

# 9. LEISURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM

## 9.1 POLICY LRT1 - INDOOR FACILITIES

**Objection Nos:** 0173/06 Stafford District Access Group; 1429/27 DOE.

### **The Objections**

- Need for greater encouragement for the provision of facilities for the disabled.
- Lack of clarity regarding land use implications and means of implementation.

### **Conclusions**

9.1.1 In response to these objections, in the Suggested Changes, the contents of the policy are transferred to the supporting text. An additional objective and extra text, both directed at provision for the disabled, are also included. To my mind these amendments represent a reasonable response to what I regard as soundly based objections.

### **Recommendation**

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

- the deletion of the Policy LRT1;*
- the insertion of the alterations to the supporting text and aims and objectives of the Chapter in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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## 9.2 POLICY LRT2 - RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PROVISION

**Objection Nos:** 1939/09-10 Mental Health Foundation for Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust and the Mid Staffordshire Health Authority and Durncross Limited; 2021/10 Gnosall Best Kept Village Association; EN0948/66 A G Simmons; EN1498/61 Stafford FOE.

### **The Objections**

- Inappropriate reliance upon NPFA standard.
- Need for consistency between suggested change to supporting text and other suggested changes to the Chapter.
- Need for additional facilities in Gnosall.

### **Conclusions**

9.2.1 The question of the appropriateness of applying the NPFA standard is part of an objection which also relates to Policies LRT3 and LRT4. I accept that PPG17

counsels against prescribing national standards of recreational provision. I am also mindful that the Council acknowledge that a local standard reflecting the circumstances within the Borough would be preferable. However, given that at present no local assessment of need is to hand, I consider that the NPFA standard provides a reasonable yardstick for inclusion in the Plan. I glean some support for this view by noting that the NPFA standard is less than the standard for provision in urban areas contained in Structure Plan Policy 118. In the light of the foregoing, I am unable to concur with the submission that criterion (c) be deleted.

9.2.2 The Council accept the additional wording put forward by **A J Simmons** and **Stafford FOE** would help achieve greater consistency with the modifications to Policy LRT4 and the supporting text to Policy LTR5 put forward in the Suggested Changes. I agree; the alterations suggested would improve the supporting text.

9.2.3. The objection relating to Gnosall concerns the management of premises and the provision of facilities for specific sports. While I have some sympathy with the concern expressed by the **Gnosall Best Kept Village Association**, my view is that the particular matters raised lie beyond the ambit of the Plan.

### **Recommendation**

9.2.4 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the insertion of the alterations to the supporting text as set out in the Suggested Changes subject to the incorporation of the additional wording put forward in objection references EN0948/66 and EN1499/61.*

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### **9.3 POLICY LRT3 - RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE STANDARDS**

**Objection Nos:** 0531/03-04 M Dudley; 0554/23 CPRE, 0946/42 A G Simmons; 1429/26 DOE; 1494/01 Stafford Borough Sports Council; 1498/62 Stafford FOE; 1939/09 & /11 Mental Health Foundation for Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust and the Mid Staffordshire Health Authority and Durncross Limited; LO35/08 Wimpey Homes Europe; EN0118/68 Fradley Estates.

### **The Objections**

- Inadequate space standard.
- Inappropriate reliance upon NPFA standard.
- Need for the policy to apply to all settlements of more than 1000 population.
- Need for accessibility of facilities to be acknowledged.
- Lack of clarity regarding the means of implementation.
- Need for definition of minimum size of play areas.
- Need to incorporate new NPFA standards.

### **Conclusions**

9.3.1 My views on the appropriateness of applying the NPFA standard are given in paragraph 9.2.1 above.

9.3.2 While an amended version of the policy, together with additional supporting text, is included in the Suggested Changes, the Council now consider it more appropriate to transfer the content of the policy to the supporting text. I think this would be a sensible step. It would meet a good many of the objections to the policy which in my view reads more as an expression of intent. I am also mindful that the provision of open space in association with housing development is addressed by Policy HO13. In particular, as framed in the Suggested Changes, the latter policy and its supporting text refer to the NPFA standard and do not differentiate, or appear to do so, between the size of settlements or developments.

9.3.3 Despite the changes, the policy still makes no reference to casual or informal play areas within housing areas which are covered by the NPFA standard; it appears to imply that the minimum play space requirement is less than the standard. I can well appreciate why objections have been lodged on this basis.

9.3.4 The Council concede the position is unclear; they indicate not only that the informal component should be included in the overall figure, but also that the NPFA standard is quoted incorrectly. In my view further clarification, including references to the minimum size of play areas, and the need for facilities to be accessible to the communities they are intended to serve, ought to be incorporated into the text of the Plan. In the light of the submission by **Wimpey Homes Europe**, I also consider it would be prudent to refer to the current NPFA play space standards.

9.3.5 **Stafford Borough Sports Council** point to a need to identify deficiencies in open space provision across the Borough. I am mindful that PPG 17 advises local plans can give an appropriate context for such an exercise, and this in turn could provide the basis for both a more proactive approach and the formulation of local space standards. However while this is a matter which merits further consideration, I am not satisfied that there is a compelling need for this to form part of the current Plan.

9.3.6 The above mentioned objector also seeks an acknowledgement that a developer's willingness to provide more than the minimum requirement, especially where open space is deficient, should be regarded as a material consideration in favour of a project. I appreciate that this stems from a genuine local concern about the erosion of open space and could help to secure a more even distribution thereof. Be that as it may, my view is that it would not be reasonable to endorse a concept whereby developers were encouraged to make up for any deficiencies which may exist. For this reason, and mindful of the advice in Circular 16/91, I consider the text should mention that any planning obligations in this respect should only relate to provision which arises as a result of the development proposed.

### **Recommendation**

9.3.7 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the deletion of Policy LRT3 and the transfer of its content as supporting text subject to:*

- i. the incorporation of and clarification of the components of the current NPFA standard;*

*ii. the incorporation of references to the minimum size of play areas, and the need for facilities to be accessible to the communities they are intended to serve;*

*iii. the incorporation of an acknowledgement that any planning obligations concerning open space provision should only relate to that which arises as a result of the development proposed.*

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#### **9.4 POLICY LRT4 - SAFEGUARDING PLAYING FIELDS AND SPORTS PITCHES**

**Objection Nos:** 0338/02 Doctors Logan, Harper and Munslow; 0408/28 Lord Stafford; 1413/01 J M Preston; 1494/02 Stafford Borough Sports Council; 1779A/24 Tarmac Midlands Housing Division; 1939/09 & /12 Mental Health Foundation for Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust and the Mid Staffordshire Health Authority and Durncross Limited; EN0554/34 CPRE; 5001/08 Westbury Homes (Holdings) Limited.

