

(SHORTENED VERSION TO FIT THE TIME ALLOWANCE OF AROUND 3 MINUTES - A.SHARRATT.)

Cllr Darren Price,
Leek East. 4th February 2021

Dear Staffordshire Moorlands Planning Committee,

Re: SMD/2020/0645 - Greywoods, Cheddleton Rd, Leek

I have a PhD in Planning and a lot of experience, as well as being Ward Councillor. This is to put into context the comments that follow and clarify that these are made with the benefit of professional experience, as well as the expected concern for my constituents and our local area.

As this is an outline application and the layout is therefore only indicative, I shall not comment on the merits, or otherwise. In addition to this, I shall leave comments on the suitability of the proposed access to Staffordshire County Council as the Highways Authority. This leaves the issue of the principle and volume of development on this site, which I address below.

It is recognised that the proposed development lies within the existing settlement boundary of Leek, and that our town has projected housing growth to accommodate over the next few years. However, Staffordshire Moorlands has an adopted Local Plan which includes a demonstrable 5+ year housing land supply, as tested very recently at appeal (APP/3248383 by Land Designation Ltd, Land South of Thorncliffe Road). As such the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF does not apply here.

This principle was established by the Court of Appeal (Barwood Strategic Land LLP vs East Staffordshire Borough Council) in 2017. That judgement stated that the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), should only be treated as a material consideration by a planning inspector in the limited circumstances set out in that paragraph and not in any other circumstances. This clearly means it does not apply when the LPA has an adopted Local Plan and a 5 Year Housing Land Supply. As the Staffordshire Moorlands has both of these, the argument made in the Design and Access Statement that this application "should be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development" (p.2) is an erroneous one.

In effect this makes the claims that the location is a sustainable one irrelevant, but I challenge this nonetheless. I suggest that the site is not in easy walking distance of local services and facilities as stated in the Design and Access Statement, with the town centre around 2km away and little in-between and that public transport services, whilst regular, are far from frequent. Most journeys to and from the proposed houses will be by private car, as indeed most journeys to and from the existing houses in Birchall are.

Furthermore, the assertion that the proposed development does not detract from the amenity of local residents is also challenged. It is my professional view that the indicative layout is successful in demonstrating that two additional dwellings on the site is over development. It is suggested that a figure ground study of the proposed buildings footprints would reveal that this development would be out of character with the urban grain of Birchall which is characterised by larger homes set in sizable gardens.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development is not relevant here and it is my assessment that the only significant benefits of this development would be to the applicant. I therefore would urge the committee to refuse this application.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Darren Price

Ward Councillor for Leek East, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

