

3.1 Have exceptional circumstances been demonstrated to justify the removal of land from the Green Belt?

The exceptional circumstances on Page 146 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Site Allocations Topic Paper – Rural Areas June 2018 only states the council needs to meet the development needs of the area.

Green Belt Review considers the site is suitable for release (with a caveat on development footprint).

During the consultation process at no point were the residents asked what they considered to be the development needs of the area? Instead we were asked to select sites in a ranking exercise, but not for which types of homes we wanted in the village.

The true and real development needs in the village are not for family homes but for the elderly and ageing population in Werrington. This has been conveyed to the District Councillors, the County Councillor and SMDC planners throughout the consultation process and all have overlooked a simple but fundamental fact.

The current elderly and ageing population of Werrington find their present homes too big for their requirements and a challenge to maintain in old age. Also maintaining their homes can be an expensive endeavour, where their financial resources would be better allocated to their care needs impacting on the NHS.

There are no suitable site managed residencies with wardens and facilities with care providers available for them to downsize into, leaving a supply of vacant family homes to come onto the market in the village.

Therefore to disrupt the village by building more family homes in the Green Belt on a slope next to the prison is not a sustainable model for the village in the long term and not meeting the true development needs of the area.

Elderly people will not want to live next to the prison on a slope either. I do not think they wish to see ambulances and prison vans whilst they sit in their gardens!

I would suggest the exceptional circumstances to justify the removal of land from the Green Belt are in reality commercial interests and profit making, not the development needs of the village as these are being ignored.

It is clearly evident that this is NOT a sound plan!

Homes England has expressed an interest in developing the site, so in this scenario are they required to demonstrate exceptional circumstances to justify the removal of the land from the Green Belt?

Or does “the council needs to meet the demands for the area” and a stated in interest from ‘Homes England’ automatically trigger the process of removing the land from the Green Belt and we have to go through the charade of a Local Plan and consultation process, which has arrived at totally opposite of what the residents of the village selected from a set of limited options in 2015 of infill and not building on the Green Belt?

Are stated interests from Home England considered any differently from applications from private developers?

3.2 If exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated have these been clearly articulated in the LP?

No as these are not meeting the true and real development needs in the village for the elderly and ageing population of the village.

As an alternative to the ridiculously proposed site in the Green Belt next to the prison on a slope, I propose a housing complex of wardened residencies with maintained gardens and facilities for the elderly on Werrington Playing Fields on the Meigh Road estate. These can be future proofed and sustainable with solar panels for energy requirements. Access can be gained off Bridle Path where the scout hut is located and perhaps even taking over the scout hut and using the building as a management office and recreation room for the elderly. The scout hut can easily be relocated.

Meigh Road Playing Fields are entering into decline due to a lack of use, due to all the sports pitches transferring to Malthouse Sports Facilities in the Parish. Anti social behaviour which includes late night drinking, people exposing themselves, vandalism, arson and dog fouling are a regular occurrence at Meigh Road Playing Fields. This is not what the park is meant to be used for and the site is now in need of an alternative use and regeneration.

<https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/local-news/police-crack-down-village-yobs-1885776>

<https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/stoke-on-trent-news/teen-tearaways-banned-area-up-1926504>

The best site for the stated aim of affordable homes is away from the prison on the land available just off Tregaron Court and Langton Court. This would be more suitable for families with young children, who would also have Bluebell Wood adjacent to go for walks in and access to Wetley Common. The site is a mothballed building plot with drainage covers already installed which has grassed over with time and is not used for anything else.

Following the sensible option of building there is proving to be difficult and being met with great resistance from the residents in that location. One of which is a District Councillor who fully supports building on sites WE03 and WE052, along with those residents in their large executive houses engaging in NIMBYISM. This individual has told a local journalist sites WE03 and WE052 have already been removed from the Green Belt.

'Prison land' pencilled in for 25 houses... 50 more just down the road

<https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/local-news/prison-land-pencilled-25-houses50-1432372>

Councillor David Shaw, Werrington's ward representative on the council, supports building on the site after it was removed from the greenbelt.

He said: "This land that will be designated for housing is Crown land, it is owned by the prison service and has been made available for housing through there."

I telephoned the journalist responsible for the article, Mat Jackson, and he confirmed Councillor David Shaw had told him that the site had been removed from the Green Belt!

Why is District Councillor David Shaw making this claim and does he know something we do not?

I feel this is important to include this information in this report.

