

Development Proposals for Land West of Stafford

Notes on Current Situation

- 1. Brief History**
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- A. Initial Submission on (irs)**
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- C. Additional Comments (irs - Sept 14)**
- D. Submission on Master Plan (irs)**

1. Brief History

- 1990s
 - The land immediately south of Doxey is allocated for housing in the 'old' Local Plan
 - Major development (up to Castle on Lord Stafford's land) proposed
 - opposed by Doxey & Newport Road residents – withdrawn/refused
 - 'Universal' submit a proposal to build near Doxey
 - opposed by Doxey
 - Eventually withdrawn/refused after change in national policy (towards 'brownfield' development)
- 2012
 - New Local Plan - 'Burleyfields' 2200 houses
- July – 2013
 - Joint Proposal by Bellway (Saint Gobain) and TaylorWimpey(Lord Stafford)
 - Generally in line with New Local Plan
 - Consultations published (with current Master Plan – see website www.doxeyca.org.uk)
- November – 2013
 - Bellway goes it alone for 170 houses
 - In area covered by 'old' Local Plan
 - Not consistent with July-13 proposals
 - Consultation very inadequate (see appendix A)
 - Opposed by Parish Council
- May – 2014
 - Bellway submits application (based on Nov – 2013 proposals)
 - No mention of July-2013 Plans
- June – 2014
 - Local Plan Adopted by Borough Council
 - Master Plan required prior to detailed applications
- Sept – 2014
 - Borough Planning officers recommend acceptance of Bellway plan
 - Bellway meeting with Parish Council
 - “No need for Master Plan” - based on 'old' local plan
 - Doxey campaign to get a Master Plan
 - Planning Committee
 - Requiring Site Visit before a decision is made
- Oct/Nov – 2014

- Petition with 650 signatures to insist on a Master Plan
- Bellway/TaylorWimpey – prepare 'Master Plan'
- Dec – 2014
 - Borough Planning officers recommend acceptance of 'Master Plan' without consultation
 - Planning Committee require proper consultation on Master Plan
- Jan – 2015
 - 19th -Consultation Exhibition organised by TaylorWimpey/Bellway at Doxey Church Hall
 - about 300 residents attend
 - 23rd – Parish Meeting discusses Master Planning
 - passes Resolution (see below)

2. Parish Meeting – 23rd Jan 2015

At the meeting attended by residents and Borough and County Council councillors the following resolution was passed :

- 1. To thank Taylor Wimpey and Bellway for putting on the consultation event on Monday January 19th 2015.**
- 2. To raise the issues with the main access especially in relation to the proximity to Doxey School.**
- 3. To put forward the concerns about Bellway who appear to be exempting their site in Doxey from the consultation of the overall masterplan.**
- 4. To highlight the importance of retaining the footpath which runs from St Thomas and St Andrew Church providing access to Stafford Castle. This needs to be retained as a “green corridor” as shown in previous plans provided.**
- 5. To raise concerns that community facilities will not be available until the first 1000 houses have been built.**
- 6. To raise concerns that a specific provision for a Doctors surgery has not been included.**
- 7. To request that construction traffic is closely monitored to reduce impact to residents.**
- 8. To put forward community concerns that the Bellway Development does not include adequate green space for the size of development.**
- 9. To note that all elected representatives, Parish/Borough/County Councillors and local MP, should monitor closely the implementation of the Masterplan**

3. Notes on the above resolution

3.1 “To thank Taylor Wimpey and Bellway for putting on the consultation event on Monday January 19th 2015.”

The exhibition was not demanded by the Borough Council and it was well arranged and attended by well-informed personnel. (unlike the unsatisfactory 'consultation' in November 2013)

3.2 *“To raise the issues with the main access especially in relation to the proximity to Doxey School.”*

This is a major problem with the whole development. The Bellway development area can only be accessed from Doxey :

- a) From The Drive – a narrow residential road
- b) From the Church Car Park – land not available
- c) Through a gap in houses between 138-142 Doxey (opposite 171-174 Doxey)
- d) through gap in houses opposite Bradbury Rise in dip just west of the Primary School

In the Master Plan the 'Drive' access is designated for a limited number of houses adjoining 'The Drive'. Two new roads ('c' & 'd') are the main access points to the development.