#### **The Objections**

- Inappropriate reliance upon NPFA standard.
- The policy should not apply to playing fields in private ownership.
- The policy should not apply to disused facilities.
- Need to strengthen the policy.
- Lack of clarity regarding the means of implementation.
- Need to clarify circumstances where development can take place.
- Unreasonable to require alternative provision prior to any development taking place.
- Need to protect existing open space.

#### **Conclusions**

9.4.1 While my views on the appropriateness of applying the NPFA standard are given at 9.2.1, the standard does not in my view have a direct bearing on this particular policy.

9.4.2 As to whether the policy should apply only to playing fields in general public use rather than those in private ownership, PPG17 notes that all playing fields - public and private - are of special significance and should normally be protected. I accept that private landowners may choose to determine whether such facilities are retained and/or maintained. I also accept that there may be instances where landowners may wish to seek to utilise the land for the operational requirements of that owner e.g. playing fields within factory premises, or where the land makes little or no contribution to the visual amenity of an area. As I see it however, such land may still constitute an important resource, possessing the potential to contribute to the overall recreational provision of the Borough. I am not satisfied therefore that privately owned land should be excluded from the policy.

9.4.3 In response to the objection by **Tarmac Midlands Housing Division**, the Council suggest that an additional clause be added to the Policy, together with further supporting text, to acknowledge that the operational requirements of the user would be a significant factor in the assessment of any proposal involving the loss of private playing fields. In my view these measures, which would be similar to the changes proposed in respect of Policy ED23, would be a helpful addition to the Plan.

9.4.4 Turning to the alleged deficiencies in the policy, a revised version is put forward in the Suggested Changes. **Stafford Borough Sports Council** confirm this fully meets their requirements. In my opinion the wording of the suggested clause (2) would also meet the objection made by **Doctors Logan, Harper and Munslow**. The phrase "*prior to any development taking place*" which the **Mental Health Foundation for Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust and the Mid Staffordshire Health Authority and Durncross Limited** say should be deleted is also excluded from the amended version of the policy, as is the reference to playing fields and sports pitches not currently in use. I find the modified policy generally consistent with the advice in PPG17.

9.4.5 In response to the Suggested Changes, **CPRE** seek the inclusion of an additional clause to safeguard existing open space. I sympathise with the reasoning which underlies this concern, but I agree with the Council's view that the issue of protecting open space which has amenity value is adequately addressed by Policies ED23 and ED25. Accordingly, I see no need to amend Policy LRT4 to cover this point.

9.4.6 The Council raise no objection to a submission by **Westbury Homes (Holdings) Limited** that clause (2) of the revised policy should refer to "*accessible*" rather than "*adjacent*", subject to the insertion of "*readily*". In my view these additional changes, with which this objector is content, are reasonable.

## **Recommendation**

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

- i. the amendment of Policy LRT4 in accordance with the Suggested Changes, subject to the deletion of the word "adjacent" from clause (2) and the substitution therefor by "readily accessible";*
- ii. the addition of an extra clause to Policy LRT4 to read, "Where a playing field or sports pitch forms part of the curtilage of another use, proposals involving the development of the land for the operational purposes of the user will be considered in the light of the operational needs of the user";*
- iii. the insertion of extra text supporting the additional clause set out in (ii) above.*

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## **9.5 POLICY LRT5 - ALLOTMENT GARDENS**

**Objection Nos:** 0001/04 N B Thomas; 0538/03 Coton Fields Action Group; 0946/41 A G Simmons; 1167/01 L Chester; 1168/01 B Chester; 1226/02 D A Hill; 1296/01 F Brown; 1494/03 Stafford Borough Sports Council; 1498/69 Stafford FOE; 1863/01 C J Van Harsselaar; 1866/01 M R Lakin; 1869/02 V J Andow; 2018/11 Berkswich PC.

## **The Objections**

- Insufficient protection given to allotments.
- Need to delete "normally".
- Alternative uses are irreversible; they should not be exceptions.
- Need for further clarification of alternative sites in terms of size, quality and accessibility.
- Need to extend the policy to incorporate other areas which have potential amenity value.

## **Conclusions**

9.5.1 Several of the objections directed at this policy seek to ensure that the Coton Fields allotments in Stafford are safeguarded from development. While I am mindful that an objection (since withdrawn) sought the allocation of this site for housing, I consider the policy provides a reasonably robust basis for the protection of all allotments. As I see it, the additional supporting text put forward in the Suggested Changes adds further weight to this objective and I commend it. The extra text acknowledges the need to make the suitability of alternative sites more explicit and provides helpful clarification. While the Council indicate no objection would be raised to criteria being set out in the policy, my view is that when read together with the additional supporting text, its intent is sufficiently clear.

9.5.2 I have reservations about referring to any alternative uses in a policy directed at protecting allotments. In particular, I share the concern expressed by **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE** that not all the uses listed therein would necessarily facilitate ready reversion to cultivation. In my opinion references to specific uses should be excluded. As the policy clearly indicates the circumstances in which redevelopment may be permissible, I do not consider the removal of the word "*normally*" would imply a presumption against development as the Council fear; to my mind this would help strengthen the policy.

9.5.3 **Berkswich PC** point out that the policy only relates to allotment gardens, with no reference to the Green Network. As the policy follows on from two sets of supporting text, the first of which is headed 'Green Network', I can appreciate why the objector's concern has arisen. However, as Policy ED25 expressly provides protection for the Green Network, I am not satisfied that there is a compelling need to broaden the ambit of Policy LRT5 as the objector suggests.

## **Recommendation**

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

i. *the deletion of the words "for uses other than recreation, sport or nature conservation" and "normally" from Policy LRT5;*

ii. *the addition of further supporting text to the policy in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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## 9.6 POLICY LRT6 - RECREATION AND TOURISM FACILITIES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE: DEVELOPMENT FACTORS

**Objection Nos:** 0940/29 NRA; 0946/37 A G Simmons; 1498/70 Stafford FOE; 1783/01 Joint Supervisors of Sir Charles Wolseley Bart's Individual Voluntary Arrangement; EN0554/34 CPRE; EN1429/87 DOE.

