





Hallam Land Management Ltd	Date Registered	4 September 2014
C/O Andrew Hiorns Limited		
Mr Andrew Hiorns	Decision Date	4 December 2014
10 Lissel Road		
Simpson	Issue Date	4 December 2014
Milton Keynes		
Buckinghamshire		
MK6 3AX		

## TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

### REFUSAL OF PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT

brownfield sites within the existing urban area, the application site is located on a greenfield site and as such the proposal is contrary to Spatial Principle SP7, which states that only where insufficient sites on previously developed land in sustainable locations are available to meet development requirements should greenfield sites be released. Furthermore, the proposed development also conflicts with criteria (f) and (l) of SP7 in that it would impact adversely on important views and would adversely affect the residential amenity of the locality and with the highway related criteria (e) due to its impact on existing infrastructure. As such the proposal does not constitute sustainable development.

2. The proposed mitigation scheme at the Weeping Cross A513/A34 junction is not currently deliverable without third party land and it is not possible to secure contributions to such works, which would be necessary to adequately mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding highway network. The proposal, therefore, conflicts with the provisions of Policy T1 (g) and (h) and of Spatial Principle 7 (e) of The Plan for Stafford Borough.

Head of Planning and Regeneration  
On behalf of the Council





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<b>Application</b>	<b>14/20878/OUT</b>	<b>Case Officer:</b>	John Dolman
<b>Date Registered</b>	4 September 2014	<b>Target Decision Date</b>	4 December 2014
<b>Address</b>	Land Between Railway Line and Bluebell Hollow Milford Road Walton on The Hill Stafford	<b>Ward</b>	Milford
		<b>Parish</b>	Berkswich
<b>Proposal</b>	Outline application for development of up to 225 new dwellings, a local convenience store of up to 250 square metres gross and community parklands including a sustainable drainage system with details of a new access from Milford Road		
<b>Applicant</b>	Hallam Land Management Ltd		
<b>Recommendation</b>	Refuse		

## REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

This application has been called in by Councillor F Finlay (Ward Member for Milford) for the following reason:-

"For the committee to consider this application in light of the residential policies for Stafford in the newly adopted local plan".

This application has also been called in by Councillor R Stephens (Ward Member for Milford) for the following reason:

"For the committee to consider the social, economic and environmental impacts of the scheme".

### Context

This is an outline application for the construction of up to 225 houses, a local convenience store of up to 250 square metres gross and community parklands including a sustainable drainage system with details of a new access from Milford Road on existing open land.

Only details of means of access are submitted for approval at this stage. These comprise a single main access point onto Milford Road via a new priority junction at the south-western end of the site opposite the existing vehicle garage and showroom. The proposed "T" junction would include a marked right-turn lane. Two emergency vehicle accesses are also indicated, one onto Falmouth Close/Avenue at the north-western edge of the site and one utilising the existing track Green Gore Lane along the eastern boundary of the site.

The overall site extends to 29.3 ha of which 8.47 ha would be developed and 20.38 ha would be designated as open parkland.

The application has a relatively narrow frontage at its southern edge onto Milford Road between existing housing on Stockton Lane to the west, and a parking area to the commercial garage to the east which has outline planning permission for 8 houses. The southern section of the site subsequently extends eastwards to the rear of the modern Bluebell Hollow residential development and its planted buffer. At the eastern edge of its southern boundary is a grouping of houses and a Scout Hut off Milford Road. The eastern boundary is with Green Gore Lane beyond which is open agricultural land. The long western boundary of the site is with existing housing fronting Stockton Lane to the south and centre. At its northern end the site adjoins existing housing on Falmouth Avenue and Falmouth Close. The northern boundary of the site is with the main West Coast Railway Line.

At its south-western end the site rises significantly northward to reach a relatively flat area in the western/central part of the site. This area, which is currently in agricultural production, is where it is envisaged that development will take place. A Parameters Plan submitted with the application indicates an area for retail fronting Milford Road to the east of the access point, with housing on the flat section of the site. Beyond this flatter plateau section of the site land slopes down northwards towards the railway line and eastwards towards Green Gore Lane. It is proposed that this sloping land to the north and east of the site would be designated as parkland.

Submitted with this application are: a Design and Access Statement; Planning Statement; Flood Risk Assessment; Transport Assessment; Travel Plan; Ground Investigation Report; Noise Assessment; Air Quality Assessment; Arboricultural Report; Ecological Assessment; a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal; Socio Economic Review; Soil Resources and Agricultural use and Quality Assessment; and a Statement of Community Involvement

## **Officer Assessment - Key Considerations**

### **1. Housing Policy**

The proposed development is on a green field site adjacent to the built up area of Stafford Town. The development of the site for housing would, therefore, need to be in line with Spatial Principle 7 of the Plan for Stafford Borough. Paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states:- "Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites." The Council has to show a 5 year + housing land supply to meet the requirements of the NPPF. The Council can currently demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land, including a 20% buffer, in the context of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

This emphasis is also made in a core planning principle (paragraph 17 of the NPPF) to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver homes that the country needs, as well as encourage the re-use of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings. Furthermore paragraph 9 states that pursuing sustainable development involves widening the choice of high quality homes.

Stafford Town is identified in the Plan for Stafford Borough to accommodate 70% of the overall housing requirements for the Borough over the Plan period, totalling 7,000 new houses. While the majority of this housing requirement will be delivered by the Strategic Development Locations at Stafford Town it is recognised that an element of provision will occur on brownfield sites, as encouraged by Spatial Principle 7.

Prior to the establishment of Settlement Boundaries, proposals for housing development should be assessed against 12 principles set out in Spatial Principle 7 (SP7) to assess the acceptability of individual proposals. SP7, however, also clearly states, separate from these principles, that development proposals should maximise the use of brownfield redevelopment sites within the towns and villages to reduce the need for greenfield sites and that only where insufficient sites on previously developed land in sustainable locations are available to meet new development requirements should greenfield sites be released.

It has already been stated in this Report that a five year supply of housing land exists. It is also acknowledged that in order to meet housing requirements a number of greenfield sites will need to be developed. The three Strategic Development Locations to the North, West and East of Stafford were identified through the plan process. The Development Strategy, including the principle of the key Strategic Development Locations around Stafford and around Stone, were found to be sound, deliverable, viable, effective and fully justified with robust and comprehensive evidence by the Local Plan Inspector and are included in The Plan for Stafford Borough as adopted. Consequently the majority of housing requirements for Stafford Town will be delivered by the Strategic Development Locations, with the remaining provision on brownfield sites within the existing urban area. There is no requirement, therefore, to develop additional greenfield sites such as this on land outside the existing built-up area. In this regard, the proposal is clearly contrary to relevant policies contained in The Plan for Stafford Borough.

With the regard to the individual criteria included in Spatial Principle 7 criteria, it is acknowledged that the proposed development is adjacent to an existing settlement with access to existing facilities as well as some public transport services. Potential conflicts with other criteria set out in this Policy will be considered in the following Sections of this Report.

Policies and Guidance:-

NPPF - Paragraphs 9, 17 (Core Principles), 47, 49, 50 (Section 6 - Delivering a wide choice of high quality housing, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216 (Annex 1: Implementation)

The Plan for Stafford Borough - SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development, SP2 Stafford Borough Housing & Employment Requirements, SP3 Stafford Borough Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy, SP4 Stafford Borough Housing Growth Distribution, SP7 Supporting the Location of New Development, Policy Stafford 1 Stafford Town, Policy C5 Residential Proposals outside the Settlement Hierarchy

## **2. Impact on Character of Area and on Open Countryside**

The application site comprises open greenfield land and although close to the existing built-up area lies beyond existing development.

The NPPF still acknowledges within paragraph 17 that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised and in both paragraphs 17 and 110 that land should be allocated for development with the least environmental or amenity value.

The development of open land beyond the edge of an existing settlement will clearly have some adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area and on visual amenity.

The current application site adjoins existing residential development within the built-up area of Stafford along most of its southern and western boundaries. It is surrounded by open agricultural land to the north, east and extends northwards wholly beyond any existing residential development.

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been submitted with this application.

This concludes that the land is of limited landscape value, much of it comprising intensively farmed agricultural land. It acknowledges that the proposed development would have moderate adverse effects at the outset with the permanent loss of the field, but that this would reduce by year 15 to minor adverse-negligible on account of the development of the Green Infrastructure proposed as part of the development. This it is stated would result in significant net gains in habitats as well as delivering an extensive area of greenspace. It is pointed out that the development would lie along the established urban edge of the Town, with modern post-war housing backing onto the site and it is claimed that new and well-designed housing set within an integrated Green Infrastructure framework would be appropriate in this context. It is also considered that the landscape character has the ability to absorb urban development of the scale and type proposed without causing unacceptable landscape and visual harm.