The access near Bradbury Rise is close to the school in a dip with restricted visibility especially from the east (nearer Stafford). There is a danger that motorists attention may be diverted by the speed humps and traffic using the access road and Bradbury Rise.

It has been suggested that a 'one-way' system be used with access 'd' being used to enter site and 'c' as the exit. This would prevent buses crossing the traffic near to the school.

We understand that traffic guidelines insist that for a development of this size that there should be two access points.

In the longer term it would be better if the bulk of traffic could be encouraged to use the southern link to Martin Drive and the Western Access Road.

3.3 *“To put forward the concerns about Bellway who appear to be exempting their site in Doxey from the consultation of the overall masterplan”*

The concept plan published as part of the joint proposals of July-2013 laid down guidelines for 'Green Corridors to provide views to the Castle' and 'Extensive green infrastructure' – these were backed in in the accompanying maps. The guidelines have been repeated, and in some cases strengthened in the latest Master Plan.

However area covered by the planning application 14/20425/FUL which was submitted in May-2014 (and which made no reference to the joint proposals), is left unchanged as an island of intensive development on the northern edge of the area.

One of the authors of the 'Illustrative .. concept plan' said that he was told, when drawing up the map, to exclude the Bellway area, which is treated in the same way as developments already built or granted planning permission.

During the last 12-14 months Bellway have held a number of meetings with Parish Council representatives as well as the 'consultation' of November-2013. None of this consultation has resulted in any material changes to the plans. Since July-2013 the density of housing is increased and open spaces reduced (see 3.5 below)

3.4 *“To highlight the importance of retaining the footpath which runs from St Thomas and St Andrew Church providing access to Stafford Castle. This needs to be retained as a “green corridor” as shown in previous plans provided.”*

This is a major issue. In the 'concept plan' of July-2013 line of the existing footpath is marked as a green footway with trees running from Doxey Church across the Greenway with links to the golf course and the town. The new Master Plan refers to **'A number of key footpath and bridleways radiating from a central Destination Park within a connected network of green infrastructure (within and beyond the development area itself) will be reinforced with key features such as ponds and woodlands incorporated in a variety of spaces.'**

Yet in the area of 14/20425/FUL the existing footpath becomes a line running on estate road pavements ! The maps of the Master Plan are drawn to disguise this.

The existing footpath is very heavily used by Doxey residents for leisure walks, as a way to reach other parts of Stafford and for walking dogs. It will be the only leisure link between Doxey, the Greenway and the recreational areas of the Castle and Golf Course. If this becomes concrete and asphalt it will restrict the freedom of children and dogs to run free (or as free as it can be in an urban area).

3.5 "To raise concerns that community facilities will not be available until the first 1000 houses have been built"

The Master Plan shows space for a 'Local Centre and New School' . It is felt that these facilities should be started as soon as possible. Existing facilities will become inadequate once new housing becomes occupied.

3.6 "To raise concerns that a specific provision for a Doctors surgery has not been included"

It was felt that emphasis should be made of the need for additional health facilities, including a doctors' surgery.

3.7 To request that construction traffic is closely monitored to reduce impact to residents.;

The existing road from Stafford to Doxey is already over-loaded at times and the additional load caused by construction traffic will make things worse. Completing the link to Martin Drive and the Western Access will alleviate that.

The new road system should be built earlier so that construction traffic for later phases does not come through Doxey and so that there will not be any incentive for residents of the new houses to use the already busy Doxey route.

3.8 "To put forward community concerns that the Bellway Development does not include adequate green space for the size of development"

As stated above the density of proposed housing has increased in the Bellway area since July-2013. Within the residential area there are no informal green spaces for children to play under parental supervision. The open space designated in the Bellway area, on the south-east corner, is a low lying area, away from the houses, subject to flooding which (I think) is protected. So no great effort by Bellway there !

3.9 "To note that all elected representatives, Parish/Borough/County Councillors and local MP, should monitor closely the implementation of the Masterplan."

Once the Master Plan was adopted it was imperative that it should be adhered to. It was the duty of all elected representatives to ensure that the developers (and local councils) fulfilled their obligations.