### **The Objections**

- Need for the policy to be more positively worded.
- Need for the policy to be sufficiently clear and robust to cater for all recreational and tourist facilities in the countryside.
- Need to refer to foul drainage disposal.
- Need to rationalise policies LRT6, LRT8 and LRT9.
- Narrow scope of, and lack of precision in, suggested amendment.

### **Conclusions**

9.6.1 In response to the duly made objections, an amended policy, expressed in a more positive manner, together with related alterations to Policies LRT8 and LRT9, is put forward in the Suggested Changes.

9.6.2 In my view, the suggested modifications incorporate the main points made by the objectors and I find them generally satisfactory. **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE**, whose objections sought a rationalisation of this policy and Policies LRT8 and LRT9, have expressed their satisfaction with the suggested amendment as have the **Joint Supervisors of Sir Charles Wolseley Bart's Individual Voluntary Arrangement**. As the need to obtain consent for alternative means of disposal of foul drainage is covered elsewhere in the Plan [supporting text to Policy ED3], I agree with the Council's view that to include this matter within this policy would be unnecessary repetition.

9.6.3 While the policy clearly applies to the countryside, I do not find the need for the protection of the countryside in general as explicit in the amended version as it is in clause (f) of the original. I consider this matter ought to be incorporated into the new clause (a) so as to make it clear that the policy applies throughout the countryside, although I see no need for the word "open" as **CPRE** suggest.

9.6.4 I am also concerned that the words "*and surrounding*" impart an element of uncertainty into the revised clause (a). They could be interpreted as imposing a greater degree of control than the related policies in the Environment and Development Chapter do. I think these words ought to be deleted. While the supporting text mentions other relevant policies in the Environment and Development Chapter, I share DOE's concern about the lack of precision in (a) and (b). For instance, it is likely that most, if not all, of the countryside acts as a "*wildlife habitat*" of sorts. My view is that the clarity of the policy would be improved by cross-referencing it to the parts of the Environment and Development Chapter which relate to areas of particular importance.

### **Recommendation**

9.6.5 *I recommend that Policy LRT6 be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes provided that:*

- i. in line 2 of clause (a) the words "surrounding countryside and landscape or" be inserted between "upon" and "land" and the subsequent words "or surrounding" be deleted;*
- ii. the words "as identified in the Environment and Development Chapter of the Plan" be added to (b) and (c).*

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## **9.7 POLICY LRT7 - RECREATION AND TOURISM FACILITIES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE: USES TO BE PERMITTED**

**Objection No:** 1783/02 Joint Supervisors of Sir Charles Wolseley Bart's Individual Voluntary Arrangement.

### **The Objections**

- The policy is too restrictive.
- Use of negatively worded phrase "will not normally be permitted" is contrary to Government advice.

### **Conclusions**

9.7.1 As I see it, the main thrust of this policy is consistent with national policy guidance contained in PPG7 which, amongst other things, seeks to protect the countryside for its own sake. Accordingly, I do not consider the limitations inherent in the policy are unduly restrictive or inflexible. In particular, my view is that the phrase "*necessary and ancillary*" provides a clearer basis for evaluating such proposals than the somewhat broader "required as direct consequence" advocated by the objector. To my mind the alternative wording put forward would not materially improve the efficacy of the policy.

9.7.2 I am concerned however about the use of the phrase "*not normally*". I accept the policy sets out the circumstances where development linked to recreational

activity would be permitted. I also appreciate why particular forms of development which would be unlikely to receive favourable consideration have been highlighted. Be that as it may, in the absence of any tests for harm within the policy itself, my opinion is that the second sentence thereof does not provide a sufficiently clear basis for taking decisions. Moreover, as controls on development in the countryside are contained elsewhere in the Plan, I see no need for this sentence.

## **Recommendation**

9.7.3 *I recommend that Policy LRT7 be modified by the deletion of the second sentence thereof.*

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## **9.8 POLICY LRT8 - GOLF COURSES AND DRIVING RANGES**

**Objection Nos:** 0940/30-31 NRA; 0941/07 & /11 MAFF; 0946/38 A G Simmons; 1429/25 DOE; 1498/71 Stafford FOE; EN0554/29 CPRE.

### **The Objections**

- Need for references to foul drainage disposal, water resources and the effect upon the aquatic environment.
- Need to refer to agricultural land quality.
- Over-restrictive approach towards golf driving ranges.
- Need to rationalise the policy with Policy LRT6.
- Inadequate coverage of ancillary buildings and activities, access and the effect of floodlighting and evening use.

### **Conclusions**

9.8.1 In response to the objections an amended policy, to be applied in association with the changes to Policy LRT6, is put forward in the Suggested Changes, as is an additional paragraph of supporting text. I regard these related amendments as improvements; they add clarity to this section of the Plan and help reduce repetition. In particular, it is now clear that Policy LRT6 provides an overall policy context for development related to visitor attractions and recreational activities in the countryside, whereas the subsequent policies address specific topics. In my opinion, the alterations adequately cover the objections relating to the need to refer to matters such as agricultural land quality and traffic generation and to rationalise the policy with Policy LRT6. In this respect I note that **A G Simmons**, **Stafford FOE** and **DOE** are satisfied with the suggested amendments.

9.8.2 The amended policy also covers the question of irreversibility and the implications for water resources, drainage and the aquatic environment are included as considerations, although I prefer the clearer version of clause (b) suggested by **NRA**. My comments concerning foul drainage under Policy LRT6 [9.6.1] also apply to this policy.

9.8.3 I accept that golf driving ranges can present particular problems, especially if they are located in relatively isolated or open areas. However, contrary to the view expressed by CPRE, I am satisfied that the amended policy and supporting text, together with the related provisions of Policies LRT6 and LRT7, would provide a sufficiently robust basis for controlling the impact of matters such as traffic, additional buildings and floodlighting.

### **Recommendation**

9.8.4 *I recommend that Policy LRT8 and its supporting text be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes subject to clause (b) being amended to read "Implications for the aquatic environment e.g. drainage and water resources."*

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## **9.9 POLICY LRT9 - HORSE RIDING/EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Objection Nos:** 0554/24, EN0554/24 CPRE; 0940/32 NRA; 0946/39-40 A G Simmons; 1498/72-73 Stafford FOE.