Some of the reasons stated for not building off Tregaron Court and Langton Court, such as access amongst other meaningless waffle, has never been a concern to the Councillors when they have previously built in the Windmill Ward along Scholars Way, Brentwood Drive, Sandy Lane or extended Irvine Road over Draw Well Lane. They are just protecting the interests of their core Conservative voters – this is NOT sound planning!

3.3 Are the landscape impacts acceptable?

The landscape impacts are not acceptable firstly due to the land providing a function as a buffer zone to the prison. Sites WE03 and WE052 have previously been used by the prison for animals to graze on possibly to provide agricultural educational purposes to the prisoners. I doubt it has been leased out or farmed for commercial purposes to be designated farmland like the article in the Sentinel refers to, this is just more distraction and diversionary tactics. No prison would allow its buffer zone to be used for commercial reasons.

If the prison were to close in the future I would like to see the site, with its rural back drop, become an agricultural education centre like Reaseheath College over in Nantwich. Under these circumstances it is important to maintain the fields around the facility for educational purposes as farmland for grazing or growing crops on and parts of the former prison can be used for halls of residence and class rooms. This would make great use of the listed buildings.

Removing all the trees and unique outbuildings, which should really be listed, from WE052 would have an extreme detrimental impact on the village as these give the village its character, appearance and rural feel. Also building on WE052 would obscure the view of a beautiful listed building and building on the slope next to the main access road into the prison is quite detrimental and not a sound plan.

Building homes on WE03 the buffer zone would not be easily absorbed into the landscape and again the proposal is substantially harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

The viewing point opposite over South Staffordshire, the Wrekin and on a good day Long Mynd was selected for the location of the war memorial and benches. It is a pleasure to pass by the site on a daily basis and experience the view and rural feel before hitting a long corridor of a suburban road into the City. This one little pleasure in life many of us in the Windmill Ward experience will be lost forever if houses are built in WE03 – this is an unacceptable loss of open space and should be immediately be designated as LGS Local Green Space never to be built on for future generations to enjoy.

3.4 Can safe and suitable accesses and sustainable links to the village facilities be achieved for the sites?

For traffic to exit and enter from these proposed sites direct on to the A52 would be both unsafe and unsuitable. This is due to the bend and elevation in the road where the current prison road is located and Oak Mount Road directly opposite. Just lower down at Washerwall Cross roads where the school is located are also the doctors, library and chemists whose car parks are working beyond full capacity. This has become so much of a concern for Councillor David Shaw that he recently

wrote in one of his Village Life publications that people needed to start taking more care before somebody is seriously injured or worse.

It maybe stated the school can handle the extra pupils but the road outside and lack of parking cannot handle the extra pupils.

For a good distance from the prison entrance to the adjacent bus stops is quite narrow, this continues past the Windmill pub. Cars regularly park on the road, in the bus stops and pavement to use the dive shop and hairdresser causing a funnel like bottle neck. The issues of cars parking all around the pavements around the take away shops, dive shop and hairdresser and driving across the junction at Johnstone Avenue has been raised with Staffordshire Highways and the Police, no action has been taken. I have a folder of pictures and videos of some of the worse driving and parking possible, especially when people are hungry and drive to the take away to buy food. They just drive there at speed and dump the car anywhere causing all sorts of obstructions and risks to public safety.

Children who use both schools have to walk through this funnel depending on where they live and there have been campaigns to lower the speed limit to 30mph over the years. An intensity of use right in the middle of the village at the main focal point in the Windmill ward is undesirable.

Can Washerwall traffic lights handle the additional traffic? If the proposed developments were to happen in the lower part of Werrington, on the Meigh Road estate below the cross roads closer to the City Centre, is a better planning proposition. Cars would access the A52 lower down and avoid long delays trying to get through the cross roads.

If access points are used down the back of the proposed site WE03 along Salter's Lane, this then makes Chatsworth Drive a rat run to avoid the cross roads.

It must also be noted that Stoke-on-Trent have requested our help to find sites for housing yet they have not proceeded with the Botteslow Street bypass which has been in the planning for over 30 to 40 years but nothing happens. This means traffic using Dividy Road has to enter the A52 Ash Bank road lower down causing traffic in a morning to back up for three miles back into Werrington.

An additional back road along Ford Hayes Lane providing access into the City adjacent to the A52 Ash Bank road has been blocked up for some reason and there is no evidence of it being reopened.

Another access road to the City via the village of Hulme and Park Hall is quite narrow in parts and dangerous and liable to flooding.

