

1. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL

1.1 THE PURPOSE AND GENERAL AIMS OF THE PLAN

Objection Nos: 0407/13 R Oldacre; 0948/08 & /11 A G Simmons; 1429/01 DOE; 1497/02 & /04 Stafford FOE.

The Objections

- The aim to ensure an appropriate level of infrastructure is unrealistic.
- Need to maintain and improve accessibility.
- Lack of clarity concerning the need to reduce travel.
- Need to safeguard the environment for present and future generations.

Conclusions

1.1.1 According to **R Oldacre** as Stafford is already overdeveloped and its current infrastructure cannot cope with existing demands, development cannot ensure that an appropriate level of infrastructure is provided. I accept that the Plan acknowledges that even with no new development or road improvements, all but two of Stafford's radial routes will be operating in excess of their theoretical capacity. However, while measures may well be needed to respond to this, I consider it is reasonable to ensure that where development does take place, infrastructure related to the scale and nature of the project, is provided. In this context, I find the disputed aim acceptable. I have much sympathy with the reasoning underlying the same objector's suggestion that no development be permitted unless it contributes to a reduction in pollution levels. Nevertheless, in my view, this measure would not be appropriate given that the development requirements for the Borough have already been established in the approved Structure Plan.

1.1.2 In seeking the substitution of the aim to maintain and improve the provision of all forms of transport by one to maintain and improve accessibility, **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE** submit that not all forms of transport are sustainable. While the Council accept the latter point, no amendment is proposed.

1.1.3 To my mind, the aim in question does not sit comfortably with those highlighted in PPG13, namely to reduce the length and number of motorised journeys, to encourage alternative means of travel which have less environmental impact, and to reduce reliance on the private car. In certain circumstances therefore, it may well be appropriate to discriminate against certain modes of transportation in favour of others. Accordingly, I consider the objectors' aim, which I find sufficiently clear, would be more fitting.

1.1.4 The Council accept this section of the Plan makes no mention of reducing the need to travel. However, while the Suggested Changes include such a reference (which I commend), and there are others elsewhere in the Plan, I agree with **DOE's** view that this matter ought to be identified as one of the Plan's stated purposes.

1.1.5 As regards the reference to sustainability in purpose (e), I accept that it is possible to infer that the comment is meant to apply to the present as well as future generations. Nevertheless, my view is that greater clarity would be added if this was made more explicit as **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE** suggest.

Recommendation

1.1.6 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by:*

- i. the insertion of the additional text on page 2 in accordance with the Suggested Changes;*
- ii. the deletion of the aim to " maintain and improve the provision for all forms of transport and movement" and the substitution therefor by "maintain and improve accessibility";*
- iii. the addition of an additional purpose, namely to reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car;*
- iii. the insertion in purpose (e) of the words "present and" between "that" and "future".*

1.2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BOROUGH

Objection Nos: 0948/09 & /10 A G Simmons; 1497/03 Stafford FOE.

The Objections

- Inaccurate reference to motorway junction 14.
- Inappropriate subjective remark.

Conclusions

1.2.1 As M6 junction 14 lies on the north-western edge of Stafford, whereas the southernmost part of the Plan area is very close to junction 13, I find the objectors' concern about the accuracy of the text well founded. I consider it should be amended accordingly.

1.2.2 The description of the Borough as "*an environmentally attractive place*" reflects my impression of the Plan Area overall. Nonetheless, although the paragraph which this phrase prefaces sounds a cautionary note, my opinion is that this essentially subjective generality could be taken to imply an element of complacency. To my mind, amended text, on the lines suggested by the objectors, would be better.

Recommendation

1.2.3 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by:*

- i. the deletion of the reference to M6 junction 14 being on the southern boundary of the Borough and the insertion of text which more accurately reflects the Borough's location in relation to the motorway junctions;*
- ii. the deletion of the phrase "Stafford Borough is an environmentally attractive place in which to live and work" and the insertion of text on the lines of that included in objections Nos 0948/09 and 1497/03.*