### **The Objections**

- Need for rationalisation with Policy LRT6.
- Need for the policy to refer to the protection of the water environment and foul drainage disposal.
- Need to encourage a wider non-statutory bridleway network.
- Suggested change is too limited in scope.

### **Conclusions**

9.9.1 Like Policy LRT8, in the Suggested Changes this policy is proposed to be altered in conjunction with the suggested modifications to Policy LRT6. While **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE**'s duly made objections seek the deletion of the policy, they are both satisfied with the suggested change. Despite the rationalisation suggested, I consider it is reasonable to include a specific policy directed at equestrian activity.

9.9.2 As I note above [9.6.2; 9.8.2] as the need to obtain consent for alternative means of disposal of foul drainage is covered elsewhere in the Plan, I see no need for this matter to be included in Policy LRT9.

9.9.3 While the concept of encouraging a wider network of bridleways is not without merit, my view is that it would not be appropriate to incorporate such a measure in this particular policy. I do agree however, that the need to have regard to existing rights of way, a factor which underlies CPRE's concern, is a reasonable consideration. Accordingly, I find the approach put forward in the Suggested Changes acceptable.

9.9.4 I acknowledge that the amended policy lacks the range of criteria included in the version in the deposited Plan. However, I consider the 'umbrella' which would be afforded by Policy LRT6 in its changed form, together with the deletion of repetitive

elements from the subsequent policies, adds welcome clarity and conciseness to this part of the Plan. The change to the supporting text of Policy LRT9 makes it clear that the provisions of Policy LRT6 are still applicable. I see no need to make this explicit in the policy itself.

### **Recommendation**

9.9.5 *I recommend that Policy LRT9 and its supporting text be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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### **9.10 POLICY LRT10 - WATER BASED ACTIVITIES**

**Objection Nos:** 1429/24 DOE; 1494/01 Stafford Borough Sports Council.

#### **The Objections**

- Lack of clarity in the policy.
- Absence of a policy for water sports.

#### **Conclusions**

9.10.1 In my opinion the policy reads more as a statement of intent rather than a basis for guiding land use. The Council accept the policy lacks clarity and a modified version which I find satisfactory, is put forward in the Suggested Changes.

9.10.2 In my view, the modified policy provides a reasonable and full framework for assessing proposals for water based sporting and recreational activities. I am not satisfied that an additional or extended policy is required to cover this topic.

#### **Recommendation**

9.10.3 *I recommend that Policy LRT10 be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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### **9.11 POLICY LRT11 - CANALSIDE FACILITIES**

**Objection Nos:** 0210/04 British Waterways; 0554/25 CPRE; 0940/33 NRA; 1429/23 DOE.

#### **The Objections**

- Need to emphasise canals as a positive element in design of development proposals and to acknowledge additional infrastructure costs upon the waterways arising from development.

- Need to balance capacity of canals with construction of marinas and facilities
- Need to add "where drainage exists or can be provided" to criteria.
- Need to clarify that development should not take place in the Green Belt.

## Conclusions

9.11.1 The Suggested Changes to the Plan acknowledge these objections to a certain extent. Notwithstanding the reservations expressed by **NRA**, my opinion is that the proposed addition to the supporting text of the policy, together with the changes to Policy LRT6, cover the question of infrastructure and drainage adequately.

9.11.2 The need to ensure that canalside development should make a positive contribution to the canal environment is expressly referred to in the supporting text; I do not consider it is necessary for this point to be included in the policy itself. There is no evidence before me to show that the canals in the plan area are used to capacity or are approaching their capacity, in which case I see no need for this matter to be covered in the Plan.

9.11.3 Contrary to the Council's view, I consider it would be preferable for the restrictions on development in the Green Belt to be made more expressly apparent in the policy itself.

## Recommendation

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

*i. the deletion of the first two lines of the second paragraph of Policy LRT11 and the substitution therefor by "Development proposals will be subject to the restrictions upon development in the Green Belt and proposals should ensure that development is in keeping with policies to protect open...";*

*ii. the addition of supporting text in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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## **9.12 POLICY LRT12 - OTHER SPORTS AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES**

**Objection No:** 1429/22 DOE.

### The Objection

- Need to clarify the basis for making Article 4 Directions.

### Conclusions

9.12.1 The need for further clarification of this matter is accepted and an appropriate addition to the supporting text is included in the Suggested Changes. I find this satisfactory.

## Recommendation

9.12.2 *I recommend that the supporting text to Policy LRT12 be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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## 9.13 POLICY LRT13 - DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

**Objection No:** 1429/21 DOE.

### The Objections

- Need to clarify criteria against which proposals will be assessed.
- Inappropriate to seek to protect the fringes of the AONB.

### Conclusions

9.13.1 These objections are accepted; in the Suggested Changes, it is proposed that this policy be deleted. I consider this is reasonable, especially as Policy ED30 is specifically directed at the Cannock Chase AONB.

## Recommendation

9.13.2 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the deletion of Policy LRT13.*

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## 9.14 POLICY LRT15 - FOOTPATHS

**Objection Nos:** 0198/02 Ramblers Association; 0946/34 A G Simmons; 1498/75 Stafford FOE; 2018/13 Berkswich PC.

### The Objections

- Need to strengthen the policy to reflect the supporting text.
- Need to specify criteria for assessing diversion of rights of way.
- The policy is too permissive.

### Conclusions

9.14.1 I agree with the **Ramblers Association's** view that the design of development schemes should acknowledge the existence and importance of rights of way. However, I

am unable to concur with their submission that the policy does not adequately protect existing public rights of way. Nor do I find it too permissive as **Berkswich PC** submit. I consider the policy makes it clear that maintaining a public right of way is a matter of paramount importance. I see no conflict between the policy, the advice in PPG13, or the provisions of the Structure Plan.

9.14.2 In my opinion the additional matters in the alternative policy suggested by the **Ramblers Association** effectively highlight the aims of the policy, in which case they are more appropriate as supporting text. In the main, these matters are incorporated in the additional supporting text proposed in the Suggested Changes which I commend. In so saying however, I see merit in including a reference to the desirability, where appropriate, of re-routing rights of way through areas of open space.

9.14.3 The latter comment is also pertinent to the version of the policy suggested by **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE**. I accept that this represents an attempt to clarify the considerations involved in assessing the merits of a diversion scheme, but I find the policy sufficiently clear in its own right. I do consider though that a reference to the desirability of ensuring that the accessibility, direction and setting of any diverted route should be at least as attractive as the route to be diverted, would strengthen the supporting text.

