

INGESTRE WITH TIXALL PARISH COUNCIL

September 17th 2013

Dear

The Parish Council would like to raise the following issues at the Examination of The Plan for Stafford Borough relating to item 4.4 Policy Stafford 4 – East of Stafford:

Item 4.4 a iv refers to the delivery, funding, viability and timing of proposed infrastructure requirements, including highway capacity and public transport improvements (including Eastern Access Improvement Scheme, Eastern Distributor Road and other road improvements).....

Item 4.4 b asks if the infrastructure and other evidence (including transport assessment) properly assess the likely level of proposed housing, employment and other development in terms of infrastructure requirements and the impact of the proposed development.

We are concerned that in both cases the required highway infrastructure, including completion of the Eastern Distributor Road (EDR) across the Sow Valley, will not be in place before the proposed housing development on either side of the Tixall Road by the Crematorium takes place.

The current proposal to take traffic to St Thomas Lane and then across the Sow Valley by existing roads is totally unacceptable. We fully support the views of John Martin who lives at St Thomas Priory Farmhouse, that installing traffic lights at the bridge by St Thomas Priory and the Canal Bridge will further impede traffic flows and result in gridlock.

The Parish Council is extremely concerned that this development should not proceed until the Beaconside extension is completed at least as far as the other side of the Sow Valley. The additional traffic generated by this development and the proposed extension of the Beaconside Industrial Park will only exacerbate the current problems in Blackheath Lane and the crossroads by the Crematorium. Traffic from the direction of Tixall already backs up to the entrance of Tixall Heath Farm and beyond, waiting for vehicles to turn into Blackheath Lane.

We are also concerned that large vehicles using the new Eastern Access road will get stuck on the bridge bend by St Thomas Priory, as has happened previously. The alternatives are the low railway bridge by Great Haywood Marina or the narrow canal bridge on Holdiford Road. We already have problems with long vehicles trying to turn in Tixall Village when they see the warning signs to these.

A large amount of commuter traffic from the Haywoods, Rugeley and beyond uses Tixall Road to gain access to Stafford and the Eastern bypass from the University to the Stone Road. In addition traffic to and from Baswich and Cannock uses Baswich Lane and Blackheath Lane. This traffic will not be significantly reduced by the proposed additional bus service.

While we welcome the new roundabout at the junction of Blackheath Lane and the Weston Road, we are concerned that merely improving the lights by the Crematorium will not solve the problem."

We note that it is proposed to introduce 30 or 40mph speed limits on all roads bordering the proposed developments. However, we are concerned that 4.6 of the Transport Assessment suggests a "gateway " type arrangement at the junction of Tixall Road with Blackheath Lane to alert drivers to the change from a rural road to a built up, residential street. The need for further improvements at this junction, e.g. a filter lane for traffic from Tixall travelling to Stafford in the morning, has been noted (Transport Assessment 7.23) and is essential – not a further constriction.

We strongly contest Staffordshire County Council's view that the development can be accommodated within the local highway network, (Transport Assessment 5.48) especially when it is acknowledged that peak commuter trips can only be reduced by 20% by aggressive measures, e.g. improved bus services, (Transport Assessment 5.45).

We note that the Transport Assessment does not acknowledge the considerable commuter traffic from Rugeley and beyond, The Haywoods, Cannock, Brocton, and Baswich which uses Tixall Road, some via Holdiford Road, and some via Baswich Lane. This already causes major holdups and will only get worse until the Eastern Access Improvement Scheme is continued across the Sow Valley, at least as far as Baswich Church. It is unrealistic to expect these people to travel by bicycle and the bus services do not readily interconnect to serve different areas of Stafford and beyond, or even the Railway Station. The new developments will only exacerbate these problems.

We totally oppose the introduction of traffic lights at St Thomas Priory and on the Canal Bridge, (Transport Assessment 7.21) supporting the view of the resident of St Thomas Priory: "The traffic flow in Baswich Lane would not be helped by traffic lights. It is self regulating at low speed and works as well as can be expected with very few accidents. The volume limiting factor is the speed at which vehicles can exit the lane at the ends. Lights would inevitably result in gridlock over and between bridges at busy times, and at quiet times would significantly increase the speed of traffic through the blind spots at bridges and result in much more injurious accidents."

We are also concerned that the new Eastern Access road will not be completed until Phase 3 (Transport Assessment 7.47) or until the 151st dwelling on the south side is occupied, (p14 of proposed Section 106 Agreement).

With regard to the Residential Travel Plan, RTP, this appears to rely heavily on producing and disseminating information encouraging the use of buses, cycling and walking rather than car transport. With regard to walking, there are only limited employment sites within walking distance of the development, especially if Staffordshire University moves to Stoke. Increased use of the bus service relies on people working in the town centre as it does not readily link with the Station or many areas of Stafford. The existing cycle route along the Tixall Road into Stafford is not used because it goes up and down over all the drive entrances, is usually blocked by parked cars and fails to protect cyclists at junctions and roundabouts where it just disappears. In particular the introduction of the Keep Left Island outside Perkins Factory, does not slow cars, but just ensures that cyclists are in danger of being knocked off their bikes as there is insufficient room for a vehicle and a cyclist by the island. It is significant that this route is not included in the RTP maps although it is the most direct route to the town centre.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Anne Andrews (Parish Clerk)