stourbridge Committee Area currently aged 60 years and over is 15,143 people.
- It is anticipated that the number of people in the Dudley Borough aged 60 years and over will increase by 27.5% by the year 2026, whilst there will be a 71.9% rise in the number aged 80 years and over.

**Figure 4 - Spatial Characteristics of Stourbridge**





**Figure 5 – Map of Dudley Borough, Wards and Committee Areas**



Source: Ordnance Survey

Produced by: NL, 18/10/2007, Strategic Research & Intelligence Team, Dudley M.B.C.

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