Appendices

- A. Initial Submission on (irs)**
- B. Parish Council Submission (Sept 14)**
- C. Additional Comments (irs - Sept 14)**
- D. Submission on Master Plan (irs)**

(These are submissions made by Iain Simpson or the Parish Council on Planning application 14/20425/FUL and the proposed master plan. These are included (as submitted) as they contain additional comments and background material. Much of the material is repeated and some has been overtaken by events.)

A. Initial Submission – June 2014

(this submission was later used as the basis for the parish councils comments on the application)

Comments on Planning Application - 14/20425/FUL

Erection of 170 dwellings, new vehicular access, parking, green infrastructure, landscaping, drainage and associated ground works. Land South Of Doxey Road Doxey Stafford Staffordshire

Background

- 1990s - Universal submits plans for 150-200 houses - eventually withdrawn
- Oct 2011 - 'Plan for Stafford Borough' proposes 2200 houses between the Castle & Doxey
- July 2013 - 'Burleyfields, Land West of Stafford'
 - joint plans 'Taylor Wimpey & Bellway'
 - generally follows 'Plan for Stafford'
- Nov 2013 - 'Consultation' meeting re Bellways plan for 170 houses
- May 2014 - Plans submitted by Bellway - basically as Dec 2013 with link to rest of area.

The Borough Plan was well publicised with public meetings. It generally was accepted on the basis that although residents would prefer there to be no development in the area, if it was to happen it was better to be as part of a larger plan that considered the area as a whole. The extra facilities promised would be welcome in an area that had lost shops, pubs and a Post Office.

The joint plans proposed by Bellway and Taylor Wimpey in July 2013 generally followed the Borough Plan and were accepted again as part of an overall strategy for the area. The road layouts were the main cause of concern.

In November 2013 Bellway produced their own plan for the area adjoining Doxey which diverged considerably from the previously agreed proposals. They were not well received and it was understood (from Parish Council meetings) that they were being re-thought.

Now in mid 2014 we have a full blown planning application which differs only marginally from the ideas 'rejected' by Doxey 6 months ago.

Objections to the plans.

1. Consultation.

The Consultation Report (Ref Bir.4362) makes much of the consultation that was carried out. In practice it was a very half-hearted procedure.

They say that an 'Advertorial' was placed in the local papers on the 21st Nov. This may be true but I know of no-one who noticed it. The first most people knew about the plans was when a leaflet came through the door on Sat 23rd/Sun24th.

As far as

"2.7

In order to further raise awareness of the public exhibitions at Sir Graham Balfour School, an 'A' board with information announcing the exhibition (see below) and inviting people in, was placed outside the venue to encourage people to 'drop in'."

is concerned this school is 2-3 miles from Doxey and again I have no recollection of a exhibition there being mentioned.

The actual exhibition at the Church was quite well attended but it is some way from the main population areas in Doxey. We were disappointed that there were no representatives of the County or the Borough in attendance to answer questions. The 4 or 5 Bellway representatives had virtually no knowledge of the site or of the previous joint plan discussed in the same building 6 months earlier. One of the Bellway staff had only been with the company a week and knew nothing at all of the area. When the positioning of the access road was questioned the Bellway representative did not know of the existence of the Primary School 100m away. The general attitude was 'if you don't like it - fill in the form'. They seemed more interested in where you lived and how old you were than your views on the plan.

Of the resident's comments documented only one seemed in favour of the plans. The general responses to queries seems to be -

- 'The site is allocated for housing in the adopted Local Plan (1998)'
- The Transport Assessment answers your query
- It will be done by the County/Borough Council
- '.. the wider Strategic Development Location will include additional services & facilities '

In summary the consultation was completely unsatisfactory with Bellway just 'going through the motions'.

Before this plan is placed before the planning committee the residents of Doxey should have an opportunity to discuss its merits, or otherwise, with officials of the Borough and County councils who will be providing most of the associated infrastructure.

The joint plan of July 2013 merited full consultation with council representatives as well as those from the developers. In view of its potential effects on local communities, this plan deserves no less .