It must be acknowledged that this is not an area with any special landscape value and that the appropriate landscape policy objective for the majority of the site is landscape enhancement, indicating a medium quality landscape that has suffered some erosion of strength of character through the loss of features typical of this landscape. It is also accepted that the proposed development will not have any significant adverse impact on the Cannock Chase AONB. Both the AONB Joint Committee and Natural England have advised that providing the site is developed in the manner indicated with parkland and structural landscaping and subject to careful control of detailed design, it will not adversely affect the AONB. Although close to the boundary it is not possible to see the site from the AONB boundary, and views of the site from the AONB are limited. Clearly, it is also acknowledged that the large area of public parkland proposed in isolation will enable improvements to that part of the landscape included within it and will provide greenspace with public access for informal recreational purposes.

Nevertheless, the proposed development would clearly have a significant impact when viewed from existing properties on Stockton Lane, Falmouth Avenue/Falmouth Close to the west of the site and from higher parts of Walton, such as The Crescent, to the south of the site. Although the applicants state that from Stockton Lane existing development at Walton can be seen beyond the site, development in Walton is distant and predominant views from these properties are of open land. From higher parts of Walton, although development at Bluebell Hollow is intervening, this is at a lower level and given existing



site levels, it is the view of this site as open land that is most dominant. Consequently, the proposed development will impact on important open views from a significant number of properties and will impact adversely on residential amenity of the locality, contrary to the provisions of Policy SP7 (f) and (i) of The Plan for Stafford.

Although as previously stated, it is acknowledged that the proposed area of parkland will facilitate improvements to that part of the landscape and will provide amenity, recreation and biodiversity benefits, it should be noted that as this is existing open land, it is not without some existing amenity value and also that as the parkland will be on the downward northern and eastern sloping sections of the site, which will not be viewed from existing properties to the west of the site and will have limited views from existing properties to the south. To these properties, it will lie beyond a residential development of 225 houses occupying an area of 8.5 ha. Proposed landscape improvements of course will only benefit the proposed parkland area, 12 ha of existing open land would be occupied by roads, houses and gardens. While the provision of the proposed parkland in itself is to be welcomed, provision of land on such a scale is not being proposed to meet any established identified need and its provision cannot justify the approval of other development that may not be acceptable.

In circumstances where it has already been established that a combination of allocated Strategic Development Locations to the north, west and east of Stafford, together with brownfield sites within the fabric of the existing built-up area can meet housing requirements for Stafford Town within the plan period and also that the Borough has a 5 year supply of housing land, including a 20% buffer, it is not considered that the development of this greenfield site, which is outside the existing built-up area and which would clearly have some adverse impacts on open views and residential amenity, can be justified or accepted as being consistent with Spatial Principle 7 of The Plan for Stafford Borough.

Policies and Guidance:-

NPPF- Paragraphs 17 (Core Principles), 110, 111, 112

The Plan for Stafford Borough - Policies N1 Design, N4 The Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure, N5 Sites of European, National and Local Conservation Importance, N6 Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), N7 Cannock Chase AONB, N8 Landscape Character

### **3. Highways**

These comprise a single main "T" junction access point onto Milford Road with right-turn lane via a new priority junction at the south-western end of the site opposite the existing garage and showroom and two emergency vehicle accesses, one onto Falmouth Close/Avenue at the north-western edge of the site and one utilising the existing track Green Gore Lane along the eastern boundary of the site.

A Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan has been submitted with the application. The Assessment acknowledged that the junctions of the A513/A34/Baswich Lane and the A34/Silkmore Lane/Ampleforth Drive were forecast to operate over capacity. The

Assessment also indicated that the developer would consider making a contribution to County led congestion reduction scheme at these two junctions.

The highway authority has formally objected to the proposal on four grounds.

The detailed access as originally proposed did not comply with standard requirements and was geometrically substandard in design and its location, creating possible vehicular conflict with the operation of an existing access point. The highway authority, however, did acknowledge that in principle the provision of a single access point in conjunction within an emergency access was considered acceptable to serve the proposed number of dwellings, the location of the access close to existing access points and the geometric make-up of the right-turn facility as proposed did not provide a safe suitable access. The highway authority also indicated that the provision of a roundabout facility as previously discussed with the applicants, prior to the submission of the application or an amended right-turn incorporating a turning lane 3 m wide, with 10 m turning length and 25 m deceleration length would be more appropriate.

The highway authority also advised that the proposed mitigation scheme at the Weeping Cross A513/A34 junction was not currently deliverable without third party land and that it was not possible to secure contributions towards such works, which would be necessary to adequately mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the highway network. They added that the wider impact of the development, in particular on the Weeping Cross A513/A34 junction had been assessed in the accompanying Transport Assessment and considered to have a material impact at this already congested junction. As a costed and deliverable mitigation scheme was not available, it would not be appropriate to secure contributions for a scheme that had no certainty of being delivered.

Furthermore, the Travel Plan as originally submitted did not provide adequate measures to encourage modal shift, specifically the provision of a bus pass for a minimum period of 3 months and a cycle voucher to enable purchase of a bike up to a nominal value.

A final objection was that there was not sufficient information to enable a full assessment of the transport implications of the proposed development to be undertaken as an appendix to the assessment has not been included with the submitted application.

Further discussions have subsequently taken place between the highway authority and the applicants and revised and additional plans and details have been submitted. These comprise a revised access drawing, an additional drawing showing a proposed combined 3 m wide combined footway and cycleway on the southern side of the A513 between the application site and the Weeping Cross roundabout junction with the A34, a revised Travel Plan and the "missing" appendix to the Transport Assessment that was not previously submitted. The highway authority has been re-consulted and their formal response is awaited. The highway authority, however, has initially advised that the proposed access alterations appear to be satisfactory subject to a Road Safety Audit being undertaken, that the revised Travel Plan is acceptable, which together with the submission of the appendix appear capable of overcoming three of the four highway reasons for refusal.

The applicants, however, have been advised that the objection on the grounds that the proposed development will have an adverse impact on the wider higher network that cannot be mitigated through a costed and deliverable scheme. While the highway

authority has advised the applicants that discussions are ongoing involving the landowner regarding the preparation of a scheme for an improvement of the A34/A513 junction and that they are hopeful that an acceptable scheme will soon be in place, there is no indication when such a scheme would be available. Furthermore this Council as the local planning authority is not satisfied that an acceptable scheme can be put in place.

The proposal, therefore, conflicts with Policies T1 (g) that seeks to ensure that traffic from new development does not have a negative impact on the network or at junctions and (h) that advises that proposals that generate significant levels of traffic, which cannot be accommodated in terms of capacity, road safety and load will not be permitted, T2 and SP7 (e) due to its impact on existing infrastructure and (k) as adequate vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access cannot be ensured.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework - Paragraphs 32, 34, 36 (Section 4 on Sustainable Transport)

The Plan for Stafford Borough - Spatial Principles 6, 7, Policies T1 Transport, T2 Parking and Manoeuvring Facilities

#### **4. Assessment of Retail Impact**

The application includes the proposed provision of a small convenience store of 250 sq m to be located on the Milford Road frontage of the site. It is suggested in the Planning and Design and Access Statements that this would be within a building also containing residential accommodation on upper floor(s).

The Plan for Stafford Borough requires in Policy E8 that proposals for developments in excess of 300 sq m should be the subject of an impact assessment. The policy also requires that new developments and extensions to existing village and neighbourhood shops should be assessed on the basis of whether the retail development meets local needs through the assessment in the NPPF without having a detrimental impact on the local hierarchy and as to whether it would result in the loss of local amenity particularly in terms of noise, litter, smell, parking and traffic creation and trading hours.

In terms of assessing the impact on the local hierarchy, as the proposed floorspace is below the 300 sq m threshold for developments in local centres requiring impact assessment, it is not considered that any objection on the grounds of impact on the vitality or viability existing village/neighbourhood shops or on Stafford Town Centre could be sustained. This is consistent with paragraphs 24 - 27 of the NPPF. Furthermore, while concerns have been expressed regarding impact on local centres and querying the need for another convenience store, it should be noted that this is a modest proposal that would be associated with the development of a further 225 houses, rather than a stand-alone proposal to cater for existing development.

In terms of impact on local amenity, this is an outline application with details of layout including car parking, scale, and appearance all to be submitted at a later date. The Head of Environmental and Health Services has recommended that a number of conditions be attached specifically relating to the retail proposal to ensure that amenities of occupiers of

both existing and proposed residential are safeguarded. Adequate parking could be ensured as part of any detailed submission.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - Paragraphs 24, 25, 26, 27

The Plan for Stafford Borough- Policy E8 Town, Local and Other Centres

## **5. Other Matters**

An Arboricultural Report has been submitted with the application. The Borough Tree Officer has no objections in principle, but points out that any proposed layout must properly consider the constraints posed by retained trees.

