

Ref 14/20425/FUL - Land South of Doxey Road, Doxey, Stafford

Revised Application – Bellway Homes – Sept 2014

(Submission agreed at meeting of Doxey Parish Council – 11th Sept 2014)

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.