1.3 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Objection Nos: 0327/24 St Modwen Developments Limited; 0386/01 & /02 The Chebsey Estate in Administrative Receivership; 0387/33 Barratt West Midlands Limited; 0407/14 R Oldacre; 0536/06 Mr & Mrs A B Hames; 0701/07 Mr & Mrs C H Kelly; 0906/01 The Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council; 0948/07 A G Simmons; 1404/04 Mr & Mrs L Morris; 1405/02 E A Hope; 1424/04 P Williamson; 1446/05 Mr & Mrs D R Rowley; 1447/04 M Howard; 1497/05 Stafford FOE; 1781/05 A Loran; 1947/07 Mr & Mrs J W Morris; 1953/06 D Scriven; 1958/07 A J Thomas; 1963/04 A E Hayward; 1964/06 Mr & Mrs W H Hawkin; 1968/07 R Morton; 1974/07 R T D Talbot; 1980/04 D Hulme; 1982/04 M Pickstock; 1983/07 Mr & Mrs C Rich; 1991/06 E Munson; 1992/04 R D Tuck; 2000/07 M William; 2016/05 Mr & Mrs D Creswell; 2018/34 Berkswich PC.

The Objections

- Omission of new settlement option.
- Allocations in Stafford are disproportionately low.
- Absence of a specific rural settlement strategy.
- Inappropriate direction of development to Stafford.

Conclusions

1.3.1 As regards new settlements, I acknowledge that Structure Plan Policy 68 provides for housing development to be accommodated in this manner. I am also mindful that the EIP Panel felt there was scope for a larger new settlement in Stafford District. However, this is not mandatory; the policy merely states that District Councils "*may consider*" this option. It seems to me therefore that whether the matter is aired is for the discretion of the District authorities, either individually or jointly, a view endorsed by the Secretary of State in his notice of approval of the Structure Plan.

1.3.2 In this instance, I am satisfied that due consideration has been given to the issue. Although the reference to new settlements in the Plan is fairly brief, I consider

the reasons for rejecting this option are sufficiently cogent. In so saying however, the site specific objections made in this context still warrant due consideration. I deal with them subsequently.

1.3.3 A number of the objections concerning housing land are underpinned by a broader criticism of the Plan's development strategy. Of particular concern is the absence of a rural settlement policy and the reduced proportion of housing land allocated in Stafford and, to a lesser extent, Stone, as opposed to the rural parts of the Borough. In this respect, my attention has been drawn to the Consultation Draft version of the Plan which proposed that the bulk of new housing be allocated in Stafford, whereas in the Deposit Draft, a more dispersed pattern of development is provided for. 43.5% of the housing allocation is in Stafford, 11% in Stone and 37% in the rural areas.

1.3.4 While a number of the components of the Plan are mentioned in this section, my view is that the principles underlying the development strategy and the relationship between the urban and rural parts of the Borough are not set out as clearly as they ought to be. In my opinion a concise exposition of the manner in which development is proposed to be distributed and the strategy which lies behind it would add greater clarity to the Plan.

1.3.5 The evolution of the Plan's approach to rural housing is chronicled in the Review Reports. Likewise, the process by which selected settlements, i.e. those where a degree of development would be acceptable in principle, by virtue of Policy HO4, were chosen, can also be traced through the Review Reports. However, the rationale underlying the selection of the sites allocated for housing in particular is less easy to discern. According to the Council, the settlement evaluation exercise was neither intended for, nor used for, site consideration purposes; settlement selection and site identification were separate exercises. The Plan is silent insofar as the merits of the individual sites or the reasons why they were chosen are concerned.

1.3.6 A desire to use re-use or 'brownfield' sites rather than greenfield ones is cited as one of the factors underlying the choice of sites. However, my view is that, other than this, the Plan as a whole is somewhat lacking insofar as a coherent development strategy and the relationship between proposals in the rural and urban parts of the Borough are concerned. For instance, some of the main development sites involve greenfield land and some of the rural housing allocations are not in selected settlements.

1.3.7 Notwithstanding the criticism levelled at the methodology employed in identifying the selected settlements, my view is that it does have a certain logic. The rationale underlying the allocations however, is far less readily apparent; a number appear to have been made without reference to the function, size, social and physical infrastructure and accessibility of the locations chosen. I see this as a fundamental weakness in the site led approach employed in the formulation of the Plan's proposals.