The Ecological Appraisal submitted with the application found that other than foraging bats, protected species were present on the site which was assessed as not being of high ecological value.

The Council's Biodiversity Officer has advised that no further surveys are required given that an ecological assessment has been undertaken and no protected species were found on site. He has requested that works to trees or hedgerows should not be undertaken in the nesting season unless it can be demonstrated by the developer that breeding birds will not be affected. This can be done by requesting a method statement for protection/avoidance of nesting birds as a condition of any approval. He has also advised that all existing trees and hedgerows should be retained where possible. He also welcomes the proposed creation of over 20 ha of open space including woodland, grassland, heathland, wetlands and SuDS based on the indicative design principles shown in the Green Infrastructure Strategy, particularly the new heathland areas given the proximity to Cannock Chase SAC. He advises that the suggestion of management of parts of the site by grazing should be explored further and that a full management plan for the site would be required.

Policy C2 of The Plan for Stafford Borough requires that 30% of dwellings should be affordable on development for more than 12 units in the area surrounding Stafford Town. Housing Strategy have advised that up to 67 units affordable units would need to be provided as part of the proposed development and that this should be provided at a ratio of 80% social rent and 20% intermediate affordable housing. The affordable element of this development would be required to deliver 54 social rent and 13 intermediate affordable housing units. The applicants have confirmed that they are prepared to accept the provision of affordable housing within the scheme.

County Education has advised that a development of 225 dwellings would generate 47 primary pupils and 41 secondary and post-16 pupils. As the catchment primary school for this development is projected to be full, a contribution towards the enlargement of primary provision of £518,457 (47 x £11,031) is sought. The need for additional secondary school places and a new secondary school in Stafford has also been identified and consequently a contribution towards the provision of new secondary school places of £1,146,647 is sought. This would result in a total education contribution £1,665,104. The education

authority advises that should the number, type or mix of the dwellings change a revised contribution will be necessary.

The Head of Leisure and Culture Services has pointed out that the site is approximately 0.4 km from the existing open space area on Yelverton Avenue, which features a play area and playing pitches. Due to the size of the development, however, it is recommended that some open space is provided on site. If this development were to provide all the open space on-site the Council would request: 13,408 sq m (1.3 ha) area of open space, to be provided to value of £203,351.63 as a capital cost and on-site maintenance contribution of £378,818.02. Due to the proximity of the existing open space resource close to the development, it is recommended in this case that 70% be provided off-site 30% on-site. The on-site contribution should be 0.4 ha to be provided to a value £61,005.48 as a capital cost and a maintenance contribution of £113,645.40. Open space off-site should be provided to value of £142,346.14 as a capital cost; with a maintenance contribution of £18,568.51.

In principle the Head of Leisure and Culture Services supports proposed provision of open spaces as part of the part of the overall Green Infrastructure proposals for the site. While it is noted that the developer also appears to be proposing to provide a LEAP within the centre of the residential area, he recommends that the on-site provision requested be provided as casual open space and that the off-site contribution is used to upgrade and enhance the existing site at Yelverton Avenue.

The Councils Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment update has identified that there will be a need for an additional 6 ATP pitches due to increase in the population of the Borough and demand and also identifies that there is a current shortfall of 300 sq m of pool space. A contribution of £75,381 towards the provision of a pool, £88,331 for sport courts/halls and £12,874 for artificial turf pitches (3G) is, therefore, also requested (£176,586 in total).

The application site is situated approximately 1.4 km to the west of the boundary of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and is, therefore, within the inner 8 km zone of influence identified around the SAC.

A Habitat Regulations Assessment has been attached as an Appendix to the Ecological Assessment submitted with the application.

While it is stated that the proposed development will not lead to any direct effects on habitats, it is acknowledged that there is potential for the development to have significant indirect effects through disturbance or damage/erosion caused by increased visitor pressure.

The proposed development of 225 houses, which is equivalent to 2.6% of the total number of dwellings to be provided in the sub-area, is predicted to contribute the equivalent of 0.7% increase in annual visitor numbers. The assessment suggests that the likelihood of residents visiting the SAC will be affected by suitable alternatives available. This includes the recreational facilities present within and immediately surrounding the proposed development and the connections to alternative attractions or recreational facilities in the wider area. It is pointed out that the proposal would incorporate a significant area of semi-natural green space including the retained woodland habitat semi-improved grassland, which with careful design should ensure that these semi-natural habitats would provide an

enjoyable experience with scenery similar to Cannock Chase and would include footpath links in and around these habitats would provide routes for walkers within the open space and links to existing countryside together with long and short circular routes for dog walkers. It is stated that these measures would be likely to reduce the magnitude of the predicted effect of recreational pressure on the SAC and, consequently, that the development would not result in a significant effect on designated features of the SAC.

The applicant's assessment refers to the strategic Cannock Chase SAC Mitigations Report which recommends a number of on-site and off-site measures to manage recreational pressure on the SAC to be delivered through planning policy, which in this case includes Policy N6 of The Plan for Stafford Borough. While acknowledging that it is not possible to reduce the number of residents visiting the SAC to zero, it is considered that the on-site measures proposed would be in accordance with local policy and would be of sufficient quality to minimise any risk of in-combination recreational effects upon the SAC and concludes that no further mitigation is necessary to address the in-combination effects of recreational pressure.

As required by Paragraphs 61 and 62 of the Habitats Regulations the Council is required to undertake an appropriate assessment on a project where it likely to have a significant effect on a European site and its conservation objectives.

If planning permission were to be granted for the proposed development, this would be subject to the applicant first entering a Section 106 Agreement with the Council, which would include a requirement for a financial contribution per dwelling for the provision of additional formal off-site open space facilities in the area together with further contributions towards the development of a swimming pool, Sports Courts/Halls and artificial turf pitches. It is also acknowledged that the proposal includes the proposed provision of 20 ha of parkland in addition to public open space required by the Council. Policy N6 of The Plan for Stafford Borough requires that all development that leads to a net increase in dwellings within 15 km of the Cannock Chase SAC must take all necessary steps to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects on the SAC's integrity. This may include contributions to: habitat management: access management and visitor infrastructure; publicity, education and awareness raising; provision of additional recreation space/contributions to off-site alternative recreation space; and measures to encourage sustainable travel. Notwithstanding the level and nature of open space provision proposed within the site, in this particular location, which is well within inner zone of influence of the SAC only 1.4 km from the SAC, it is likely that a housing development of the scale proposed will generate additional visits to the SAC and consequently, it is considered that a contribution of £500.00 per dwelling would be justified to contribute towards measures to mitigate the impact of the development on the SAC.

Given these factors, it is considered that with the proposed level of open space and the proposed provision/contributions to open space on and off-site and sports facilities off-site together with a financial contribution per dwelling, which can be secured as an obligation included in a Section 106 Agreement specifically for that purpose, should satisfactorily mitigate any potential impact on the Cannock Chase.

As required under the provisions of the Habitat Regulations Natural England has been consulted and has confirmed on the basis of the information provided that it concurs with the view of the Council that that the proposal can be screened out from further stages of

assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination.

A Section 106 Agreement would be used to secure affordable housing and financial contributions for additional school places, open space and to mitigate the impact of additional dwellings on Cannock Chase SAC. It is considered that they are all justified under the terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 122. The applicants have submitted a draft Section 106 Agreement to cover these matters.

A significant number of representations have been received regarding the impact of the proposed development on existing local health service facilities and in particular on the local doctor's surgery and some have suggested that if planning permission were to be granted that either additional facilities should be provided within the application site or that a financial contribution should be required as part of a Section 106 towards the cost of providing additional facilities. Procedures are in place, agreed with health service providers to carry out consultations primarily through the local plan process and for individual planning applications for 500 or more dwellings. This application falls outside the required consultation procedures and consequently there is no basis either for consultation or to require any contribution towards the provision of health services as part of this single application.

A Noise Survey has been submitted with this application. This concludes that acceptable internal noise levels within dwellings can be achieved by using standard thermal double glazing across most of the site, with a need for higher glazing performance in some rooms of the first row of dwellings to the north. Noise levels within garden areas can be achieved in most cases, but where this is not possible localised screening from dwellings themselves and the south-western retail area will be utilised to ensure a suitable area providing a noise climate less than or equal to 55dB. No requirement for any vibration isolation treatment provided that dwellings are located at a suitable minimum distance from the main West Coast railway line to the north of the site.