2. Transport

Existing Doxey Traffic

The 'main' road through Doxey between The M6 and the railway bridge (less than 2km) has 17 significant access points (excluding house drives)

- Aston Bank Farm
- M6 Maint area
- Doxey Fields
- road to Castle Grange estate
- road to Church car park
- Greensome Lane
- Bradbury Rise
- The Drive
- Doxey Primary School
- Access to houses nr Walland Grove
- Access to New Testament Church car park
- The Drive
- The Crescent

- Baxter Green
- Reed Drive
- Access to Chevron/Universal Car Part
- Access to Saint Gobain

With the anti-speed measure already in place, another two significant access points will only make things considerably worse.

In the busy times, especially morning rush hour (8-9am), the road is very busy and occasionally traffic backs up towards Greensome Lane. There is only one road into Doxey and one out and is therefore accidents can cause major problems. In winter the railway bridge can be impassible with ice/snow build up.

170 houses (maybe more in future) are likely to create an appreciable increase in traffic. How many new residents will work in Stafford town centre and therefore not use a vehicle ?

The positioning of the main access road just before the school, a bend and a dip in the road seems very unfortunate.

Only the completion of the Western Access Route and its connection to the development via a new 'Spine Road' will make development of this area acceptable.

3. Footpaths

The existing public footpath from the Church to the Castle seems to run alongside and across the estate roads. In the joint Taylor Wimpey/Bellway plan it ran as a independent wooded path through the estate. In the new plans there are no pedestrian routes (apart from the link to The Drive) and no real separation of pedestrians and traffic.

4. Open Areas/Play areas

The only open space provided is on the southern boundary quite a long way from the western houses. There is no provision of play areas even for the very young. The comment that a contribution could be made to the Castle View play area ignores the fact that it is even further away from the new houses.

The joint plan provided for a number of informal open spaces at various sites within the area, some doubling up as swales. The Bellway plan provides almost unrelieved rows of housing. the only open space being where housing is not permitted.

Although the area to the south-east of the site, which includes the existing football field, is in the same ownership there has been no attempt to integrate this into the plan.

5. Attenuation (Balancing) Pond

In the Borough joint plans the Balancing lake was to be positioned at just north of the hedge where the ground was almost at its lowest. It is now positioned south of the hedge where the ground is about 2m higher. This seems to have been done to increase the number of houses that could be built on the site. To achieve this it is proposed to move very large quantities of soil to lower the balancing pond and raise the building land.

Is this wise ?

6. Failure to look at the Bigger Picture.

The joint plan of July 2013, in agreement with the about to be appoved 'Plan for Stafford' provided a framework which would provide 2200 house together with shops, a school, extensive play areas and open space. It would create a large disturbance to local residents but, in the long term, would provide a good environment for people to live and play. Houses, play spaces, shops etc could be positioned in a logical manner regardless of land ownership.

The Bellway plans cram as many houses as possible onto the land that they control and assumes that

all other facilities will be provided at a later stage by someone else.

If the Bellway proposal is implemented in isolation there is a real possibility that the development of the remaining area will be carried out without the needs of Doxey residents being considered. The facilities lacking in the Bellway plan such as shops, playing fields etc. may well be placed further away from the houses in Doxey.

Conclusion

The objections to this plan are not 'Not In My Back Yard'. We accept that the area between our house and the Castle will be built on. But it is imperative that it is done in a manner that future generations will appreciate and that the residents of existing properties to the north, south and east of the 'Burleyfieds' area will gain as much as its new residents.

If piecemeal development, such as proposed in the Bellway plans, goes ahead it will make the proper development of all of the area between Doxey and Stafford Castle much more difficult and impoverish the lives of those living near it.

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B. Parish Council Submission – Sept 2014

Ref 14/20425/FUL - Land South of Doxey Road, Doxey, Stafford Revised Application – Bellway Homes – Sept 2014 Submission from Doxey Parish Council

This application is an update of the original application submitted in May 2014, but the plan is basically unchanged. The main difference is that the existence of 'The Plan for Stafford Borough' (henceforth “Local Plan”) adopted by the Council on 19th June is recognised if not supported.

The main document submitted by Pegasus on behalf of Bellway consists mainly of justifying the application and trying to explain why the provisions of the Local Plan should not be applied. This is discussed further in section 5.

