

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE PLAN FOR STAFFORD BOROUGH

EXAMINATION HEARING 23rd OCTOBER TO 1st NOVEMBER 2013

OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement. I'm Frances Beatty, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration. I've been working with Officers and Members of the Council on the local plan for the last 2 and a half years, since I took up the portfolio.

Can I start by saying that Stafford Borough is committed to growth. We originally took our cue from the Regional Spatial Strategy, but made a decision very early on that, as the County Town, we wanted to encourage investment in both housing and employment.

To this end, we have a robust development strategy that focusses on Stafford and identifies strategic locations for sustainable development.

A particular interest and passion for me is in ensuring that new development is of a high standard of design and landscape quality, not just in terms of the look and quality of individual buildings but in how these new neighbourhoods are created and configured.

This is complemented by an emphasis on our environmental and built heritage, which will contribute to making the Borough a good place to live and work. If our settlements are attractive, it will inspire businesses to make the choice to locate here and their workforces to settle here. In the process of taking a neighbourhood approach, we have engaged with landowners, developers, public agencies and communities to address the wide range of issues and opportunities presented by the major directions of growth.

We have benefited from support from ATLAS, the Advisory Team for Large Applications, which is now part of the Homes and Communities Agency. They have offered consistent and invaluable advice and support

over the last few years with the western direction of growth. We have been able to put this to good use in considering the other major development locations.

Our elected members, and the communities they serve, have been keen to see that this planned growth in housing and employment is matched with appropriate supporting infrastructure. We've therefore worked with Staffordshire County Council to plan for the roads and schools that are required in years to come. Green space, sports provision, and other community facilities feature heavily in the area master plans

Although the main focus for future development is Stafford, the rural areas have an important part to play. Stone, as the second largest settlement, has seen considerable growth in the last plan period. We are therefore looking for a more modest scale of development in the next 15 to 20 years. This, in part, also respects the development strategies of our near neighbours in Newcastle and Stoke, who have a ambitious regeneration programmes.

We have identified a number of Key Service Villages in our extensive rural areas. These have the capacity for limited growth to keep them vibrant and to serve local needs. And we are backing the production of neighbourhood plans to guide future development and support the needs of these rural communities.

The policy suite within the local plan reflects the local character of the Borough, and complements the National Planning Policy Framework. Members and Officers have worked hard to ensure that our policies give appropriate guidance to developers and assist in the decision-making process.

I believe our Plan for Stafford Borough reflects the continuing interest of the development industry in investing in this diverse and attractive area of ours. It also reflects the needs of our local communities, and it plans for the future generations that will take the County Town and Borough of Stafford forward over the next 20 years and beyond.

Thank-you.