### **Recommendation**

9.14.4 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the inclusion of the additional supporting text in accordance with the Suggested Changes subject to the incorporation of additional references to the desirability, where appropriate, of re-routing rights of way through areas of open space and ensuring that the accessibility, direction and setting of any diverted route should be at least as attractive as the route to be diverted.*

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## **9.15 POLICY LRT16 - TOURISM AND OTHER VISITOR FACILITIES AND ATTRACTIONS**

**Objection Nos:** 0946/33 A G Simmons; 1498/76 Stafford FOE; 2018/15 Berkswich PC

### **The Objections**

- Inappropriate use of the word "sustainability" in the supporting text.
- Need to protect and enhance existing tourism assets.

### **Conclusions**

9.15.1 The Council accept the reference to sustainability in the supporting text is inappropriate in this particular context. In the Suggested Changes, it is proposed to be deleted, a measure which I commend.

9.15.2 While **Berkswich PC**'s representations were submitted as an objection, I share the Council's difficulty in identifying just what is being sought by way of remedy, or indeed how the policy is deemed to be deficient. I find the policy satisfactory; I am confident that, with careful application, it would facilitate the provision of tourist and visitor facilities without damaging the environment, including the Cannock Chase AONB which this objector specifically refers to.

#### **Recommendation**

9.15.3 *I recommend that the supporting text to the policy be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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### **9.16 POLICY LRT17 - HOTELS AND GUEST HOUSES IN URBAN AREAS**

**Objection Nos:** 0946/32 A G Simmons; 1498/77 Stafford FOE; 1783/04-05 Joint Supervisors of Sir Charles Wolseley Bart's Individual Voluntary Arrangement.

#### **The Objections**

- Need for hotels and guest houses to be encouraged only within RDBs.
- Need for reference to proximity to public transport facilities.
- Need to encourage hotel development adjacent to Rugeley as well as Stafford and Stone.
- Need to acknowledge the commitment for hotel development at Wolseley Bridge.

#### **Conclusions**

9.16.1 As the policy falls within a section of the Plan headed "Hotels and Guest Houses in Urban Areas", I find the words "*or adjoining*" in the policy somewhat anomalous. Were the policy to remain as drafted, there would be merit in adding the environs of Rugeley to those of Stafford and Stone, but I prefer the approach advocated in the Suggested Changes.

9.16.2 The Council's suggested amendments add clarity and consistency and help bring the policy more into line with Structure Plan Policy 36. On the other hand, I consider that to limit this type of development to locations within RDBs, as opposed to built-up areas, would be too restrictive; it is conceivable to me that there may be instances where hotels could be accommodated satisfactorily in areas earmarked for commercial development, as PPG21 indicates.

9.16.3 As the centres of Stafford and Stone are within their respective urban areas, I see nothing untoward or contradictory in the suggested inclusion of the phrase "*in particular near or within the town centres...*" As the main public transport interchanges are within or close to the two town centres, I do not consider that specific reference to the proximity of these facilities in the text would significantly improve the efficacy of the Plan.

9.16.4 I accept that in certain instances the acknowledgement of commitments in the form of planning permissions may add a degree of clarity to the Plan. However, in this case, I am not satisfied that the relevance of the Council's resolution to grant permission for a hotel on part of the Wolseley Estate as long ago as January 1990 is sufficiently central to the Plan to warrant it being acknowledged either in the form of an annotation of the Proposals Map or as an additional policy and text as suggested by **the Joint Supervisors of Sir Charles Wolseley Bart's Individual Voluntary Arrangement**.

#### **Recommendation**

9.16.5 *I recommend that Policy LRT17 and the supporting text thereto be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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### **9.17 POLICY LRT18 - EXTENSIONS TO HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES AND OTHER SERVICED ACCOMMODATION**

**Objection Nos:** 0946/31 A G Simmons; 1498/78 Stafford FOE.

#### **The Objection**

- Clause (e) should be cross-referenced with Policies ED20, ED21 and ED22.

#### **Conclusions**

9.17.1 The Council accept there is merit in this objection. I agree; the suggestion would add cohesion and consistency to the Plan. An appropriately worded amendment is put forward in the Suggested Changes.

#### **Recommendation**

9.17.2 *I recommend that Policy LRT18 be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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### **9.18 POLICY LRT19 - CONVERSION OF EXISTING DWELLINGS OR REDUNDANT BUILDINGS IN RURAL AREAS**

**Objection Nos:** 0200/08 Whitbread plc; 0532/26 West Midland Bird Club; 0941/12 MAFF; 0946/28 A G Simmons; 1429/20 DOE; 1498/79 Stafford FOE.

#### **The Objections**

- Duplication of matters covered in other policies.
- Omission of public houses/restaurants from suitable alternative uses.

- Redundancy `test' is inappropriate.
- Need to acknowledge buildings important as breeding or roosting sites for protected species.

## Conclusions

9.18.1 In response to these objections, this policy is proposed to be deleted in the Suggested Changes. This step is accompanied by a more appropriate title for the supporting text [which is intended to remain], as well as an additional paragraph of text referring to other parts of the Plan. Although **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE's** objections include a suggested modified version of the policy, they are satisfied with the suggested change as are **DOE**. As the Plan contains a robust policy base for dealing with the conversion of rural buildings I am satisfied that the changes proposed would not reduce its efficacy. The reference to the redundancy `test' in the supporting text is also proposed to be deleted. I commend this measure too; it means that there will be no conflict with the advice in PPG7.

9.18.2 Restaurants are already cited as an example of an alternative use and so are hotels; to my mind it would be logical to include public houses too. Provided that my recommendation concerning buildings occupied by protected species in respect of Policy ED14 is accepted, I do not consider it is necessary to refer to this matter here, although a cross reference to that policy would be helpful.

## Recommendation

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

- i. the deletion of Policy LRT19;*
- ii. the alterations to the supporting text as set out in the Suggested Changes;*
- iii. the addition of public houses to the examples of alternative uses set out in the supporting text and also the inclusion in the text of a reference to the provisions of Policy ED14.*

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## **9.19 POLICY LRT20 - TOURING CARAVAN AND CAMPING SITES**

**Objection Nos:** 0946/29 A G Simmons; 1429/19 DOE; 1498/80 Stafford FOE.

## The Objections

- Duplication of matters covered in other policies.
- Need to clarify that very special circumstances need to be demonstrated to justify such development in the Green Belt.

