


Ref-036C
-347B


24 May 2024

Strategic Planning Team
South Staffordshire Council
Community Hub
Wolverhampton Road
Codsall
South Staffordshire
WV8 1PX

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

28 MAY 2024

RECEIVED

To the Strategic Planning Team,

South Staffordshire Local Plan Review
Regulation 19 Publication Plan Consultation 2024
Southern Edge of Stafford (A34 Corridor)

1 Introduction

In response to your letter of 17 April 2024 I wish to raise objection to the inclusion of the land south of Stafford for housing.

This is despite adjustments you have made to the number of houses to be built and the recent additions to planning legislation of which the most relevant part is the "Levelling-up and Regeneration Act" 2024. This is mostly concerned with procedures and ways of speeding up the planning process and as the name implies reducing the glaring geographic housing and economic inequalities in the country. The emphasis remains on building in urban areas and not in the open countryside which should continue to receive protection for the enjoyment of all.

I have previously sent you my objections to the Gladman application (2017), to your "Preferred Housing Options" consultation in November 2021, and lastly your "Local Plan Publication Plan" in December 2022 (by email). In this letter I have tried to pull together the objections I have previously made to aid clarity for you and hopefully the Inspector.

I can still see no justification for the release of land for development in this sensitive location.

I set out below the reasons for my continued objection to its release of this land for development whatever its scale.

1 Background

There is a long history, as you will be aware, attaching to the release of land in this location for development. As far back as May 1986 an outline planning application (0335/86) was submitted to your Council for a nursing home on a small area in the north-east corner of the site now being considered by your council as suitable for housing. It was refused planning permission in 1986 as being contrary to the Open Countryside policy E3 in the then adopted Northern Area Local Plan.

In a subsequent planning appeal (T/APP/C3430/A/77209/P3) the Planning Inspector stated, "*Hazelstrine Lane at present is a strongly-defined boundary to the built-up area of Stafford and the proposed development would tend to blur the distinction between the town and the surrounding rural area.*"

He went on to say, "*Approval of your client's scheme would increase the authority's difficulty in resisting future proposals for development along the fringes of the urban area, for example on the open land south of Hazelstrine Lane between the appeal site and the A34 trunk road.*"

He further recognised that this location provided, "*an attractive rural setting to the residential areas to the north.*"

In refusing the appeal he concluded, "*the proposal would represent an undesirable intrusion in the countryside which could only be justified by special circumstances*"

The Inspector's application of basic land use principles remain as relevant today as they did then.

In May 2017 Gladman submitted an outline planning application (18/01031/OUT) for the development of some 155 dwellings and 55 apartments on the current site. It was likewise refused as being contrary to development in the "Open Countryside" (Policy OC1) in the currently adopted local plan. A subsequent appeal was withdrawn. No reason was given.

2 Impact on the Environment

Development in this area would be an extension of the urban area of Stafford into the adjoining area of open countryside.

This land on this southern flank of Stafford forms a continuum of open space, comprising farmland, woodland (private), a canal (Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal) and the washlands of the river Penk. The removal of the farmland element of this entity would detract from the whole.

This land is currently in productive agricultural use and possesses its own intrinsic landscape value. The loss of this well maintained and productive farmland can be ill-afforded as such farmland is a resource of increasing national importance in these times of economic and climate change.

This is also an area rich in its biodiversity and abundant wildlife. In my earlier objections to the Gladman proposals in 2017 I attached an appendix listing some of the wildlife that frequented the area. There have been some changes over time with a decline in some species of birds and other animals which only makes the preservation of this open land all the more vital. But the list still provides a good illustration of visiting wildlife. I therefore attach this list as an appendix.

Hazelstrine Lane provides public access to this area. It became of increasing importance during the pandemic lockdown as people became more aware of what was on their doorstep.

3 Housing - Setting a Precedent

Development in this location of whatever scale is likely to set a dangerous precedent for more widespread and unplanned development in the future leading to the loss of yet more agricultural land and a reduction in wildlife habitat. Whatever safeguards are put in place it will be difficult to resist the pressures from developers for the release of more land which to them would be seen as a desirable location.

The location of this site on the edge of Stafford and on the outer fringes of South Staffordshire District means that future residents will mainly look to Stafford for the services they need. The cost of providing those services will have to be met by Stafford Borough Council.

The houses to be built on this site are unlikely to meet the most pressing national housing need which is for more affordable homes.

It is unfortunate that the area lies on the boundary of two planning authorities where the one most affected by the development has no direct control over the development.

Having identified the need for more housing in their area the District Council should ensure that the development is located in the right place where it does the least environmental damage and best meets the needs of its residents.

It should be possible, given the reduced number of houses now proposed for the site, to re-allocate them elsewhere in the District in more suitable and convenient locations for the intended residents.

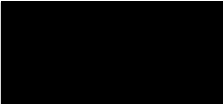
4 Conclusion and Recommendation

The qualities of this area both as attractive landscape, productive farmland and wildlife habitat should continue to be recognised and protected. These intrinsic qualities have not changed.

The release of this land for development would negate the consistent approach the District Council has so far taken in protecting this land from development.

In the light, therefore, of the many objections received to the release of this land for housing development I would ask that the Planning Inspector recommends to the District Council that this site be removed from the local plan and that the housing proposed be reallocated elsewhere in more suitable locations in the area.

-



(MR M. PLUMB)

Appendix (Updated)

Birds regularly seen (no particular order)

Robin
Dunnock
Wren
Great Tit
Blue Tit
Coal Tit
Long-tailed Tit
Chaffinch
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Treecreeper
Nuthatch
Greater Spotted Woodpecker
Green Woodpecker
Starling
Blackbird
Song Thrush
House Martin
Jay
House Sparrow
Willow Warbler or Chiffchaff
Collared Dove
Stock Dove
Woodpigeon
Jackdaw
Grey Heron
Blackcap
Buzzard
Sparrowhawk
Kestrel
Pheasant
Magpie
Crow
Mistle Thrush

Occasional Visitors

Bullfinch
Garden Warbler
Redwing
Fieldfare
Tawny Owl (heard not seen)
Ring Ouzel (over one week!)
Siskin

June 2017