

## **SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

Mr Mark Jackson MRTPI, Partner, Planning,  
Development & Strategic Advisory,  
Cushman & Wakefield

Appeal PINS ref. APP/Y3425/W/23/3315258

**CHANGE OF USE FROM STUDENT  
ACCOMMODATION TO ASYLUM SEEKER  
ACCOMMODATION**

Former University Halls of Residence,  
Stafford Education and Enterprise Park,  
Weston Road, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST18 0A

Town & Country Planning Act 1990  
(as amended)

Serco Limited

April 2023

## **SUMMARY PROOF**

The following provides a summary of the proof of evidence by Mark Jackson MRTPI in respect of planning appeal ref: APP/Y3425/W/23/3315258 submitted by Serco Limited (“the appellant”) in respect of the decision of Stafford Borough Council to refuse permission for change of use from student accommodation to asylum seeker accommodation (“the appeal scheme”) at the Former University Halls of Residence, Stafford Education And Enterprise Park, Weston Road, Stafford (“the appeal site”).

The proof of evidence addresses general planning matters and evaluates the planning balance pertaining to the appeal scheme.

The appeal site and the proposals are described in detail in the officer’s report to committee and the statement of common ground.

The appeal proposal received no technical objections and was recommended for approval in the Officer report to committee **(CD/A22)**. However, the officer’s recommendation was not accepted by Members at Planning Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and the application was refused. No Development Plan policies were cited in the reason for refusal **(CD/A25)**.

Matters in relation to the proposed operation of the Appeal Site and Serco’s experience of managing other similar sites, as well as addressing the Council’s concerns regarding perceived fear of crime, are dealt with as part of the Proofs of Evidence issued by Lisa Dysch **(CD/E3)** and Katy Wood **(CD/E2)** of Serco Limited.

No amendments have been made to the Appellant’s proposals since the Application was taken to Planning Committee.

It is common ground that there is an urgent need for asylum accommodation nationally.

Within the administrative area of Stafford Borough Council there is only a very small level of asylum accommodation provision and the appeal proposal is of an appropriate scale and density for the location of the site and having regard to the population of Stafford.

The appeal site was chosen following a review of potential sites by the appellant. It is deliverable, suitable and sufficiently flexible to provide for the accommodation needs of asylum seekers and provides a good level of amenity space on site.

It is common ground that the appeal proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan.

The main matters to be considered as part of this Appeal were discussed at the Case Management Conference between the Inspector and all parties and are set out in a succinct manner by the Inspector in Paragraph 5 of the CMC Notes:

- the effect that the proposed development would have on social inclusivity;
- on fear of crime; and
- on local public health resources

I do not consider that the fear of crime has a reasonable basis when considering the appeal proposal and I consider that it does not meet the threshold for being a material consideration. Even if there are problems they will be managed by the appellant. Any fear of crime will therefore not arise as a result of the use of the land as asylum accommodation.

I consider the appeal proposal does not introduce any elements that would reduce the opportunity for social interaction between the occupants and the surrounding area and the Appellant will encourage the integration of the appeal site within the local community.

In relation to healthcare, I accept there will be an impact on resources from the appeal proposal, although a significant amount of on-site provision will reduce these impacts. The NHS has not suggested that the Appellant should be required to pay for the health assessments or argued for a financial contribution to assist with mitigating any perceived impact. I, therefore, conclude the impacts are acceptable in planning terms.

I am of the view that the appeal proposal represents a sustainable form of development that should be granted planning permission