



Matter 4 | Natural and Historic Environment (SNE1- SNE6 and SHE1 –SHE4) Written statement

**Sandwell Local Plan 2024-2041
Submitted for Examination**

Vulcan Property II Limited

August 2025

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Preliminaries

Local authority

Sandwell Council

Local plan

Sandwell Local Plan 2024-2041

Written statement

The following table sets out Matters, Issues and Questions to which the written statement relates

Matter	Issue	Question(s)	Page(s)
Matter 4 Natural and Historic Environment (SNE1-SNE6 and SHE1 -SHE4)	Issue 4 – Whether the plan is positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy in relation to its policies for the natural and historic environment (policies SNE1 – SNE6 and SHE1 – SHE4).	Q4.3 a), b), c), d)	5
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Sevo Planning Consultancy (Sevo) has prepared this Regulation 22 written statement for Vulcan Property II Limited (Vulcan). The written statement responds to matters, issues and questions as set out by the Inspector at *SA/ED59 Sandwell Local Plan 2024-2041 – Examination Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) for Weeks 2 and 3* of the Sandwell Local Plan (the SLP) Examination.
- 1.2 This submission is made ahead of the Local Plan Examination Week 2 and 3 hearing sessions scheduled to be held between Tuesday 23 September 2025 and Friday 3 October 2025. Friday 26 September 2025 (PM) and Friday 3 October 2025 (PM) are Week 2 and Week 3 reserve sessions.
- 1.3 This written statement responds to the issues and questions associated with **Matter 4 | Natural and Historic Environment (SNE1-SNE6 and SHE1 –SHE4)**. The corresponding hearing session is scheduled to take place on **Tuesday 30 September 2025 (AM)**. Sevo will not attend this hearing session to give oral evidence for Vulcan. Sevo has submitted this written statement ahead of the deadline of **midday Thursday 28 August 2025**.
- 1.4 Vulcan owns a site of 1.14ha at Brades Road, Oldbury. Vulcan put the site forward in response to the Local Plan Call for Sites as suitable for brownfield housing development. The site is included in the submission version of the plan, as a proposed housing allocation.
- 1.5 Vulcan has previously submitted representations at the following stages of development plan preparation:
- Issues and Options / Call for Sites – February and March 2023
 - Regulation 18 Preferred Options – six weeks to 18 December 2023
 - Regulation 19 Publication Draft – six weeks to 4 November 2024
- 1.6 Vulcan also made submissions following a draft Sandwell Housing Market Assessment Update (HMA) stakeholder workshop, held in June 2024.
- 1.7 Preparation of the SLP was preceded by the Council, together with Dudley Council, Walsall Council and the City of Wolverhampton, progressing The Black Country Plan 2039 (the BCP). The BCP reached Regulation 18 stage before being abandoned in October 2022 because the four councils were unable to reach agreement on the approach to planning for future development needs within the framework of the BCP. Vulcan had made representations at Issues and Options/Call for Sites and Regulation 18 stages, with its Brades Road site included in the BCP as a proposed housing allocation.
- 1.8 Reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) are to the version published in December 2023, unless explicitly stated otherwise.
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2. Matter 4 – Written statement

M4 Natural and Historic Environment (SNE1-SNE6 and SHE1 –SHE4)

Issue 4 – Whether the plan is positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy in relation to its policies for the natural and historic environment (policies SNE1 – SNE6 and SHE1 – SHE4).

Q4.3 Are the requirements of policy SNE3 clear and consistent with national policy?

Including:

a) Would they be effective, including sufficiently flexible?

b) For soundness, should the policy be clearer on tree retention and replacement?

c) d) Are the specified buffers justified?

Does the policy appropriately address the protection of irreplaceable habitats including ancient and veteran trees in a manner consistent with national policy?

M4.3.1 In respect of Q4.3 a) and b), Vulcan raised objection to the policy wording at Regulation 18 stage, setting out that for it to be consistent with the Framework it must acknowledge that there will not be the justification for the retention of some trees, particularly in the context of poor specimens and where removal is justified in the context of wider development benefit. Vulcan also set out a need to recognise that any requirement for replacement trees should be informed by site-by-site assessments, alongside a measured consideration of BNG, as opposed to a standard requirement for tree planting at a ratio of 3 trees per tree lost.

M4.3.2 The Council made changes at Regulation 19 submission draft stage, but stopped short of including explicitly that poor quality trees should be discounted from canopy cover calculations. Vulcan also maintained in its Regulation 19 representations that tree planting should be the subject of site-by-site assessments.

M4.3.3 At SA/ED2 the Council sets out a view that the policy is clear that in cases where trees are categorised in a formal survey as 'U' or where they are dangerous and diseased, their retention will not be required. SA/ED2 also acknowledges that whether their canopy should be counted will be a matter for consideration on an individual basis.

M4.3.4 Vulcan considers that three modifications are required for policy SNE3 to be effective, sufficiently flexible and sound:

- The policy should acknowledge explicitly that there will not be the justification for the retention of some trees, particularly in the context of wider specimens and wider development benefit;
- The policy should be explicit that poor quality trees should be discounted from tree canopy cover calculations; and
- The policy must set out that each case for replacement trees should be informed by site specific assessments, rather than a standard ratio of 3 trees per tree lost.

Q4.4 Are the requirements of policies SNE4, SNE5 and SNE6 clear, justified, consistent with national policy, and will they be effective?

- M4.4.1 In respect of Q4.4), Vulcan supported the positive Regulation 18 wording of draft policy SNE6 Canals, wholly concurring with the Council position that canal-side sites can provide opportunities for high-quality developments with enhanced accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and other non car-based modes of transport.
- M4.4.2 Vulcan encouraged further promotion of canal-side developments, with a focus on encouraging waterfront views for residential developments, and the interdependency of cross-referencing urban design policies.
- M4.4.3 West Midlands Police set out in its SNE6 submission the need to consider crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime when considering development proposals on the canal network. This provides further good reason to explicitly reference waterfront views in canalside development, given the benefits afforded to designing out crime and tackling the fear of crime by the natural surveillance offered.
- M4.4.4 Vulcan maintains that policy SNE6 should be amended to explicitly reference a design preference for waterside views, and the benefits of the canalside development in terms of enhancing non-car travel consistent with the objectives of sustainable development.
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