## Conclusions

9.19.1 The Council accept the need to rationalise the content of the policy in association with the proposed changes to Policy LRT6. I find the version in the Suggested Changes more concise; the two clauses contained therein are more specifically targeted at this particular form of development. I also commend the suggested addition to the supporting text which cross references the policy with other policies in the Plan, notably Policy LRT6.

9.19.2 The Suggested Changes also incorporate advice concerning this type of development in the Green Belt. I find this amendment satisfactory; reflecting the advice in PPG2, it makes it clear that it would only be permitted in very special circumstances. As Policy ED9 covers this particular point, I see no need to refer to it in the policy itself. However, I consider greater clarity would be achieved if the supporting text included a reference to Policy ED9.

## Recommendation

9.19.3 *I recommend that Policy LRT20 and the supporting text thereto be modified in accordance with the Suggested Changes subject to a reference to Policy ED9 being included in the supporting text.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## 9.20 POLICY LRT21 - HOLIDAY CHALET AND STATIC CARAVAN SITES

**Objection Nos:** 0946/30 A G Simmons; 1429/18 DOE; 1498/81 Stafford FOE.

### The Objections

- Duplication of matters covered in other policies.
- Need to clarify that very special circumstances have to be demonstrated to justify such development in the Green Belt.
- Need to set out the approach concerning sites affecting the AONB and sites of nature conservation importance.

### Conclusions

9.20.1 In the light of the amended version of Policy LRT6 now proposed, the Council accept that scope exists to rationalise this policy to avoid duplication and have done so in the Suggested Changes. I regard this as a sensible measure which I note satisfies **A G Simmons** and **Stafford FOE**, although I consider the supporting text ought to refer to Policy LRT6, as does the suggested amendment to the text supporting Policy LRT20.

9.20.2 In response to the objection by **DOE**, the Council propose to make specific references to development in the Green Belt, the AONB and other sensitive areas in the supporting text. I accept that these are important considerations, but as they are the subject of other policies in the Plan, I am not satisfied that this material needs to form

part of the policy itself. In so saying however, I consider greater clarity would be achieved if the supporting text identified the relevant policies.

### **Recommendation**

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

- i. the deletion of clause (b) of Policy LRT21;*
- ii. the addition of supporting text as set out in the Suggested Changes;*
- iii. the addition to the supporting text of references to the application of the policy in conjunction with Policy LRT6 and the other policies, including Policy ED9, which deal with development in the Green Belt, the AONB and other sensitive areas mentioned in the changes to the text.*

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### **9.21 POLICY LRT23 - VISITOR SERVICES**

**Objection No:** 1429/17 DOE.

#### **The Objection**

- Lack of clarity regarding land use implications and means of implementation.

#### **Conclusions**

9.21.1 The Council accept the policy represents a statement of intent rather than a clear land-use policy. In the Suggested Changes the content of the policy is transferred to supporting text. I find this satisfactory.

#### **Recommendation**

9.21.2 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the deletion of the Policy LRT23 and the transfer of the content thereof to supporting text in accordance with the Suggested Changes.*

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### **9.22 PROPOSAL T1 - STONE: TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL POLICY AREA**

**Objection Nos:** 1429/16 DOE; 1940/06-08 Bass Taverns.

#### **The Objections**

- Lack of distinction between the policy and the supporting text.

- Need for clearer definition of the Policy Area.
- Land uses unduly restrictive.
- Unreasonable to focus development in the northern part of the area.

## Conclusions

9.22.1 As the proposal and supporting text are printed in the same typeface, the one cannot readily be distinguished from the other. In my view this needs to be rectified. The Council's suggestion that italics could be used to highlight the proposal would be a satisfactory solution.

9.22.2 The absence of definition of the Policy Area on the Stone Area Inset Map is inconsistent with the Plan's text. This matter is largely resolved in the Suggested Changes where the area to which the policy is intended to apply is clearly defined, but I consider that the text should also be amended to include a reference to the Town Centre Inset.

9.22.3 As regards the range of permissible uses, I accept that the area in question is on the fringe of Stone's town centre and contains uses such as car parking which serve the town centre. Nevertheless as I perceived it, in the main, the character of the area derives from its relationship - functionally and visually - with the Trent and Mersey Canal; as such, it is somewhat distinct from the town centre. In the light of this, I find the proposal that the area be defined for canal related development both reasonable and appropriate.

9.22.4 The submission by **Bass Taverns** that a modest sized food store would assist in attracting new investment, shoppers and visitors is not without merit, but my view is that such development would not be in keeping with the main thrust of this proposal. I do agree however with the Council's view that an element of residential use would be appropriate and this should be acknowledged in the Plan. My impression is that the public car park between the canal and Crown Street is a well used facility. Likewise, the bowling green performs a useful visual and functional role as open space. In these circumstances, my opinion is that the references to the retention of the latter and that development be focused in the northern sector of the area are reasonable and should remain.

## Recommendation

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

- i. the amendment of the presentation of the text under the heading "Proposal T1.." in a manner which clearly distinguishes the proposal from the supporting text;*
- ii. the definition of Proposal T1 on the Stone Town Centre Inset in accordance with the Suggested Changes, together with the insertion of an appropriate cross reference in the text;*
- iii. the addition of residential to the uses identified in the text.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **9.23 OMISSION - VILLAGE ATTRACTIONS**

**Objection No:** 2021/04 Gnosall Best Kept Village Association.

#### **The Objection**

- Absence of initiatives to attract visitors to villages such as Gnosall.

#### **Conclusions**

9.23.1 I acknowledge there are many items of interest in and around the various settlements within the Borough and there may well be benefits to be derived from attracting visitors to them. However, having regard to the advice in PPG21 to which the Council refer, I see this is largely as questions of marketing and promotion, matters which lie beyond the scope of this Plan.

#### **Recommendation**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

### **9.24 OMISSION - FACILITIES IN STAFFORD**

**Objection No:** 0531/05 M Dudley.

#### **The Objections**

- Absence of references to the expansion of facilities
- Absence of mention of the facilities of Rowley Park, Riverside or Beaconside and their future.