The Head of Environmental and Health Services has requested conditions requiring that: any final layout should take account of the findings and recommendations in the Noise Report, that details, including a separate specific noise report, be submitted for any extraction, refrigeration or air handling plant proposed for the retail unit, that the hours of operation for the retail unit be restricted, together with general conditions to control construction works on the site including restricting hours of work and associated deliveries.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy - paragraphs 50, 69, 70, 72, 73, 118, 119, 23

The Plan for Stafford Borough - Policies C1 Dwelling Types and Sizes, C2 Affordable Housing, C7 Open Space, Sport and Recreation, N1 Design, N5 Sites of European, National and Local Conservation Importance, N6 Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), N7 Cannock Chase AONB; I1 Infrastructure Delivery Policy

## 6. Conclusions

The proposed development is unacceptable on highway safety grounds. In addition, the Council has an existing five-year supply of housing land plus a 20% buffer and it has been established in The Plan for Stafford Borough that housing requirements for Stafford Town can be met without the development of additional greenfield sites beyond the existing built-up area. There is no justification, therefore for this development with the consequent harm to open views and the residential amenity of the locality and on existing (highway) infrastructure. At the present time, it has also not been fully demonstrated that adequate access can be provided to the site. The development, therefore, conflicts with Spatial Principle 7 and Policy T1 of The plan for Stafford Borough.

## Consultations

**Parish Council:** Object on the following grounds:

This is a greenfield site and has sustained crops over a considerable length of time. The Agricultural land Classification deems Grade 3a land such as this to be significant to the rural economy and until recently, land could only be considered for development with the permission of the Secretary of State. Object to loss of productive agricultural land;

Site is not included in the recently adopted Local Plan which embraces the government aim under the Localism Act and the NPPF for local authorities to fulfil a duty to cooperate with local people on planning issues. Key issues in the Local Plan should be addressed working with partners, which in the case critically involves the Cannock Chase AONB and Special Area of Conservation. Localism Act legislates for the community to shape future development, with Parish Councils designated as neighbourhood forums and encouraged to identify where development may or not take place. As this site has not been identified or allocated as part of the strategic needs of the Borough or as one suitable for development, to allow its development so soon after adoption would significantly undermine the plan and the public's involvement in the process. The applicant has not demonstrated why it is necessary to revisit this site;

A key challenge for the Council through the Local Plan is the maintenance and enhancement of irreplaceable assets such as the AONB and SAC, which includes the provision of open space and the need to protect, conserve and enhance the historic landscape character of communities. Any development must deliver measures to mitigate impact on the AONB and SAC. The Plan for Stafford Borough makes it clear that development must not adversely affect the special character of an area, including the importance of open space and views. The Parish Council considers that the development encroach harmfully on to land formerly regarded as the buffer zone to the AONB, being visually intrusive in views from the Chase and surrounding countryside sited on the plateau area of the application site. No mitigation measures are shown and the applicants



make no reference to the importance of this attractive agricultural area to the general landscape of the gap between Walton and Stockton Lane;

The development will significantly harm residential amenities of occupiers of properties on Stockton Lane, Bluebell Hollow, Milford Road and parts of Walton Village with intrusive housing in this rural landscape, with the risk of overlooking existing dwellings;

Highways structure is already inadequate to ensure easy access into the Town and the proposed development could potentially add a substantial number of additional vehicles to this congested route and the situation would be exacerbated if other forthcoming developments are permitted;

Proposals for transport enhancements beyond the immediate area are not clear and further information is required. It is also important that all parties affected by emerging road or other transport proposals are fully consulted;

Proposed access will cause danger to highway users and pedestrians so close to a school entrance and bus lay-by;

Schools in the area have insufficient capacity to cope with additional children. The plan should include provision for extending local schools;

There is inadequate health provision in the area without taking into account other proposed developments. If permitted the development should provide for an extension to the existing doctor's surgery or for a new surgery rather than a retail store;

There is no master plan allowing the full impact of the development to be assessed including the relative proportions of housing, including the percentage of starter homes as opposed to bungalows, which could be tied in to any subsequent reserved matters application;

The applicants have not shown how the proposed open space would be managed and funded in perpetuity, nor provided any guarantees or evidence as to how the land would be protected against future development;

Wish to be advised of any further changes or emerging Section 106 negotiations before final determination so that further representations can be made;

Should this plan succeed, would wish to ensure that the community benefits would be secured through a Section 106 Agreement.

**Highway Authority:** Object on the following grounds:

Proposed site access fails to comply with DMRB TD42/95 and is geometrically substandard in design and its location creates possible vehicular conflict with the operation of an existing access point. While the provision of a single access point in conjunction within an emergency access is considered acceptable to serve the proposed number of dwellings, the location of the access close to existing access points and the geometric make-up of the right-turn facility proposed do not provide a safe suitable access. The provision of a roundabout facility as previously discussed with the applicants or an amended right-turn incorporating a turning lane 3 m wide, with 10 m turning length and 25 m deceleration length would be more appropriate;

The proposed mitigation scheme at the Weeping Cross A513/A34 junction is not currently deliverable without third party land and it is not possible to secure contributions to such works, which would be necessary to adequately mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the highway network. The wider impact of the development, in particular on the Weeping Cross A513/A34 junction has been assessed in the accompanying Transport Assessment and considered to have a material impact at this already congested junction. A costed and deliverable mitigation scheme is not available and it would not be appropriate to secure contributions for a scheme that has no certainty of being delivered;

The submitted Travel Plan does not provide adequate measures to encourage modal shift, specifically the provision of a bus pass for a minimum period of 3 months and a cycle voucher to enable purchase of a bike up to a nominal value;

There is insufficient information to enable a full assessment of the transport implications of the proposed development to be undertaken as an appendix to the assessment has not been submitted.

**Environment Agency:** No objections and no conditions requested, but make detailed comments to be passed on to developer as informative.

**Severn Trent Water:** No objections subject to the approval and subsequent implementation of detailed proposals for the disposal of drainage.

**Staffordshire County Flood Team:** No objections subject to a condition requiring submission and approval of a detailed surface water drainage scheme.

**Schools Organisation (Staffordshire County Council):** Comment as follows:

A development of 225 dwellings would generate 47 primary pupils and 41 secondary and post-16 pupils;

As the catchment primary school for this development, Leasowes Primary, is projected to be full a contribution towards the enlargement of primary provision of £518,457 (47 x £11,031) is sought. This contribution is based on 2008/09 cost multipliers which are subject to change;

The SKM report identified the need for additional secondary school places and a new secondary school in Stafford. A contribution towards the provision of new secondary school places of £1,146,647 is sought;

The total education contribution based on 225 open market dwellings is £1,665,104;

Should the number, type or mix of the dwellings change a revised contribution will be necessary.

**Natural England:** Comment as follows:

Cannock Chase SAC

Note that the Council as competent authority under the provisions of the Habitat Regulations has screened the proposal to check for the likelihood of significant effects and on the basis of the information provided concurs with the view of the Council that the proposal can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

There are four SSI's at a distance of between 0.9 km and 4.6 km from the application site. Advise that none of the SSI's pose a constraint in determining the application. No conditions are required but an informative is requested that a "Welcome pack" providing information on recreation opportunities in the locality for new residents including educational and awareness addressing relevant ecological issues, such as the location and sensitivities of nearby national and locally designated sites, steps that residents can take to enjoy and conserve local resources.

## Protected Landscapes

Having assessed the application and consulted the AONB partnership, do not believe that the proposed development would impact significantly on the purposes of designation of the close-by Cannock Chase AONB. This advice is based on the submitted indicative landscaping and open space proposals. If the application is approved, advise that these proposals be secured as they offer a valuable opportunity to address the degraded landscape character of the Sandstone eastlands within which the application lies.

## Green Infrastructure

Welcome the significant proportion of the site proposed as multi-functional green infrastructure. The design approach should be secured as part of any approval and any approved scheme should incorporate well designed Green Infrastructure to ensure that the development is better able to be accommodated within its landscaping setting and as an extension to the Town.

## Biodiversity Enhancements

Application provides a basis for a range of opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife. The authority should consider securing measures to enhance biodiversity of the site from the applicants. If approved suitable management arrangements and long-term funding will need to be secured.

## Soils and Land Quality

Consider that the application falls outside the scope of consultation on this issue as it would not appear to lead to the loss of over 20 ha of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

## Other Matters

The authority should assess local sites (biodiversity and geodiversity), local landscape character and local or national biodiversity priority habitats and species. Natural England Standing Advice should be applied to assess impact on protected species.

