

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