3.5 Will living conditions for future occupants be acceptable given the proximity of the allocation to the prison?

No they are not acceptable.

As of June 30 2017 HMP Werrington held 114 prisoners which also means many visitors who come and visit these prisoners. Some of whom take time out in the village and maybe carrying dangerous weapons or illegal substances. What if they were to come across rival gang members in the village?

I have spoken with a former prison officer who mentioned escapes from the prison are a common occurrence, it would be interesting if records are kept on how many do occur and where the prisoner has been picked up from.

Residents in Salter's Close report they can hear loud noises, shouting and banging from the prison and this sometimes can be heard by residents in other parts of the village.

What if the requirements of the prison over the coming years change due to new practices being introduced and these are restricted due to homes being built within the grounds?

Can the prison handle extensive construction going on within its grounds in the buffer zone?

What of the rights of the prisoners and prison staff in having homes built inside the buffer zones of the prison, how will these be affected or is that not a concern?

3.6 Are all the policy requirements necessary and clear to the decision maker?

Stoke-on-Trent has contacted the Staffordshire Moorlands to ask help to meet their housing needs, especially those on the border. However their needs are not the needs of our particular village, which needs to focus on the requirements of the elderly and ageing population.

What they are actually doing is taking a liberty from the residents of the village and passing their problems onto us which we cannot absorb and this is NOT a sound plan! A good number of residents have moved up the bank into the village to get out of Stoke-on-Trent and their un-resourceful solutions and lack of ability to provide a nice place to live and now they are expecting us to share in with their incompetence and misery they create!

Why has the local plan ignored that we are a Parish of Caverswall and no homes are being built in Caverswall to ease the pressure on Werrington. I have looked back over the plans and noted some sites were identified to include one behind the home of our County Councillor Ross Ward (Conservative) behind Mill Close and adjacent to Caverswall Road. Upto 40 houses or more could be built there and they are right on the border of Stoke-on-Trent. Besides which the local shop issued a plea in the local paper to use it or lose it and the locals have saved the pub from demolition.

<https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/local-news/community-raises-funds-save-caverswall-301942>

After reading the article it is obvious this was done to stop a developer building houses in the village, NIMBYISM on steroids, where there is spare capacity and a reasonable solution if we must help Stoke-on-Trent. Or the Weston Heights estate on the A520 Weston Road can extend back over the border into the Staffordshire Moorlands to provide affordable homes where the market rate for land could be cheaper. I would support any scheme to just give Stoke-on-Trent the land for free and move the border so they can build any homes to meet their demands. It would be a beautiful and scenic place to live with the River Blithe floating through it.

Just to keep building and filling every spare piece of land available land in the more traditional rural Windmill Ward of Werrington that does not have a core of Conservative voter to appease is neither acceptable NOR sound planning!

None of the policy requirements are necessary and clear to the decision make because they do not reflect the true picture but one that has been presented to not upset the core of die hard Conservative voters and their Nimbyism.

It also needs to be observed there is a divide in Werrington between those on Meigh Road in their large executive house who the Conservative councillors represent, whether the plan is sound or

NOT. They use the library as their control and command centre and all the village resources seems to go on making the gardens nice there with fancy new buildings. They announce that Werrington should be open for trade and most of the shops are in the Windmill Ward.

We are now getting an abundance of shops that do not meet our local needs, such as a take away, which should be shut at 11.30pm but stay open until 1am and vaping and tan shops. This is attracting the wrong sort of people into the village and we regularly have the Police making patrols. Both the district council and Police are refusing to do anything about the take away staying open beyond its permitted hours.

<https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/stoke-on-trent-news/youths-antisocial-behaviour-police-werrington-1974033>

They have stopped replacing the glass in the phone box at the top of Johnstone Avenue, there is no point.

So to return to the question:-

3.5 Will living conditions for future occupants be acceptable given the proximity of the allocation to the prison?

Some are starting to ask where do the walls of the prison begin, maybe it is the Green Belt that is the walls of the prison judging by some of the characters walking around the place.

Building new homes by the prison is not going to help the Windmill Ward, we do not need them and we do not want them and we have just become a dumping ground for the Conservative party via and the undesirable problems they want to push onto people who do not vote for them.

This is nothing more than a money spinning exercise by selling off public land so Homes England can build houses in an important open space in the village with meaningful views which the village cannot absorb!

The independent planning officer is the one and only last chance I have of saving this village and particularly the Windmill Ward from being disrupted and destroyed beyond recognition. Building more homes in that location will be a tipping point and NOT a sound plan!