### **Borough Biodiversity Officer:** Comments as follows:

An ecological assessment has been undertaken and as no protected species were found on site, no further surveys are required;

Works to trees or hedgerows should not be undertaken in the nesting season (March to August), unless it can be demonstrated by the developer that breeding birds will not be affected. This can be done by requesting a method statement for protection/avoidance of nesting birds as a condition, to include timing of work, pre-work checks, avoiding nesting areas etc;

Existing trees and hedgerows should be retained where possible;

The Green Infrastructure Strategy aims to create over 20ha of managed open space including woodland, grassland, heathland, wetlands and SuDS. The indicative design principles as shown in the G.I.S. report are welcomed and will provide a good variety of habitats. New heathland areas are especially welcomed and work well with the site's proximity to Cannock Chase SAC. The suggestion of management of parts of the site by

grazing should be explored further. And a full management plan for the site will be required.

**Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee:** Comment as follows:

Comments made without prejudice to considerations regarding location of development set out in Local Plan, housing land supply, development of open land outside AONB or to physical character of Walton on The Hill and Weeping Cross:

Site is close to AONB boundary. Not possible to see site from AONB boundary. Other than The Way for the Millennium which runs along the canal towpath north of the railway line, there are no public footpaths in this part of the AONB or on the application site, so the development would not impact on the immediate area of the AONB;

In terms of the wider AONB, the site can be seen from high open land around the millennium sundial on Broc Hill, but the visual impact on the setting of the AONB is offset in part by existing older housing at Walton and Weeping Cross, recent housing on Bluebell Hollow and longer views to the buildings in Stafford in the background. The site, especially the part proposed for development, although open, sits within built-up framework of Stafford. Providing site is developed in manner indicated with parkland and structural landscaping, the impact on the AONB will be limited;

Based on this assessment and subject to careful control of detailed design, have no objections as it will not adversely affect the AONB.

**DEFRA:** No response received.

**Staffordshire County Council Archaeology:** Comments as follows:

The proposed application is supported by an archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA), but concerned that the historic landscape character has not been considered in the assessment of heritage assets for the area. Also concerned to note that the 'Local Plan Housing and Industrial Allocation: An Archaeological Assessment' has been considered which is somewhat out of date while failing to make use of the more recent Stafford Borough Historic Environment Assessment. Attention is drawn to Historic Environment Character Zone 7 (Baswich and Walton-on-the Hill) which includes the area of the proposed scheme. The DBA should also consider the results of the West Midlands Regional Research Framework when considering archaeological potential across the site; The DBA identifies correctly that there are no designated archaeological heritage assets within the area of the proposed scheme while the nearest Scheduled monument is approximately 1 km to the north-west of the scheme. The DBA considers that the lack of records on the HER suggests low potential and while this is not in dispute, there remains the potential for the presence of late prehistoric archaeological remains within and close to the valley of the River Sow as well as positioned on plateaus overlooking such a rich resource base;

Bearing in mind the scale of the proposed scheme, its location in close association with the River Sow (and the river confluence), and potential from similar locations elsewhere in Staffordshire, it is considered that there remains the potential for late prehistoric remains to be encountered during groundworks associated with this scheme. It is advised that a staged evaluation (comprising geophysical survey and trial trenching) be undertaken to determine archaeological potential and significance across the site. This work, which may be satisfactorily secured via a condition attached to any planning permission for the scheme, will also inform the need for and scope of any further archaeological works upon the site. These works should be undertaken by an appropriate organisation/s employing appropriately experienced staff. The organisation/s should comply with the Institute for

archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct and the relevant IfA standard and guidance and with any Brief prepared by the SCC Historic Environment Team.

**Staffordshire County Council (Rural County Environmental Advice).** Comment as follows:

#### Landscape

The LVIA correctly identified the relevant landscape character types and landscape policies as given in the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2001) Planning for Landscape Change. The appropriate landscape policy objective for the majority of the site is landscape enhancement, indicating a medium quality landscape, which has suffered some erosion of strength of character through loss of features typical of this landscape. Habitats creation, hedgerow restoration, hedgerow restoration and tree and woodland planting provide suitable landscape enhancements, but note that site does not appear as a Strategic Development Location in the new Local Plan.

Views from Milford Road show the landform, rural in character, rising as it meets the skyline to form the horizon. From the north, while considered distant, views from Brancote and Tixall Heath towards the site feel predominantly rural in character. The proposed development would provide intrusive rural elements, changing the perception of the landscape. Development will inevitably result in some landscape and visual impact and the developer should demonstrate that the proposal seeks to minimise that impact. The proposed Green Infrastructure will help offset detrimental impact, but access onto the site may require the removal of more vegetation than indicated to provide a suitable visibility splay to the highway. Advise that the likely landscape impacts of this proposal be assessed in detail, having regard to the description of the relevant landscape character type and quality.

#### Rights of Way

Proposal will have a direct impact on Public Footpath Number 1 Berkswich Parish and any development should not commence until an Order has been made and confirmed to divert the footpath.

While the County Council has not received any application to add or modify the definitive Map of Public Rights of Way, which affects the land, but point out that this does not preclude the possibility of the existence of a right of way at common law or by virtue of a presumed dedication under Section 31 of Highways Act. Advise that it may be necessary to make further local enquiries and seek legal advice in respect of any physically evident route affecting the land or apparent exercise of a right of way by members of the public.

**Staffordshire Wildlife Trust:** No response received.

**Network Rail:** Comments as follows:

No objections in principle but note that proposal is adjacent to the operational railway and that the site includes an access point/right-of-way onto the railway. Developer must contact Network Rail to confirm that rights-of-way will not be impacted;

A Risk Assessment and Method Statement should be submitted to Network Rail Asset Management once the proposal has entered development stage to cover all works within 10 m of the railway;

If not already in place, a steel palisade fence at least 1.8 m high should be provided adjacent to the railway boundary. Point out that any existing fence along the boundary would have been erected by them to take account of any risk posed at the time and would not have taken into account any future use of the site where increased numbers of people and minors may be using land adjacent to the railway and request condition requiring fencing;

Advise that all surface water be directed away from the railway and request a condition requiring submission of surface water drainage details;

Will need to review excavation works to determine if they will impact on railway line and request condition requiring submission of details of ground levels, earthworks and excavations to be carried out near to the railway;

Acknowledge the potential for noise/vibration impacts due to proximity of railway line and that development should be assessed in context of NPPF guidance. Also point out that levels of usage of railway line may alter and that maintenance works to the railway will be required and that these usually take place at night;

Suggest no trees be planted next to railway boundary due to possibility of high winds resulting in trees being blown over blocking the railway line and damaging overhead lines, destabilising ground leading to landslips and shed leaves falling onto the track causing trains to lose grip.

**Canals and Rivers Trust:** No response received.

**Ramblers Association:** It is essential that the emergency access onto Falmouth Avenue should be open for pedestrians and cyclists to enable residents to access: the adjacent cycle route to Stafford; local Schools along Porlock Avenue; adjacent housing at Baswich; local shops along Bodmin Avenue; and local buses at Porlock Avenue/Bodmin Avenue.

**Borough Tree Officer:** No objections in principle, but any future applications must be supported with an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree retention/removals plan and Arboricultural Method Statement in accordance with Table B: 1 of BS 5837 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction recommendations 2012.

**Borough Parks and Open Spaces Development Officer:** Comments as follows:

Sports pitch provision and built associated facilities within the area fall short of national standards as identified within the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy 2009 Assessment and are in need of refurbishment to address significant quality deficiencies. This has been supported by the draft revised 2013 assessment;

The National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) supports the Council current policy by ensuring that all developments are designed to be sustainable both now and in the future;

This is a major development off Milford Road surrounded by residential development. It is approximately 0.4 km from the existing open space area on Yelverton Avenue. This open space features a play area and playing pitches. However due to the size of this development (225 dwellings) it is proposed that some open space is provided on site;

Due to the size of this development the Council is reasonably entitled to request a quantitative provision of 25.91 sq m per person of open space provision under its current policy. If this development were to provide all the open space on-site the Council would request: 13,408 sq m (1.3 ha) area of open space; open space on-site to be provided to value of £203,351.63 as a capital cost; and on-site maintenance contribution of £378,818.02;

Due to the fact that an existing open space resource is within very close proximity of the development, it is proposed that the development provides a financial contribution offsite and casual open space onsite. It is recommended that this split be 70% off-site 30% on-site;

The on-site contribution should be: 4,022 sq m (0.4 ha) area of open space; open space on-site to be provided to value £61,005.48 as a capital cost; and on-site maintenance contribution of £113,645.40;

The offsite contribution is: open space off-site to be provided to value of £142,346.14 as a capital cost; and off-site maintenance contribution of £18,568.51;

As part of the application the applicant has advised that open spaces will form part of the overall Green Infrastructure of the site. In principle this type of open space is supported as it provides the developer opportunities to meet numerous requirements in terms of biodiversity, community benefit etc. The development proposes a large proportion of the site to be parkland and through this area walks will be established allowing the residents to move through the natural environment. The developer also appears to be providing a LEAP within the centre of the residential area;