#### **Conclusions**

9.24.1 While the objector expresses disappointment with this section of the Plan and points to the absence of references to specific items, no ways of improving the Plan are put forward. In my view Policies ED23, and ED25 provide a reasonable basis for protecting important open areas. Likewise, the policies in this section of the Plan afford protection for recreational facilities. While proposals for the expansion of facilities could have been included in the Plan, I do not find it unacceptably lacking because the Council have apparently not chosen to promote such measures.

#### **Recommendation**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

## **9.25 OMISSION - WEST MIDLANDS ARTS**

**Objection Nos:** 0345/01 & /06 West Midlands Arts.

### **The Objections**

- Absence of a leisure, recreation and tourism opportunity zone from Stafford town centre.
- Need to encourage evening access to cultural facilities.
- Lack of attention to arts facilities as attractions.
- Need to address the retention and development of cultural activities.

### **Conclusions**

9.25.1 In my view the provisions of the Plan provide a sound basis for considering leisure and cultural based projects in Stafford's town centre and for assessing proposals which may affect existing facilities. I am not satisfied that the identification of a "zone of opportunity" is needed in this case. Laudable though the promotion of cultural activities and facilities and improving access thereto may be, my view is that the means of facilitating such initiatives lie outside the ambit of the Plan.

### **Recommendation**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

## **9.26 OMISSION - GARDEN CENTRES**

**Objection Nos:** 0202/03 &/04 S P Harding.

### **The Objections**

- Need to control garden centre development in the countryside.
- Need for a policy directed at garden centres.

### **Conclusions**

9.26.1 In support of these objections, specific reference is made to a site in the countryside to the north-east of Eccleshall. While I can appreciate the basis of this concern, I do not consider it appropriate for me to comment on development control decisions taken by the Council. In my view, the policies contained in the Plan provide a sufficiently robust framework to enable this particular form of development to be dealt with effectively. I am not satisfied therefore that a policy specifically directed at garden centres is needed.

## **Recommendation**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

## **9.27 OMISSION - ENABLING DEVELOPMENT**

**Objection No:** 1921/02 A H Morris.

### **The Objection**

- Absence of any policy or statement which acknowledges that appropriate enabling development may be required.

### **Conclusions**

9.27.1 I accept that there are instances where it may be expedient to grant planning permission for development which may not otherwise be permitted in order to facilitate the implementation of a particular project. However, while the objector cites an example of enabling development in a neighbouring authority, my view is that there is a danger that a policy endorsing such an approach could undermine the efficacy of the Plan as a whole. I am unable therefore to commend a modification of this nature.

## **Recommendation**

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

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## **9.28 OMISSION - PROMOTION OF RECREATIONAL AND TOURIST POTENTIAL - TRENTHAM GARDENS**

**Objection No:** 0400/06 British Coal.

### **The Objection**

- Need for a policy concerning the recreational and tourism potential of Trentham Gardens.

### **Conclusions**

9.28.1 While the Suggested Changes to the Plan are silent insofar as this matter is concerned, a policy covering the Trentham estate was approved by the Council's Development Services Committee on 1 June 1995 and put before me for consideration, albeit unpublicised.

9.28.2 In the light of the historic importance of the estate, which also contains two SSSIs, and its function as a major focus for recreational and leisure activities, together with its likely impending disposal, it seems to me that there ought to be a site specific policy in the Plan. As I see it, it is particularly important that such a policy should provide a framework to facilitate the continued realisation of the recreational and tourism potential of the estate, but in a manner which ensures that its historic and natural attributes are safeguarded.

9.28.3 On the face of it, the formulation of a policy would appear to satisfy the objection, but two principal areas of dispute still remain. These concern firstly, the wording of the policy and secondly, the definition of the northern part, or 'core', of the estate where development and appropriate infilling is to be allowed.

9.28.4 As regards the first matter, while I appreciate that active consideration is being given to the designation of the estate as a conservation area, I share the objector's concern that the requirement to '*preserve and enhance*' or '*protect and enhance*' as it is also expressed, is more stringent than statute provides for. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 only requires that special regard be had to the *desirability* of preserving a listed building and its setting, or of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. It may well be that the Council's policy could underpin a refusal of planning permission if a scheme failed to preserve or enhance the site's built and landscape heritage. However, notwithstanding the generally high environmental quality of the estate, I am not satisfied that it would be reasonable to frame the policy in this manner.

9.28.5 In my view the policy suggested by the objector provides a clearer basis for guiding development. It identifies the land use to which the estate is put and sets out a series of criteria against which the merits of any project can be assessed, rather than a series of targets to be achieved as the considerations in the Council's version appear. In addition, given the statutory duty to consider planning applications, it avoids the use of the superfluous and somewhat vague phrase "*will consider*". As PPG15 indicates that conservation and sustainable economic growth are compatible objectives and economic prosperity can secure the continued vitality of conservation areas and the use and maintenance of historic buildings, my view is that the inclusion of economic benefits as a factor to be assessed is reasonable. Given the range of considerations likely to be involved, I also see merit in the 'balance of advantage' approach advocated by the objector. Bearing in mind the range of uses already present at the site, I consider the addition of outdoor sport and recreation is reasonable.

9.28.6 In the light of the foregoing, I prefer the objector's version of the policy to that proffered by the Council. I also agree with the objector's submission that the Proposals Map should be annotated accordingly.

9.28.7 Turning to the 'northern core', both parties agree the need to focus development in the northern part of the estate. This seems sensible as this is where most of the buildings and visitor attractions are already concentrated.

9.28.8 The core areas proposed by the objector and the Council both encompass the main concentration of buildings - older and more recent - in the northern part of the site.

However the area identified by the objector is considerably larger than that defined by the Council.

9.28.9 I accept that the core area identified by the objector includes key areas such as the formal Italianate gardens between the lake and the remains of the former house, together with areas of tree cover and landscaping. Nonetheless, while the prospect of development over the whole of this area would have serious and adverse consequences, I consider its boundaries are reasonably well defined; the area is somewhat distinct from the less formal landscape beyond it. Great care would need to be taken to ensure that any development did not impinge upon what I regard as highly sensitive surrounds and I would not wish to countenance development on all the land within this area. Nonetheless, my view is that the area defined by the objector is not excessive and the suggested policy is sufficiently robust to ensure that its distinctive and valuable qualities are safeguarded. For these reasons I favour the larger area put forward by the objector. To my mind the area identified by the Council is too restrictive to provide scope or encouragement for appropriate development compatible with a major leisure facility, albeit located within a most important historic setting.