1. Objections to the original plan.

As the application is basically unchanged, the objections made by the Parish Council in its submissions of 13th June (8, 1701206) are still valid and need not be repeated in depth.

We would also like to support the comments made by the Stafford Leisure and Culture Dept. (Roger Leverett - 19th June 3/1704472) regarding the recreational facilities (or lack of them) and the problems caused by the lack of a Development Strategy.

2. Continuing lack of meaningful consultation.

Our earlier document emphasised the inadequacies of the original consultation procedure which was not well publicised and staffed by people who had no knowledge of the area and not much of the plan they were recommending. The May plan took virtually no notice of any of the residents comments.

A public meeting was held at Doxey Church Hall on 26th June which was attended by a representative of Bellway's planning consultants. At the end of the meeting the impression was given that the adoption of the Local Plan and the residents comments would result in some real changes to the application. Regrettably this has not occurred and the only additions are attempts to justify an unchanged plan.

3. “Stafford Western Access Route” (SWAR)

(Nb. This is the connection to be created from Martin Drive on Castlefields through the Saint Gobain site to the Sainsbury's roundabout and then on past Halfords to Foregate.)

Since the earlier application was submitted, the County Council has now announced that SWAR would now go ahead, partially funded from Central Government. We now need to be able to evaluate how this decision will affect the implementation of the development of the area. (This point is made in the Staffordshire CC submission of 9th June (Paul Hurdus 3, 1703241).

Without a Master Plan for the area it is unclear how the estate roads will connect with the SWAR and until that connection is made all additional traffic generated from the area will be channelled along Doxey Road into Broad Eye.

4. General Planning Problems (covered in our earlier submission)

- 1) Worries regarding road accesses onto Doxey Rd especially concerning the School and visibility.
- 2) The proximity of foot and cycle paths to the main estate roads and the resultant danger/restriction of children and animals.
- 3) The lack of Open Spaces/Recreation Areas within the development, the distance to Castle View and the unsuitability of the 'Open Space' at the South-East corner of the site.
- 4) The excessive land movements needed to move the Balancing Pond and Watercourses away from the area being built-on. (Doxey already suffers from land settlement due to wet sand a few feet from the surface)
- 5) Increased load on existing facilities (School, shops) and lack of provision of any new ones (chemist, surgeries etc.)
- 6) Excessively high density of dwellings crammed into the area covered by the 1998 local plan.

5. Not compatible with the Local Plan

5.1 The Plan evolves.

Our major complaint is that Bellway's plans are not consistent with the Local Plan adopted by the Borough in June. The plan, originally published in 2011, outlines expansion of Stafford on the East, North and West (as well as in some of the villages). It was explained to the public in a series of exhibitions, including one in Doxey with a final version published after full consultation.

The plan for 'West of Stafford' envisages the building of a new community (referred to as "Burleyfields") between Doxey, Castletown and Stafford Castle with 2200 new dwellings, new shops, a new school, recreational and community facilities. In spite of some misgivings the proposals were accepted by the bulk of the community as the best chance of providing for future and existing residents of the area.

5.2 The need for a Master Plan

The Local Plan stated that *"...Any application for development on a part or the whole of the area should be consistent with a master plan for the whole Strategic Development Location. The master plan for the whole site should be produced by all developers involved in the development of the site and agreed by the Council prior to applications being submitted. Any application for a component of the whole site must be accompanied by a specific master plan which shows the relationship of the application area to the wider Strategic Development Location.*

This Master Plan is essential if the development of the area is to be co-ordinated over a period of time and implemented by different organisations developers or public bodies. It should specify general road structure, the positioning of shopping, educational and recreational facilities and prevent the piecemeal development that has blighted many areas.

5.3 Bellway (and TaylorWimpey) endorse the plan.

In July 2013 (14 months ago) Bellway and TaylorWimpey produced a consultation document for the development of most of 'Burleyfields', backed up with exhibitions and supported by the Borough and County Councils. This followed the "Local Plan" in most regards and accepted the need for a Master Plan as there would be a *"Concept plan submitted to Stafford Borough Council for agreement and to support its draft Local Plan"* in Autumn 2013.

Bellway would develop the (bulk of the) area north of the Greenway (owned by Saint Gobain) and TaylorWimpey the remainder (owned by Lord Stafford).

This again was generally accepted by the Parish Council and most residents as a reasonable way to proceed, if development had to go ahead in the area.

5.3 Bellway goes it alone (and forgets the Local Plan)

In December 2013 Bellway independently produced a plan for their part of the area which relied on the previous (1998) local plan and proposed building 170 houses cramped into the area adjoining Doxey (Road). It was accompanied by highly inadequate consultation and with no support from the Borough or County Councils. It made no reference to the Local Plan, or to the area to the south of the Greenway or to TaylorWimpey, their erstwhile partners.

This plan, opposed by Doxey residents and the Parish Council, was formally submitted, virtually unchanged, in May 2014 and again in September 2014.

5.4 The 'Planning Statement Addendum' of Sept 2014

The latest submission makes virtually no changes to the actual plans but is accompanied by 15 page document that tries to explain why the Local Plan is not being adhered to.

It states that the “*Bellway Homes and Saint Gobain application was submitted prior to the adoption of Stafford Policy 3 [the 'Local Plan']*” and that “*.. there was no requirement .. for a comprehensive plan to be produced .. prior to the submission*”. The planning application was, in fact, submitted over nine months after the unveiling of joint plan with TaylorWimpey which proposed exactly this comprehensive plan.

To make the situation worse it talks in a number of places of the 'Phase 2' of the operation without giving any clear idea of what is involved. No Master Plan even for the area in their own control!

To excuse their lack of a master plan or general facilities there are general statements proposing that 'contributions' could be made towards provision of facilities, without specifying what (or where) these facilities might entail.

There are some references to roads and paths linking to the area south of the Greenway and attempts to argue that their plans are consistent with the Local Plan.

6. Conclusions

The Bellway plans should be rejected because

- The proposed development is cramped and lacking in open space provisions and community facilities.
- Consultation with local communities has been grossly inadequate.
- Building houses in this position, at this time, prevents the proper integration of Doxey, Castlefields and the new 'Burleyfields' community.
- Foot/Cycle paths are not kept separate from traffic.
- There is no indication how the road structure will link-up with the Stafford West Access Route. The additional traffic will, in the mean time, add to the congestion by the school and on Doxey Road right up to Broad Eye.
- Until a comprehensive master plan is produced for 'Burleyfields' by all developers, the development is premature.

C. Additional Submission By Iain Simpson - 14th Sept 2014

Ref 14/20425/FUL – Land South of Doxey Road, Doxey

Additional submission from Iain Simpson, 170 Doxey, Stafford, ST16 1EQ

These comments relate to the situation after the publication of 'SBC Officer's Report' – 1746011 on the Borough Website 9th September 2014'

1. Consultation Dates

I am under the impression that the original date for the submission of comments was the 18th Sept., other people have quoted the 22nd Sept. My **second** notification has the date of 15th Sept.

The letter dated 9th Sept (received on Wed 10th) announcing the committee meeting on the 17th quotes the date as 15th (after a manual correction).

Whatever the dates quoted in letters are, The Borough Website page – Application Dates has
Neighbour Consultation Expiry Date : 22 Sept 2014
Standard Consultation Expiry Date : 22 Sept 2014

Therefore the Planning Committee decision (which I believe has delegated power) is being made 5 (five) days prior the last date for the submission of comments !

This may be legal but it seems to be somewhat dubious !

2. Planning Officer's Recommendation

This document was registered on your website on Tuesday September 9th – 13 (thirteen) days before the expiry date. His recommendation of approval would appear to have prejudged any consideration of comments received after this date.

Again this is very worrying

3. Consideration of Local Complaints

In the Planning Officer's Recommendation the representations of Doxey Parish Council and of the 20 individual representations are briefly outlined but no attempt has been made to answer them.

In addition the planning officer concerned has refused to meet with the Parish Council to discuss the application, presumably he has spent quite a lot of time discussing it with Bellway.

This seems to show scant regard to consultation with local residents and their representatives.

4. Timing of the Committee decision

Apart from the problems of consultation dates mentioned above, the rush with which the application has brought to Committee would appear to relate to the fact that the four month period from the application submission on 22nd May expires on 22nd Sept.