It is recommended that a LEAP is not developed within the site and that the off-site contribution is used to upgrade and enhance the existing site at Yelverton Avenue. It is recommended that the 4022 sq m on-site provision requested be provided as casual open space. As part of the Reserved Matters application the applicant would have to provide information in regard to how the casual open space would be managed and maintained. If they propose to use a management company, documentation will need to be provided to illustrate this;

The Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment update identifies that there will be a need for an additional 6 ATP pitches required due to increase in the population of the borough and demand. The assessment also identifies that there is currently a shortfall of 300 sq m of pool space and that that Stafford Leisure Centre is currently operating at capacity along with Alleyne's. Any future developments will further increase the deficiency in swimming capacity;

The current Sport England Facilities calculator has been applied to the proposed development as there will be an impact upon facilities in the local area as residents join local sporting clubs either as adults or through schools and increased usage on swimming pools;

Due to the identified shortfalls this development should contribute £75,381 towards the provision of a pool, £88,331 for sport courts/halls and £12,874 for artificial turf pitches (3G). The total amount that needs to be contributed is £176,586;

Leisure Services will not be seeking the adoption of any footpath or cycle way and associated infrastructure including lighting as part of this development. These paths should be adopted by the County Council who are the Highways authority for the Borough; The applicant advises that some of the open space/parkland will be used as part of the sustainable drainage system (SuDS). Stafford Borough Council will not adopt any land forming part of the SuDS scheme and as a result the Council will not be seeking adoption of any of the open space upon site and alternative management methods must be secured.

**Housing Strategy:** Comment as follows:

This development of 225 dwellings is required to deliver 30% affordable housing which equates to 67 dwellings;

As of 03 October 2014 there were approximately 1441 households on the Housing Register in Stafford Borough. In addition to this, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (October 2012) suggests an annual affordable housing shortfall of 210 dwellings comprising approximately 154 units in general needs accommodation and a shortfall of 55 for older person's accommodation;

Council Policy suggests that affordable housing should be provided at a ratio of 80% social rent and 20% intermediate affordable housing. The affordable element of this development should therefore deliver 54 social rent and 13 intermediate affordable housing;

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment identifies an undersupply of 1 and 2 bedroom homes and an oversupply of 3 bedroom homes. A mix of these required properties would be expected on site;

Affordable housing must at least meet the standards recommended by the Homes and Communities Agency in terms of size and rent level as well as other factors, which affect the work of Registered Providers;

It is recommended that sites not only provide a mix of bedroom numbers but also a mix of property sizes, able to accommodate more than the minimum persons;

It is preferred that any 1 bedroom accommodation contain a minimum of 3 habitable rooms, particularly in units designed for older people that are not part of flexi-care style scheme;

Where a 2 or more bedroom affordable home is intended for rent, it is recommended that this is not delivered as part of flat/apartment units, because such properties are unaffordable for single people or couples on benefits and are not favoured by Registered Providers as being the best environment for families with young children;

On large developments with a mix of affordable and open market housing, it is expected that the affordable housing be spread across the development in clusters of roughly 15 units to allow for easy management by Registered Providers. The look of the affordable properties should be indistinguishable from the open market housing on the site.

**Head of Environmental and Health Services:** Request conditions requiring that: any final layout should take account of the findings and recommendations in the Noise Report submitted with the application; that details, including a separate specific noise report, be submitted and approved for any extraction, refrigeration or air handling plant proposed for the retail unit; that the hours of operation be restricted for the retail unit; and general conditions to control construction works on the site including restricting hours of work and associated deliveries.

**Police Architectural Liaison Officer:** Recommends that the development attains Police Secured by Design (SBD) award.



**Neighbours:** 138 individual representations received from the occupiers of 126 properties. Points raised:

Site not designated for housing in Local Plan;

Local Plan is in place as required by NPPF to conform with the Framework, meet local needs and reflect local people's views of how they wish their community to develop. Such a plan is in place and does not include this land, despite the applicants claiming otherwise at the pre-application presentation;

Areas for housing building have been allocated in the area to the north of Stafford and with the adoption of The Plan for Stafford Borough both the Government and the Council have agreed that this is the only area for substantial house building in Stafford until 2031;

Understand that development should only be permitted outside areas specified in Local Plan where a genuine need for a change to the plan can be shown;

Large sites have been identified in the Local Plan for 7000 new homes in the Stafford Town area;

Understand that there are plans approved to meet housing demands in Town for at least five years - why propose further expensive and disruptive development;

More suitable infill sites are available for development;

Seems wrong if developers were allowed to proceed with this proposal, which would make a mockery of the Council and the Planning Section where a plan could be overridden and ignored only 3 months after adoption;

Proposal contrary to Spatial Principle 6 of The Plan for Stafford Borough as development would not promote a sustainable rural economy or the conservation or improvement of the rural environment;

While objecting to half-a-dozen frontage houses in this location might be difficult, a development on the scale now proposed would be wholly inappropriate on greenfield land;

Existing proposed developments in this part of Stafford could result in 800 new houses, with 2500 residents, approximately 1000 children of school age and over 800 vehicles. This site would increase overall numbers to 1025, numbers of children to 1000 and vehicles to 1200;

Approval may set precedent to other developers as no area would be sacred;

Greenfield site between Town and rural area;

This farming land gives Stafford a pleasant approach from the east;

Recognition that strategic planting will be required around the site perimeter is tacit acknowledgement that the development will be visually harmful and intrusive;

No cross-sections or visualisations have been submitted to enable the impact of the development on long distance sightlines and visual amenity to be assessed;

Much of land is currently in viable and sustainable use for agriculture;

Cannot afford to lose more agricultural land;

Agricultural land significant to the rural economy that until recently could not be lost to agriculture and developed without the permission of the Secretary of State;

Land is included in agricultural land categories as land capable of sustaining high yield crops and is important to the rural economy on this basis;

Should be maintained as arable land to produce locally grown food as part of effort to reduce our carbon footprint and reduce global warming;

Losing farmland is irresponsible and short-sighted;

Development will be visible from AONB;

Land falls within or is very close to a buffer zone where it is appropriate to refuse development that would have a detrimentally impact on the AONB;

Will expand the Town close to Cannock Chase - should be retained as a buffer;

Sites such as former Police HQ should be developed before greenfield sites;

Redevelopment should take place in the Town Centre, including conversion of older buildings into apartments;

Loss of visual amenity particularly affecting residents of Stockton Lane and Walton on The Hill;

The public footpath and mature Oak trees are in a delightful visual amenity in the current rural setting, which would be ruined by surrounding them with houses and a small amount of grass;

Adverse impact on occupiers of properties on Bluebell Hollow - any tree planting to screen development will take time to be effective;

Character of the landscape is being destroyed;

Local Plan policies require that development should not adversely impact on the special character of an area, including the importance of open space and views;

Development, which would be on high ground, would have a significant adverse effect on the local area;

Siting of proposed development on brow of field will have maximum visual impact on Walton village, AONB, and even Tixall and Beaconside;

Potential for disastrous impact on important open views across and from the adjoining Sow/Penk river valley;

Will spoil the beautiful surroundings of Walton on The Hill and its character;

Proposed developments are having an adverse impact on the character of the area;

NPPF requires sustainable development through protecting and enhancing natural environment. Proposed development would take place in a beautiful natural environment that encourages diversity and attracts wildlife - proposal, therefore, would be contrary to these NPPF provisions;

Blot on the landscape;

Important that undeveloped gaps should be left. This would fill in last remaining gap along Milford Road. Its exclusion from the Local Plan was presumably to preserve this gap;

The position of the proposed parkland is away from the existing housing area and would not benefit existing residents;

Baswich, Walton on The Hill and Milford would become a single suburb of Stafford;

Atmosphere of community is being changed beyond recognition;

Site has always been regarded as a buffer zone between the Town and The Chase;

More green space between Town and Cannock Chase would disappear forever;

Hard to assess development as a "garden Village". Such information as has been submitted suggests closely packed buildings would be likely on proposed development area that would not contribute to the visual sustainability of the site or area;

Land is designated as Green Infrastructure in Local Plan;

Character of proposed buildings would not be in keeping with properties on Stockton Lane backing onto the site;

No master plan has been submitted depicting layout and house types;

Will affect quality of life for occupiers of existing houses, which once lost can never be regained;

Loss of views particularly affecting residents of Stockton Lane;

Loss of privacy and security;

Neighbouring properties on Stockton Lane and Bluebell Hollow will suffer a reduction of sunlight and increased noise;

Draft proposals have not included any consideration as to how to blend the mix of housing throughout the development without adversely impacting on existing residents;

Design of individual houses should be varied and diverse as compared to nearest neighbouring house to prevent any development being a blight to visual amenity;

Land has been used by community for many years and its destruction would be a sad loss to the whole community;

