

Public 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

Oct 2011 Universal submits plans for 150-200 houses - eventually withdrawn

July 2013 Plan for Stafford Borough' proposes 2200 houses *between* the Castle & Doxey Burleyfields, Land West of Stafford' - joint plans 'Taylor Wimpey & Bellway' -

Nov 2013 generally follows 'Plan for Stafford'

May 2014 Consultation' meeting re Bellways plan for 170 houses

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 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 the first most people knew about the plans was when a leaflet came through the door on Sat 23rd/Sun24th.

The developers say that *"In order to further raise awareness of the public exhibitions at Sir Graham Balfour School, an 'A' board with information announcing the exhibition and inviting people in, was placed outside the venue to encourage people to 'drop in'* but this school is 2-3 miles from Doxey.

The actual exhibition at the Church was quite well attended but it is some way from the main population areas in Doxey. The community 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.

Transport

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.

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.

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.

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?

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 presesumbly 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 houses 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 may impoverish the lives of those living near it.