Has the developer threatened to take the matter to appeal if the application is not approved by that date ?

If so why was it left so long before the revised application was received (1st Sept), especially since the only significant change to the plan is the addition of a link from the spine road to any development south of the area. (the latest revision of the 'Planning Layout' 1226-01 is dated 19th August)

The very short time between submission and decision (16 days) has the effect, whether deliberate or not, of preventing full discussions of the application and its implications (see below).

5. Sabotage of “The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031”

“The Plan for Stafford Borough is the first part of the new Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001. The Local Plan will guide where new development will take place across the Borough area, describe what changes will occur, and identify how places will be shaped in the future.” (para 1.1 The Plan for Stafford Borough)

This is the most serious objection to the recommendation to approve the application.

The 'Local Plan' has been in preparation since 2008. It was presented to the public in 2011 and after lengthy consultations and revisions it was approved by the Council on June 19th. The consultation involved local exhibitions including one in Doxey. It was considered at a Doxey Parish meeting on 6th October 2011 and broadly accepted (although with some reservations regarding road layouts and 'zoning' of housing and recreation).

The implementation of 'Policy Stafford 3 - West of Stafford' would cause major changes to Doxey but it was felt that the planning of the area as a whole would provide safeguards and would prevent 'piecemeal' development. Additional facilities would be provided that could be shared by existing residents as well as the inhabitants of the new houses.

Especially relevant is the statement that

“.. The master plan for the whole site should be produced by all developers involved in the development of the site and agreed by the Council prior to applications being submitted. Any application for a component of the whole site must be accompanied by a specific master plan which shows the relationship of the application area to the wider Strategic Development Location. The design of the application should not prejudice the delivery or design of the wider Strategic Development Location. ..”

This provided a reassurance for local residents that any development of the area would be carried out within the Local Plan and that their interests would be protected.

The recommendation of the Case Officer that the Bellway application should be approved in the absence of a master plan makes a complete 'nonsense' of the Local Plan. In less than 3 months it has become apparent that if a developer doesn't want to comply and shouts loud enough he doesn't have to.

The message to all potential developers is that Stafford Borough is a 'soft touch' and that they can do what they like. The time and money spent on the Plan has been wasted, Stafford Borough is seen to have no commitment to its own policies.

Residents who have put their trust in the Borough Plan (and the staff who prepared it) have been betrayed.

Iain Simpson 14th Sept 2014

Appendix D – Comments on Master Plan – January 2015

[Comments on the Master Plan by Iain Simpson – Exhibition 19th Jan 2014]

Taken as a whole, the Masterplan seems to be well thought out and covers many local concerns. It follows the well-received plan outlined by Bellway and TaylorWimpey in 2013, but has been undermined by the 'need' to incorporate the Bellway plans submitted last year.

The 'Green Infrastructure Strategy'

The reference to 'key footpath and bridleways ... within a connected network of green infrastructure .. features such as ponds and woodlands ..' is particularly welcome.

One of the main footpaths to run through the area – from Doxey Church to the Castle' is very heavily used by residents of the area for family walks and dog-walking. In the original (Summer 2013) proposals this path was shown as a 'wide' green path with trees from the Church to the Greenway. In the Bellway proposals of Dec 2013 and May 2014 this 'green' path has been replaced with pavements running alongside estate roads – completely unsuitable for children or dogs.

Bellways proposals and the Masterplan

Since the Bellway proposals were submitted in May 2014 they have been considered twice by the Stafford Planning Committee. In September they said that a Masterplan was necessary. In December it is said that consultation on the Masterplan should take place before the detailed plan was considered .

The Master Plan has been produced and provides a framework for the area, except for the area covered by the Bellway proposals. One of the authors of the 'Illustrative .. Concept Plan.' has said that he had to exclude this area as there was a planning application already submitted.

A Master Plan is there to provide a framework for detailed plans not to rubber-stamp them.

There is no point in consulting residents on the Masterplan if it is not going to result in reconsideration of the detailed plans.

The Local plan for Stafford says “ *The master plan for the whole site should be produced by all developers involved in the development of the site and agreed by the Council prior to applications being submitted.*”

The applications are 'wagging the Masterplan dog' !