Design of development will not be in keeping with local traditional housing. High density modern development such as Bluebell Hollow looks out of place;

Works to Green Gore Lane to make it fit for access by emergency vehicles will change its nature;

Green Gore Lane is an ancient route which links to the public right of way and should be protected from development;

Concerned that the inclusion of Green Gore Lane in the application could be a potential access road for further development in the future;

Use of Green Gore Lane will impact adversely on users of Walton Village Hall;

Roads not capable of managing increased demand;

Existing traffic congestion on route into Town;

Will have huge impact on existing congestion into Town;

Further development in this part of Town should not be permitted on a piecemeal basis;

Until the Baswich Lane/Cannock Road junction is improved, the additional traffic generated by proposed development will worsen existing congestion;

Radial traffic problems cannot be resolved in the short or longer term as they require additional major public facilities or expenditure, such as road widening or new construction, which would be unlikely to be publicly funded. Council should indicate that there will be no more major developments in areas which would involve the use of these radial routes until these problems have been addressed to create extra capacity or until proper public transport alternatives are available;

Will lead to queues from A5134/A34 mini-roundabouts back to access point for proposed development;

Development will generate between 400 and 500 additional vehicles;

Other developments also proposed including former Police HQ site which will add to traffic problems;

Increase congestion will result in increased response times for emergency vehicles;

The roads through the Weeping Cross estate and along Baswich Lane already experience high volumes of traffic attempting short-cuts, exceeding the 30 mph speed limit and turning it into a rat-run;

Proposed changes to Baswich Lane will lead to more traffic that will cause greater problems in the area;

Stafford acknowledged by local bus provider as one of the most congested towns in which to provide services;

There are two bridges that are over 1000 years old along the route from this site to the Town Centre, which are both used excessively - further developments will only further reduce their life-span;

Traffic problems are aggravated by any problems on the M6 Motorway, including ongoing roadworks;

Quicker to travel the 11 miles to the Rugeley store than to travel to the Stafford Tesco;

Likely that routes along Old Croft Road and Hillcroft Park will become rat-runs with associated dangers and some drivers will even use a route through Milford and Brocton to access Cannock Road;

Severe congestion already occurs around Leasowes School at morning, lunch and evening drop-off/pick-up times;

Concerned about safety of access, which would be close to existing traffic lights and to a pelican crossing;

Proposed access point will be onto the already busy A513 next to a bus lay-by and virtually opposite a turning to Walton High School and also close to a pelican crossing where Stockton Lane discharges and receives pedestrian and vehicular traffic to and from the Weeping Cross and Baswich Estates with their two primary schools;

Concerned over viability of proposed access, particularly in light of proposed alterations to garage opposite, which include two new entrances to Milford Road and proposed access to small residential development on existing car park adjacent to application site;

Road is too narrow to accommodate a holding lane;

Bluebell Hollow development required traffic light controls to enable traffic to access the A513 from the development;

There are four existing junctions onto A513 within 350 m;

View of oncoming eastbound traffic towards Stockton Lane is limited;

Relocation of bus-lay by as required would result in front of buses being opposite main gas manifold;

T junction proposed with vehicles filtering onto Milford Road from development would lead to problems at peak times and school times due to traffic queues with a particular danger to pupils attending Walton High School;

Position of access will cause additional safety issues for children travelling to and from local schools;

Site lies on the wrong side of the busy A513 for its catchment High School and for Berkswich Primary School;

Query how new residents will be able to turn right from site onto Milford Road at peak times;

Concerned about parking and safety associated with proposed convenience store around junction with Milford Road;

Location of proposed convenience store will encourage illegal parking;

Proposed emergency access onto Falmouth Close is not viable as cars are normally parked on both sides of the existing narrow roadway, which would cause problems for emergency vehicles;

The inclusion of footpath access into the cul-de-sac section of Falmouth Avenue will increase footfall in the area and a likely increase in pedestrian related accidents;

Road system around Falmouth Avenue, which is fed directly from Weeping Cross and Baswich Lane, would be very congested if the main access to the proposed development were to be blocked and would not offer a suitable alternative for emergency vehicles;

Submitted documentation implies that there are a number of bus services from the area to the Town Centre, whereas apart from the very occasional bus from Brocton and Milford to Walton village, the only service is the bus to and from Lichfield. Other routes are not within reasonable distance;

The plans indicate that the bus stop at the bottom of The Rise will have to be moved towards Milford. Although this is not a great distance, as the service into Walton is so infrequent, many Walton residents, who are often elderly and using shopping trollies, make use of this stop which is served by the regular Stafford to Lichfield service. Accessing the existing stop is difficult enough without extending the walk and giving bus users another road to negotiate;

Travel Plan appears to ignore reality and seems to just consist of persuading 9% of people in the area for sole journeys to car share or preferably to walk or cycle by distributing Travel Packs and providing personalised advice and by promoting working at home, home deliveries from supermarkets and online shopping;

Will add to parking problems on Bodmin Avenue by people visiting the doctor's surgery;

Existing traffic calming measures in the area have not been successful;

No further development should be considered until the Eastern By-Pass issue has been resolved to ease traffic passing through this heavily congested area;

Development would finally stop the EDR being built;

Future construction of the EDR should be safeguarded;

Line of EDR crossing this site should be safeguarded until there is greater clarity over the long-term transport requirements for Stafford;

Concern over Council's recent transport proposals, which appear to be trying to make access into Stafford more difficult. Actions appear to be driven by desire to build and suffer consequences after the event. Residents should be provided with complete plans and feasibility studies used to justify actions;

Do not agree with traffic survey undertaken as target buyers would be likely to be working families with a minimum of 2 cars per household, resulting in a 450 car estate;

Some lateral thinking on traffic is necessary - perhaps a new railway station at the rear of the planned site;

Proposed public footpath linking to Falmouth Avenue/Falmouth Close will jeopardise security of existing residents, due to likely anti-social behaviour and requiring the erection of higher fencing;

Proposed footpaths should be incorporated into any subsequent scheme;

Pedestrian travel from proposed houses to local amenities should be encouraged in the interests of public health and wellbeing;

Any new roads and surfaced footpaths should be porous to prevent surface water flooding after rain;

Will lead to increased run-off and risk of flooding. It is not proven that drainage lakes would completely mitigate this;

Impact on existing services including drainage, water supply, electricity and gas supplies, communication cables/masts;

Concerned over loss of trees and hedgerows;

All existing trees and hedgerows should be retained, particularly those referred to in the Arboricultural Report;

Will have adverse impact on wildlife;

Hawks, skylarks, kestrels, Peewits, Buzzards, Owls, pheasants, sparrow hawks, mallards, dragonflies, field mice, deer, hedgehogs, rabbits, foxes, squirrels and many other species of birds and animals and pollinating insects have been seen on the land;

Would destroy an important natural habitat at this end of Stafford;

Concerned over impact of development on the existing buffer between what is at present agricultural land and residential development on Bluebell Hollow, which has become a safe haven for wildlife;

Loss of any open land in this area will reduce habitat for and consequently numbers of birds;

Would put further pressure on Cannock Chase;

Concerned over impact on nearby SSSI at Baswich Meadows;

The development would result in an increase of between 600 - 900 residents of which 300 - 400 may be of school age;

Local schools are already full or near to capacity;

Local schools are already in urgent need of refurbishment;

No existing plans to extend existing schools or to build new schools;

Developers contributing to an education fund will not overcome problems as money will never be spent in the local schools as there is little space for expansion;

MoD proposals for a similar sized residential development include provision for education;

Local residents are concerned over the influx from other areas such as Rugeley, Cannock and Penkridge, there may be no room for future generations of local children;

Few services available locally;

Existing health provision is barely adequate for current population;

Medical Centre at Weeping Cross is having difficulty coping;

Existing two week wait for doctor's appointments;

Lack of parking at existing surgery;

Concerned that Council has not entered any dialogue with the relevant health authorities to ascertain impacts on health services that could be mitigated through a financial contribution and/or amendment to include a new surgery. Query how proposal can be properly evaluated without obtaining formal observations from health care providers;

Clinical Commission Group should not be so reluctant to become involved in proposed developments of under 500 houses and should assess the impact of housing proposals alongside plans for future development plans for the area. In this case it is known that existing provision fails to meet community needs;

No documentation relating to applicant's evidence as to scheme viability and likely Section 106 obligations;

Any financial contributions should be truly meaningful which will actually deal with problems rather than providing token amounts;

If we do have to have a new housing estate, should also provide more schools, a surgery, a thoughtful road network and attractive houses;

If approved developer should meet capital and revenue costs associated with the infrastructure impact of their proposals. Should pay commuted sums in respect of ongoing revenue cost of additional teachers, police officers etc at least until they are taken over by Government as reflected in an increase in the Rate Support Grant;

