

Mr P Morrison
Chief Executive
Planning Inspectorate
Room 3 O/P
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

27th January 2023

Dear Mr Morrison,

I understand that an appeal has been lodged with yourselves against Stafford Borough Council Planning Committee's decision to refuse Serco's application to convert historic student accommodation at the old Staffordshire University site to asylum seeker accommodation. The proposal for the site at Beaconside, Stafford, is to house a mixture of short-term accommodation (160) before applications are assessed and a further 322 places of longer-term dispersed accommodation whilst applications are being determined.

I am writing to ask you to register and pass onto your relevant planning inspector that I strongly oppose this appeal.

I am keen that Stafford plays its part in housing asylum seekers, and I know that our communities are ready to welcome them. However, this site is wholly inappropriate, right next to a primary and secondary school, the health faculty of Staffordshire University's Stafford campus and opposite Staffordshire Police HQ and a large housing estate.

The Planning Committee of Stafford Borough Council back in July last year raised concerns around the sheer volume of people being housed in such a concentrated area, with a shortage of support services locally and the additional pressure that this concentration and massing of people would have on already stretched services, particularly the health service, education, police, and other support services. The site itself has a variety of housing estates and schools in close proximity, which does not make for an ideal location, when so many people are massed at close confinement.

For clarity, Staffordshire (and Stafford Borough) are keen to play their part in the emergency housing of those fleeing persecution and needing somewhere safe to live whilst their claims for asylum are being heard, which is why Staffordshire Leaders offered back in October to manage the local elements to ensure that the delivery on the ground of a workable plan could be achieved.

Stafford Borough remain against the use of accommodation in this concentrated way and feel that our agreed migration number of 137 for the whole Borough could be better accommodated through working with the local Council and housing in smaller placements.

You may be aware that we currently have approx. 70 young men accommodated in the village of Penkridge in my constituency. I already have numerous complaints about men hanging around the local schools and following girls home. The harassment of women whilst going about their daily business and various other problems. This illustrates perfectly why the Beaconside site is so inappropriate, and I fear serious implications if it goes ahead.

I would urge your department to refuse this appeal on the basis that the location of this site is completely inappropriate for such a facility and local services are already strained to breaking point. This application does nothing to ensure that those people seeking refuge in our country can be helped in the best way possible for both them and our local communities.

Theo Clarke MP
Stafford Constituency