1.3.8 I acknowledge that in approving the Structure Plan, the Secretary of State indicated that the Borough's housing allocation could be accommodated through the examination of urban and rural options (including a new settlement). In addition Structure Plan Policy 66 provides for housing development in rural settlements. I appreciate that PPG7 advises that new housing will continue to be required in rural areas too. Indeed, both PPG7 and PPG3 state that in many villages provision can be made for

modest development without damage to the countryside or to the settlement itself. I am also mindful that the gestation period of the Plan took place against a backdrop of evolving national policy guidance and the current version of PPG13, to which many objectors refer, was not issued until after the Plan had been placed on deposit.

1.3.9 I am concerned however that the guidance in PPG12 which advises authorities to pursue policies which encourage the use of public transport in identifying areas for new development and to locate housing in a manner which minimises car use for journeys to work, school and other local facilities, does not appear to have been a weighty consideration in determining the Plan's development strategy. I accept that the Government's 'Sustainable Development Strategy' and the desirability of reducing the need to travel advocated in PPG13 are reflected in several of the Suggested Changes to the Plan. However these considerations have not been accompanied by any amendments to the allocations of land, in particular the distribution of the sites proposed for housing.

1.3.10 I find that incorporating the up-to-date advice somewhat selectively has led to inconsistencies. Not only do certain of the proposals not reflect current government guidance, but also they appear rather at odds with some of the amended aims of the Plan and its various sections set out in the Suggested Changes.

1.3.11 While a key settlement or 'main village' approach as advocated by **Tarmac Midlands Housing Division** could help bring about a more coherent rural settlement strategy, I am not satisfied that this is essential. To my mind what is needed is a clearly stated approach consistent with current national and strategic guidance, including RPG11. While the quantum and precise distribution of development in the wake of the latter are matters for future reviews of the Structure and Local Plan respectively, my opinion is that the locational principles contained therein are pertinent to this Plan.

1.3.12 According to the RPG, one of the means of promoting a sustainable pattern of development is by co-ordinating policies for transport and other forms of development with the aim of siting development at locations highly accessible by public transport. The RPG also advises that outside the metropolitan area and the North Staffordshire conurbation, most development should be focused upon the existing larger settlements. The benefits of siting new development near public transport centres or along corridors well served by public transport are also highlighted.

1.3.13 The advice in the RPG echoes that in paragraph 3.2 of PPG13. I accept that the latter refers to Structure Plan policies, but to my mind it is equally relevant to a strategy for the distribution of housing in an authority such as Stafford Borough, large parts of which are rural in nature. In my opinion particular regard ought to be paid to the following points of guidance:

- allocate the maximum amount of housing to existing larger urban areas;
- avoid any significant expansion of housing in villages and small towns where this is likely to result largely in car commuting;
- avoid sporadic housing development in the open countryside, but promote appropriate development in existing communities which can help sustain local services and employment.

1.3.14 I consider the current policy guidance lends strong support to the argument that Stafford in particular should be the main focus for development activity. Reasons for retaining Stafford as the main focus for housing development are also set out in the Second Review Report [CD3.2 para. 2.46]. While the report acknowledges there may be valid demands and needs for development outside Stafford too, my view is that these reasons continue to be pertinent and ought to remain as weighty considerations.

1.3.15 No Structure Plan policy identifies Stafford as a focus for new development, nor does the Secretary of State's approval letter advocate this either. Indeed he specifically removed housing allocations for sub-areas of Districts from Policy 56, pointing out that the distribution of housing allocations within Districts should be undertaken through the local planning process. Nevertheless, as Structure Plan Policy 78 seeks to concentrate development in urban areas, my view is that more emphasis ought to be placed upon Stafford and, to a lesser extent, Stone, which possesses similar attributes, albeit on a smaller scale. To my mind such an approach would accord with the main thrust of the locational guidance contained in PPG13, although to apportion development on a percentage basis as **Barratt West Midlands Limited** advocate would be too prescriptive.

1.3.16 I accept there is a case for directing a proportion of development to the rural parts of the Borough. PPG3 refers to housing sites being in areas where potential house buyers want to live and the Structure Plan EIP Panel recognised that demand was high in the rural areas of the Borough. However as I see it, development outside the main urban areas ought be more explicitly related to the accessibility, function, size, social and physical infrastructure of the settlements concerned, rather than the somewhat incoherent and inconsistent approach evident in the Plan. I accept that the apportionment of housing to Stafford and Stone which the Plan proposes is higher the percentage of the Borough's population who live in the two towns at present. Nevertheless, my view is that the degree to which additional development is proposed to be dispersed throughout the rural areas does not accord with the principles of sustainable development as identified in PPG12 and amplified in PPG13.

1.3.17 I appreciate that the submission by **R Oldacre** is part of his thesis that Stafford is overdeveloped, but having regard to the Structure Plan requirements for housing and employment, together with the advice in PPG13 and RPG11, I see no reason to question the principle of directing further development to Stafford.

Recommendation

1.3.18 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by:*

- i. the insertion of a more explicit exposition of the development strategy and the rationale which underlies it, indicating that:*
 - a. the urban centres of Stafford and Stone, but more particularly the former, are to be the main focuses for development;*
 - b. in the rural areas, the prime objectives in determining the location of development are to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, to avoid sporadic housing development in the open countryside, and to*

promote appropriate development in existing communities which can help sustain local services and employment.

ii. that consideration be given to inserting additional supporting text in the Housing Chapter so that the proposals are explicitly linked to the strategy.

1.4 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES (RDBs) AND RECOGNISED INDUSTRIAL ESTATES (RIEs)

Objection Nos: 0126/01 D R Parry; 1944/48-49 Second City Homes Limited.

The Objections

- Absence of explanation of how the selected settlements were chosen.
- Confusing status of urban land not covered by the designations.

Conclusions

1.4.1 The factors involved in the selection of settlements for RDB definition is described in the Housing Chapter, and the rural settlements concerned are described individually. However there is no clear definition of the term "selected settlement" in the Plan. Moreover, the Plan itself is silent insofar as the precise reasons for the selection of particular settlements identified is concerned. Given the significance of selected settlements in the Plan, I see this as a deficiency which ought to be rectified.

1.4.2 To my mind the role of RDBs and RIEs is made reasonably clear in the Housing and Employment Chapters. However given the importance ascribed to the two concepts, I consider greater clarity would be imparted into the Plan by the addition of a section explaining the function and purpose of the two designations in the Introductory Chapter.

1.4.3 I appreciate that the two concepts are somewhat different from the more commonplace settlement boundaries which usually define the whole of a built-up area. However it seems to me that their intent is rather different in that they define areas where specific policies are intended to apply. I am satisfied therefore that in principle the concepts of RDBs and RIEs are reasonable tools for controlling and guiding development. I deal with the question of the appropriateness of applying the concepts to particular areas in my consideration of the objections to Policies HO4 and EM2 and various site specific objections.

Recommendation

1.4.4 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the addition to the Introductory Chapter of a section explaining the rationale behind and definition of selected settlements and the function and purpose of RDBs and RIEs in relation to the Plan's development strategy.*

1.5 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Objection Nos: 0946/01 A G Simmons; 1497/01 Stafford FOE; 2018/30 & /36 Berkswich PC.

The Objections

- Need to promote a sustainable development project.
- Need to apply the concept of environmental capacity to the Plan.
- Need to place sustainable development at the heart of the Plan.

Conclusions

1.5.1 **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE** advocate a policy whereby a sustainable development project will be promoted in four wards in the Borough. Such an initiative is not without merit and could well assist in the understanding of the practical implications of endeavouring to achieve sustainable local communities. However, my view is that while this suggestion could well have implications for land use, the formulation and inception of a project of this nature falls outside the ambit of the Plan.

1.5.2 **Berkswich PC** make lengthy submissions on the issue of sustainability and its relationship to development plan formulation. However, as I see it, they are largely general in nature; precisely what is being sought by way of modification to the Plan is not readily apparent.

1.5.3 To my mind purpose (e) of the Plan is broadly consistent with the Bruntland Report's definition of sustainable development and the Plan contains a wide range of policies which seek to safeguard the environment. On the other hand, there is a need to provide sufficient land for new development in accordance with the provisions of the Structure Plan. It may be that these are becoming somewhat dated as the objector suggests, but in my opinion this does not diminish their validity. In these circumstances, I agree with the Council's view that the formulation of the Plan involves achieving a satisfactory balance between conserving the environment and allowing for necessary development.

1.5.4 In so saying however, one difficulty in viewing the impact of the Plan's proposals is the absence of an objective and systematic environmental appraisal of their impact. To my mind this would have been of great assistance in assessing the effect of proposals. I am mindful that the Environmental Appraisal of Development Plans Good Practice Guide cites an instance of an appraisal being carried out on a Plan at post inquiry stage. However, I have reservations about the value of what I would regard as a 'bolt-on' exercise.

1.5.5 As I see it, in order to be fully effective, the concept of environmental appraisal needs to be incorporated into the plan making process at a very early stage. Carrying out a meaningful appraisal exercise at such a late stage in the preparation of the Plan could lead to further delay in bringing it forward for adoption. My opinion is that

in this instance the need to have an adopted Plan outweighs the benefits which may accrue from carrying out an appraisal. In so saying, I strongly advocate the incorporation of a full environmental appraisal in any subsequent review of the Plan. There may be some merit however in carrying out a limited form of appraisal in order to help evaluate the alternative housing sites recommended for further consideration.

Recommendation

1.5.6 *I recommend that no modification be made to the Plan.*

1.6 LOCATION OF HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT SITES

Objection Nos: 0946/51 & /58-82 A G Simmons; 1497/96 - 1498/10, 1498/42-3, 1498/59 Stafford FOE.

The Objections

- Selection of sites exacerbates unsustainable travel to work pattern.
- Need for a 'mixed use' approach.
- Inappropriate emphasis is on former employment redevelopment sites in rural areas.

Conclusions

1.6.1 In arguing that the Plan's employment and housing proposals do not address what the objectors regard as an unsustainable travel to work pattern, an alternative strategy of seeking to establish an even distribution of jobs and residents willing to work on a ward basis is suggested.

1.6.2 The notion of providing opportunities for people to work, rest and play in the same area and thereby engendering sustainable communities is not without attraction. It would be consistent with the concept of 'urban villages' and could help reduce the need to travel. I accept that wards can form a basis for identifying communities, or perhaps neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, in my view it is not unreasonable to regard a medium sized town such as Stafford, or a smaller one like Stone, as a single entity when considering the overall distribution of land uses.

1.6.3 I acknowledge that on a ward-by-ward basis there is a mismatch between homes and places of employment. However, as I perceived it, the public transport links within the towns provide a reasonable degree of accessibility for the local populace. I am not satisfied therefore that there is a compelling need to attempt to match the distribution of jobs and homes at what I regard as a very local level. As I see it, guiding development to accessible locations is a more reasonable objective, although in individual instances it may be appropriate to give weight to other considerations such the benefits of re-using 'brownfield' land.

1.6.4 A further factor leading me to this view is the sheer scale of the development requirement emanating from the Structure Plan. The evidence before me suggests that it is not feasible to accommodate all of it within the confines of the existing built-up areas; some substantial allocations of fresh land will be needed. I am mindful that PPG4 acknowledges that it may not be appropriate to separate industry and commerce from the residential communities for whom they are a source of employment and services and RPG11 highlights mixed uses as a means of promoting a sustainable pattern of development. However while PPG13 also advocates the juxtaposition of employment and residential uses where feasible and points to the benefits of providing a wide range of facilities at the neighbourhood level, in PPG4 it is pointed out that the juxtaposition of incompatible uses may cause problems.

1.6.5 I appreciate that allocating land for a single use could be regarded as perpetuating a 'development monoculture'. However, it seems to me that ensuring that there is a reasonable degree of accessibility between homes and workplaces is just as valid an approach as the alternative of providing for mixed-uses in individual development schemes.

1.6.6 I acknowledge that many small scale employment uses can and do function within neighbourhoods; they can help underpin local communities. However, there are also many enterprises whose scope extends beyond the immediate locality within which they are situated. The increasingly global nature of many modern businesses and the resultant access requirements makes it difficult for them to be accommodated in existing neighbourhoods without causing severe disruption. In this respect I am mindful that PPG4 advises that the locational requirements of firms - who often give high priority to good access to roads - are a key input into the preparation of local plans.

1.6.7 I accept that it is desirable to ensure the Plan provides a sufficiently flexible framework to facilitate, where appropriate, a mixture of land uses. Nonetheless, given the development requirements for which provision has to be made, I am not satisfied that significant advantages would accrue from making specific allocations for mixed land uses in this instance. Nor do I consider that modifying the Plan's proposals to strive for a better balance between residents and employment opportunities within particular wards would be a significantly better approach.

