

Council Position Statement – Westbridge Park, Stone

Following the hearing sessions and site visit on Wednesday 3 August 2016, the purpose of this note is to provide a Council Position Statement regarding the settlement boundary at Westbridge Park, Stone.

The Council considers that the settlement boundary, as defined on the Stone Settlement Boundary map (P2-A3), including previously developed 'brownfield' land at Westbridge Park is sound.

The settlement boundary has been defined in order to deliver new retail and leisure developments in accordance with Spatial Principle 7 in the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough (P2-C1) where new development is supported within boundaries. