

STAFFORD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK MEETING WITH STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

DATE OF MEETING – 28 FEBRUARY 2008

Name of Attendees

Heather Grossman – Director of Assets & Resources, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Steve Knight – Project Manager, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Alex Yendole - Principal Planning Officer, Stafford Borough Council

- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service welcome the opportunity to be proactively engaged in preparing the new development plan for Stafford Borough. AY set out the context for Stafford Borough in terms of the Regional Spatial Strategy figures and the Local Development Framework including the focus of significant development at Stafford and associated population increases.
- Detailed Fire Risk maps have been prepared for the Stafford Borough area identifying the number and intensity of activity including the number of fire & rescue incidents and call out rates. Clearly more activity and incidents might reflect a level of risk that requires larger facilities with full time staff rather than a retained unit.
- Stafford Fire Station has full time staff whilst the other fire stations in Stafford Borough at Eccleshall, Gnosall and Stone have firefighters on the retained duty system. Currently there are 58 fire & rescue appliances across Staffordshire including one rapid response unit, although an additional three are planning. Although these units can be used for community outreach and high visibility approaches to reducing incidents of arson and hoax calls this is not its primary function.
- The level of development in Stafford Borough proposed through to 2026 will not require any major plans such as new fire stations although some increases in capacity may be required in certain locations such as additional space. Furthermore there are no plans to close any fire stations and no plans to move Stone Fire Station. A new engineering works is proposed however in terms of Stafford Borough's area there is no likely disposal of facilities or land.
- In Stafford town there is a commitment to build a new facility, in the next 1-2 years, in the Rising Brook area including some community facilities to increase capacity in the southern area of the town. Although this new facility does not include a rapid response unit, the fire station at Beaconside will have such a vehicle located there. Stafford Fire Station located at Beaconside has sufficient capacity to deal with fire activity and risk in the Stafford town area.

- It should be noted that moving a fire station even two miles can have a significant impact on response times for fire call outs and the turn out time for retained staff. Equally changes to the transport network may have important implications and should be considered carefully by decision-makers.
- The Fire & Rescue Service is currently considering a different modelling approach for its facilities which will provide more of a focus and involvement with the community. As an example some Fire Stations are considering a change of approach to open up a community room to be made available for hire in order to engage more people in the existing building and therefore the Fire & Rescue Service.
- The advantages of using fire stations for community facilities includes greater contact with the general public. Fire-fighters are considered to be honest brokers in most communities with open liaison skills as well as providing links to other professionals. Fire stations are seen as a place of neutral territory bringing together the community with other agencies as well as being able to stage other events including the provision of facilities such as a gym. Clearly different models will apply to different communities to maximise benefits.
- With regards to the mapped data the bright red areas identify high levels of activity whilst the blue shading identifies less intense activity. It is crucial the fire stations are not compromised by new developments. Stafford Borough Council to provide mapped information concerning future development locations and estimated numbers of properties so that the potential number of call outs can be modelled by the Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service. Assumptions will need to be made regarding the types of housing and levels of migration. The modelling work can be carried out in order to assess risks including the possible expansion of activity at the Ministry of Defence land, Stafford because of increased terrorism risks. In general terms the capital cost of new Fire & Rescue Service buildings is relatively low compared to other public sector services, being approximately £1 million - £3 million.
- The fire station at Gnosall is presenting some challenges because of limited space and lack of facilities for retained staff. For the last 10 years or so rural areas have been losing retained fire-fighters because of societal influences e.g. reduction in shift working, increased housing costs together with the necessary mental and physical skills for the role. Recruitment is now being a major challenge.
- The mapped work shows eight minutes turn out times with this model being able to provide for significant expansion at Stafford. However it is important to consider current and future traffic congestion scenarios through the model simulation for new traffic generated. Increased housing development and therefore a greater supply of people in key locations across the Borough will help in recruiting new retained fire-fighters in the future. Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service wish to work with Stafford Borough Council on potential new facilities / expanding existing properties through the Development Plan process.

- In comparison to other areas of Staffordshire there are relatively few problems of fire risk in Stafford Borough. The development industry should be used to meet new demands and provide community facilities delivered through new residential schemes of significant sizes.
- In summary there is a robust case for the Fire & Rescue Service to retain its recruitment programme, promote community facilities and encourage the Cadet service / youth enrolment. The vulnerability of elderly people may become a more significant issue in the future due to an ageing population.
- Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Stafford Borough Council to develop options and implications concerning increased levels of development within Stafford Borough through GIS modelling work and potential new facilities required. There are two main types of maps: 1) Risk profile of high activity areas; 2) Counting the number of residents and potential incidents.
- Contact details can be provided for the Staffordshire Ambulance Service to AY. Further exchange of GIS mapped information to use the MID-MIF format to link into the Northgate XG and Wings GIS systems. Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service's GIS specialist is Dave Askey on 01785 898624 with email d.askey@staffordshirefire.gov.uk. David Askey to be sent GIS maps showing potential development locations for the Stafford Borough area by AY.
- Date of next meeting to be arranged for May / June 2008

Notes prepared by Alex Yendole
Forward Planning Section
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