1.6.8 The rural RIEs and employment redevelopment sites all lie outside existing settlements. As they represent the only provision for employment in the rural areas, I have some sympathy with the view that more provision should be made in the settlements themselves, especially the larger ones. However, I am not satisfied that re-designating some of the proposed housing sites is necessarily the best option.

1.6.9 My view is that this consideration would be most appropriately dealt with as part of the formulation of a rural development strategy, based on a functional appraisal of the rural settlements, their attributes and potential. As such an exercise would be likely to prove time consuming to carry out, and could have wide reaching implications, my view is that the most appropriate stage for pursuing this would be when the Plan comes up for review.

1.6.10 In response to the objectors' concern about focusing rural employment upon the former employment sites at Meaford and Cold Meece, the Council accept that the journey to work pattern will not be significantly changed. While this is somewhat inconsistent with the amended aims of the Plan, it seems to me that in both instances this has to be weighed against the benefits arising from utilising brownfield land. To my mind the inclusion of proposals for both sites is reasonable in this context, although I prefer to regard them as particular opportunities rather than a cornerstone of a locational strategy as the Plan appears to imply. In my view the reference to the sites providing a focus for rural employment ought to be deleted.

Recommendation

1.6.11 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the deletion of the third sentence of the text under the heading "Former Employment Re-development Sites" in the Employment Chapter.*

1.7 USE OF THE WORD "NORMALLY" IN POLICIES

Background

1.7.1 Although both **DOE** and the **National Trust** comment on the liberal use of the word "normally", their remarks in this respect have not been treated as objections. In response to my request for clarification on this matter, a number of suggestions are put forward by the Council which I consider below.

Conclusions

1.7.2 The issue of the appropriateness of "normally" in local plan policies has come to the fore on a number of occasions as local authorities prepare their respective plans. Indeed, I have been acquainted with the dialogue between the Council and **DOE** on this subject.

1.7.3 In my view, the use of the word provides neither clarity as to the circumstances in which a particular policy might or might not apply, nor allows any more flexibility than is provided for in the planning legislation. Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 54A of the Act, the statute recognises that there may be cases where other material considerations outweigh development plan policies.

1.7.4 To my mind, the inclusion of "normally" clouds the issue and creates uncertainty. The requisite degree of clarity and flexibility can be achieved by including objective criteria which clearly set out the circumstances where planning permission will or will not be granted.

1.7.5 The amendments put forward by the Council [inquiry document PLI 360] would remove "normally" from the majority of the policies in the Plan. As I see it, while these relatively minor alterations do not materially affect the main thrust of the

individual policies concerned, on the whole they add greater clarity to the Plan. I commend them.

1.7.6 My only reservations concern Policies HO14 and LRT2. These two policies are similar in that while they seek to safeguard particular types of land from development in a forthright manner, they also contemplate its loss. Even with "normally", it appears to me that there is an element of contradiction inherent in them. I consider this makes their real intent somewhat uncertain and lacking in clarity. Although my recommendations in respect of the duly made objections to Policy LRT2 are given at 9.2.4, [Policy HO14 is not the subject of any duly made objections], my opinion is that the two policies ought to be re-drafted, not only to secure the removal of "normally", but also to make their precise intent clear.

1.7.7 In a number of instances the use of "normally" in a policy is the subject of a specific objection. I deal with these in my consideration of the individual policies concerned.

Recommendation

1.7.8 *I recommend that:*

i. unless otherwise covered in my recommendations regarding the individual policies objected to, the Plan be modified in accordance with the amendments set out in paragraph 3.1 of PLI 360;

ii. further consideration be given to the wording of Policies HO14 and LRT2 to secure both the removal of the word "normally" and the clarification of their precise intent.

1.8 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS TO INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

Objection Nos: 0321/05 M Upton; 0407/39 R Oldacre; 0863/31 SCC; 0946/91 A G Simmons; 1404/06 Mr & Mrs L Morris; 1406/02 Brocton PC; 1414/06 B Holt; 1429/02 & /64 DOE; 1497/91 Stafford FOE; 1967/07 A R Ward; 1968/10 R Morton; 1991/10 E Munson; 1994/08 Mr & Mrs A C Shufflebotham; 2000/09 M Williams; 2005/03 Mr & Mrs H W N Rowley; 2018/08 Berkswich PC; EN0388/10 HBF; EN1930/16 English Nature.