Stafford Hospital will not be able cope with new development that has already been permitted;

With changes in opening times for A&E and the pressure that Stafford Hospital is under to improve its services, the impact of up to 700 additional patients in the area will impact negatively on services that primary and secondary healthcare can provide;

While applicants state that they would be prepared to contribute towards the provision of accommodation to promote village cohesion, as existing community buildings are overstretched, it is new recreational premises that are required;

Merely providing a convenience store will not address real pressures on local facilities;

Proposed convenience store is not required as there are a number at Weeping Cross, Wildwood and Baswich Lane;

Why has convenience store been retained in proposals when over 50% of respondents to applicants consultation process felt that it was unnecessary;

The Town does not have the jobs or the infrastructure to sustain the proposed increase in the population;

Stafford is being turned into a commuter town;

Proposed shop and its location will cause nuisance for existing neighbouring residents, particularly during the evening;

Noise nuisance from additional traffic;

When the application for the development of Bluebell Hollow was granted, existing residents were assured that there would be no further development on land behind;

Applicants have not given satisfactory explanation as to how proposed open land would be cared for in future or what protection community would have from further development;

Development would create a second rate and potentially unkempt urban parkland on previously private agricultural land, requiring financial support and Policing. This would

have to be supported by either the Borough or the Parish Council as it would be unreasonable to require new householders to provide finance and the proposal for a Trust would not be viable in the long-term;

No binding mechanism has been included in the application to ensure that the remaining land is retained as public open space;

Disappointing that it is envisaged that social housing would be located adjacent to existing houses on Stockton Lane rather than being spread throughout the development;

If any area is to be developed, surely the need is for bungalows for ageing people, maybe a village for the elderly with appropriate infrastructure to cater for their specific needs. This would release family homes;

If permission granted it should only be for bungalows, small houses and apartments for over-55's;

Proposed developer should accommodate for first-time buyers. Not enough housing is being provided for this group;

Of 56000 houses in Borough 1.5% have remained empty for the last 6 months - upgrading empty homes would minimise waste and utilise pre-existing infrastructure;

Property guides in local papers are evidence that there is no shortage of houses;

Question whether there is a critical housing shortage given that there were 635,127 homes empty in the UK in 2013;

Not against change, but changes should be for the better rather than introducing more problems;

Vexatious and opportunistic application;

Do not believe that development would be viable for 225 given the likely cost to developers of acquiring the overall site - estimate that more than 500 dwellings would be required for development to be profitable;

Given size of overall site, concerned that this application is to establish a foothold for further development;

Waste of Tax Payers money producing Local Plan if current proposal was to be approved;

Support proposal as existing land is of no amenity value and would welcome the additional open space that would be created as part of the development;

Have not found any reference in the application regarding the need to safeguard the area of the registered Stockton Common.

### **No relevant Planning History**

#### **Recommendation** - Refuse for the following reasons:

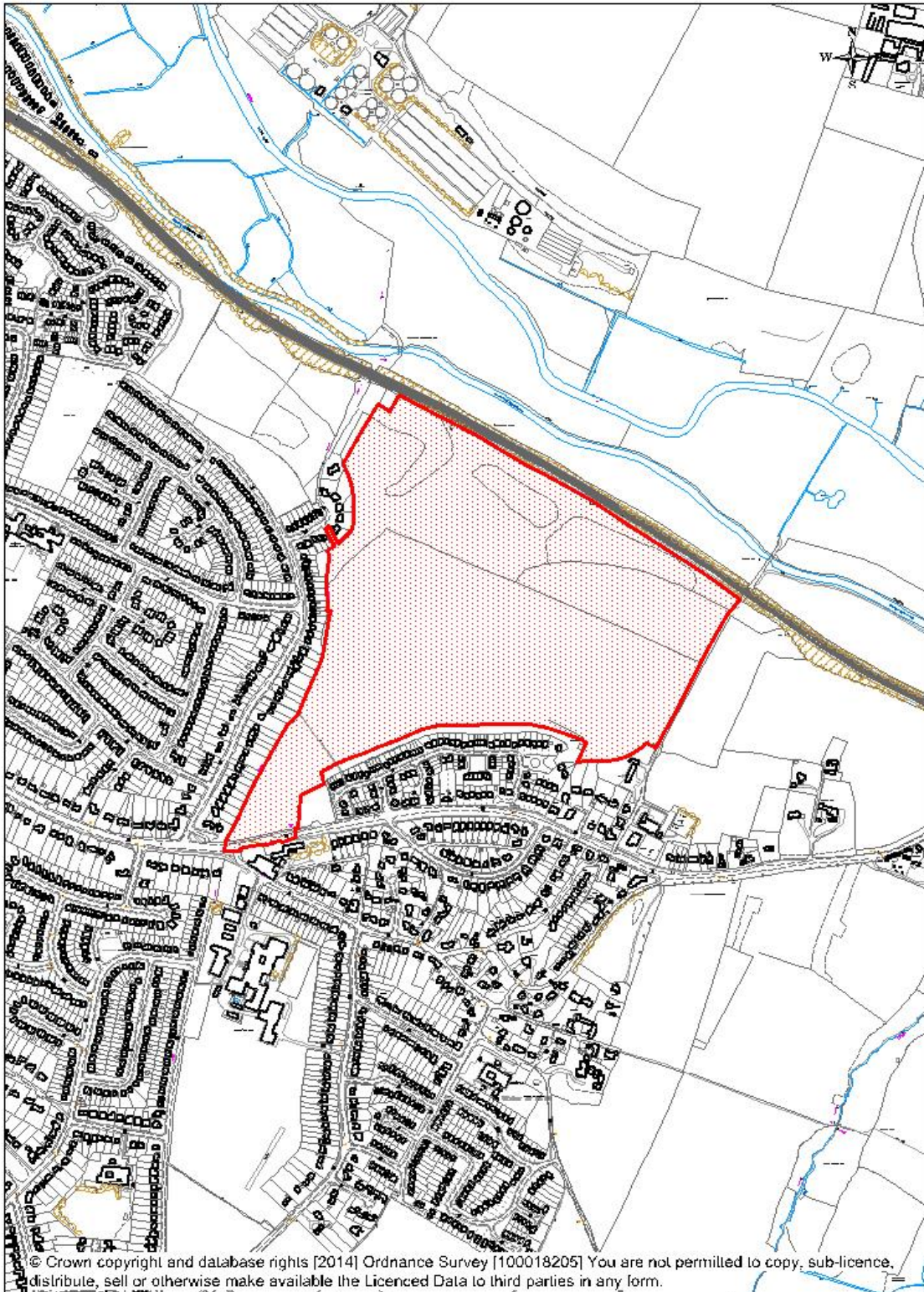
1. The Council can demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land, including a 20% buffer. The Plan for Stafford Borough demonstrates that for the plan period objectively assessed housing need can be fully met in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. Sufficient housing land is identified in the Strategic Development Locations delivered by Policy Stafford 2, Policy Stafford 3 and Policy Stafford 4, in the Plan for Stafford Borough to meet the requirements of Stafford town. The Council has more appropriate, viable and deliverable land available for housing so that the less preferable application site is not required. This application is a substantial residential proposal that lies outside the identified Strategic Development Locations and the proposed development strategy, and is contrary to the Plan for Stafford Borough. Although it is recognised that an element of provision will occur on brownfield sites within the existing urban area, the application site is located on a greenfield site and as such the proposal is contrary to Spatial Principle

SP7, which states that only where insufficient sites on previously developed land in sustainable locations are available to meet development requirements should greenfield sites be released. Furthermore, the proposed development also conflicts with criteria (f) and (l) of SP7 in that it would impact adversely on important views and would adversely affect the residential amenity of the locality and with the highway related criteria (e) due to its impact on existing infrastructure and (k) as adequate vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access cannot be ensured. As such the proposal does not constitute sustainable development.

2. The proposed mitigation scheme at the Weeping Cross A513/A34 junction is not currently deliverable without third party land and it is not possible to secure contributions to such works, which would be necessary to adequately mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding highway network. The proposal, therefore, conflicts with the provisions of Policy T1 (g) and (h) and of Spatial Principle 7 (e) of The Plan for Stafford Borough.
3. Proposed site access fails to comply with DMRB TD42/95 and is geometrically substandard in design and its location creates possible vehicular conflict with the operation of an existing access point. This is in conflict with the provisions of Policy T1 (g) and T2 and of Spatial Principle 7 (k) of The Plan for Stafford Borough.



**14/20878/OUT**  
**Land Between Railway Line And Bluebell Hollow**  
**Milford Road, Walton On The Hill**



Dept: Planning & Regeneration

OS Ref: SJ 9521

Not to Scale