### **Recommendation**

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

- i. the addition of a Policy for Trentham Gardens together with related supporting text and plan identifying the northern core as contained in inquiry document 186/OP/0400 A;*
- ii. the identification of the site and reference to the policy on the Proposals Map.*

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### **9.29 OMISSION - DRY SKI SLOPES**

**Objection No:** 0946/36 A G Simmons.

#### **The Objection**

- Need for a policy concerning dry ski slopes.

#### **Conclusions**

9.29.1 I accept that dry ski slopes can have a marked visual impact, as much if not more than golf driving ranges which the objector mentions. I also acknowledge that ski-lifts are specifically referred to in PPG21. I see no reason to take issue with the content of the policy and supporting text put forward by the objector. However, there is no evidence to show that pressure for this type of development in the plan area has been, or is likely to become, a particularly pressing issue. Furthermore, I am satisfied that the policy coverage of the Plan is sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that the appropriate

degree of control could be exercised over any proposals for this particular form of development should they arise.

9.29.2 In the light of the foregoing, I agree with the Council's view that there is no need to include a policy of this nature in the Plan.

### **Recommendation**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

### **9.30.1 OMISSION - STAFFORD CASTLE GOLF CLUB EXTENSION**

**Objection No:** LO115/01 Stafford Castle Golf Club.

#### **The Objection**

- Need to provide for an extension to Stafford Castle Golf Course.

#### **Conclusions**

9.30.1 The objector's existing course has only nine holes and I accept that the consequent constraints affect both the functioning of the club and the aspirations of local golfers. I fully appreciate that the allocation of an area which would provide the opportunity to expand the course to eighteen holes would provide a welcome degree of certainty to the Golf Club.

9.30.2 However, irrespective of the sensitive nature of the land which has been identified as an expansion site by the objector, my view is that allocating land to meet the requirements of individual sporting organisations would introduce an inappropriate and unnecessary level of detail into the Plan. To my mind, Policy LRT8, which is specifically directed at golf course development, together with the relevant environmental policies in the Plan, provide an adequate framework for dealing with this particular matter.

#### **Recommendation**

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

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### **9.31 OMISSION - PUBLIC HOUSES/RESTAURANTS**

**Objection Nos:** 0200/01-04 Whitbread plc.

#### **The Objection**

- Need for policies concerning extensions to public houses and restaurants and conversion of buildings to A3 or hotel use in the countryside.

## **Conclusions**

9.31.1 Two policies are advocated by the objector as part of the overall case supporting the objections to policies in both this section and in the Environment and Development Chapter. I appreciate the contribution that public houses and restaurants can make to the economy, but in my view, the Plan's policies, albeit not specifically directed at these particular uses, are sufficiently comprehensive to enable such proposals to be fully considered. I am not satisfied that the need for policies directed at the uses in question is sufficiently compelling to warrant their inclusion in the Plan.

## **Recommendation**

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

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## **9.32 OMISSION - LAND AT CRESWELL GROVE, CRESWELL**

**Objection No:** 1779D/26 Mount Charlotte Thistle Hotels.

### **The Objections**

- The hotel development site at Creswell should be identified on the Stafford and Creswell Inset Maps.
- The RDB for Creswell should be amended to include the approved hotel.

### **Conclusions**

9.32.1 The objection site, 6.48 ha in area, lies on the south-west side of M6 junction 14. Planning permissions were granted for hotel development on the land in 1989 and 1990. In October 1994 the Council resolved to renew the 1989 consent subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement.

9.32.2 I heard that the project had not progressed due to uncertainty concerning the motorway widening proposals and the state of the economy, but the objector remains fully committed to the scheme. Given that the main thrust of Policy LRT17 seeks to direct hotel developments to locations within the main urban areas or within the RDBs of selected settlements, I fully appreciate why the objector company wishes to safeguard its position. Indeed, I consider the amended version of the policy put forward in the Suggested Changes throws this stance into sharper focus.

9.32.3 I acknowledge that extending Creswell's RDB to include the site would bring any future proposals for hotel development here within the ambit of Policy LRT17. However, I am not in favour of this measure, which the objector also accepts is a less satisfactory 'fall back' position. As I see it, not only would this be a somewhat contrived solution, but also it would effectively make the site suitable for housing by virtue of

Policy HO4. In my opinion this is not an appropriate location for residential development; it would represent a significant expansion of Creswell, out of keeping with, and poorly related to, the scale and pattern of settlement here.

9.32.4 Turning to whether the project should be acknowledged in the Plan, PPG12 advises that the precise level of detail in a local plan is a matter for local decision. Although a development of this nature could well benefit the local economy, I do not consider the project goes sufficiently to the heart of the Plan, or is sufficiently "relevant to the Plan's proposals" as the DOE's Good Practice Guide, to which the Council refer, puts it.

9.32.5 I am mindful however that the Guide also advises that where it is proposed to renew permissions, these can be included in the Plan and shown as proposals. In the light of this, I attach considerable weight to the Council's decision to renew the planning consent on the site *after* the Plan had been placed on deposit and, equally if not more significantly, *after* the publication of the suggested change to Policy LTR17. I regard this as a clear endorsement of the acceptability of a hotel development on the site in the context of the provisions of the Plan. In this respect I draw a firm distinction between this project and the scheme at Wolseley Bridge to which I refer at 9.16.4. I accept that it is not the function of the Plan to protect private interests, but having regard to particular circumstances appertaining to the hotel site at Creswell, I consider it would be both reasonable and expedient to include the approved scheme as a proposal in the Plan.

### **Recommendation**

9.32.6 *I recommend that the Plan be modified by the inclusion of the approved hotel project in the Plan as a proposal.*

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## **9.33 OPEN SPACE PROVISION IN GREAT HAYWOOD, LITTLE HAYWOOD AND COLWICH**

**Objection No:** 0390/01 The Haywood Society.

### **The Objection**

- Need to remedy local deficiencies in open space provision.

### **Conclusions**

9.33.1 While the Plan contains policies which seek to safeguard recreational facilities and acknowledges that local deficiencies exist, the areas concerned are not identified. Nor are there any specific proposals to make good such deficiencies. While I see merit in incorporating positive remedial measures in the Plan, whether or not this should be done is essentially a matter for the Council's discretion. I do not consider the absence of positive proposals in this respect materially weakens the efficacy of the Plan as a basis for guiding land use.

**Recommendation**

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

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