The Objections

- Need for a specific policy in the Plan.
- Need to secure developer provision of community services and facilities.
- Lack of reference planning agreements being voluntary and should be fairly and reasonably related to the development proposed.
- Financial contributions from developers can lead to an excess of unwanted development.
- Need for a Public Transport Fund.
- Nature conservation sites should be acknowledged.

Conclusions

1.8.1 A new policy directed at this issue is included in the Suggested Changes. In my view this policy, which reflects the provisions of Structure Plan Policy 95, adequately meets the concern of those parties who seek the inclusion of a measure of this nature. It also makes clear the voluntary nature of obligations and that they should reflect the development proposed in scale and scope.

1.8.2 While **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE** express general satisfaction with the new policy, in their response to the Suggested Changes they suggest that car parking be deleted from the examples of facilities which may be required. I accept that there may be instances where such provision may encourage increased car usage, but equally this may not necessarily be the case. I am not satisfied therefore that there is a compelling need to amend the policy. The other matters raised by these objectors, and echoed by the **HBF**, stem from what appear to be minor typographical or drafting errors. These ought to be rectified.

1.8.3 As regards the propriety of financial contributions, I accept that it is conceivable that the prospect of a financial contribution towards the provision of infrastructure could influence the decision making process. Equally however, the incorporation of such a policy in the Plan would provide a reasonable platform to assist in securing the provision of facilities; it would not necessarily lead to superfluous or unwanted development as some objectors fear. On balance, I consider the advantages of this measure, which would be consistent with Government guidance in Circular 16/91 and PPG12, outweigh the perceived disadvantages.

1.8.4 The public transport fund which **R Oldacre** advocates is related to his submission that all road schemes should be cancelled. The funding of the provision or enhancement of public transport facilities could, where appropriate, fall within the ambit of the policy, but I not satisfied that the wholesale diversion of resources away from highway measures is reasonable.

1.8.5 As the new policy only refers to examples of amenities or resources to which regard may need to be had, I do not consider the inclusion of a reference to nature conservation sites, as suggested by **English Nature**, needs to be added.

Recommendation

1.8.6 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the insertion of Policy INT XX in accordance with the Suggested Changes, SUBJECT TO the deletion of "at" in the third line of (b) and substitution therefor by "that" and the deletion of "where to" in the first line of (c).*

1.9 GENERAL MATTERS

Objection Nos: 0390/09 The Haywood Society; 0946/02 A G Simmons; 1499/04 Stafford FOE.

The Objections

- Need for a Monitoring and Review Policy.
- Need for greater publicity and consultation regarding larger developments.

Conclusions

1.9.1 In suggesting a monitoring and review policy, **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE** seek the endorsement of a need for openness in any debate regarding the monitoring, review and determination of any subsequent local plan. It stems from concern about the exclusion of the public from certain of the debates about the formulation of the Plan. In a similar vein, the objection by **The Haywood Society**, seems to me to be directed at the manner in which Council business is conducted.

1.9.2 I fully appreciate the concern and the desire to ensure equal and full facilities for participation in the planning process. Be that as it may, I regard this as a matter which lies outside the ambit of the Plan. I am unable therefore to support the requests that the suggested policy or an undertaking to take proper account of local opinion be included in the Plan.

Recommendation

1.9.3 *I recommend that no modification be made to the Plan.*

1.10 FORMAT OF THE PLAN

Objection No: 0387/01 Barratt West Midlands Limited.

The Objection

- Lack of clarity in presentation.

Conclusions

1.10.1 This objection concerns the Plan's presentation rather than the land use proposals contained therein, but in my view it is consistent with the concern expressed by **DOE** about the lack of distinction between proposals and reasoned justification which I refer to in subsequent chapters. I consider the use of paragraph numbering, as **Barratt West Midlands Limited** advocate, would greatly assist the reader.

Recommendation

1.10.2 *I recommend that the paragraph numbering be adopted in the Plan.*
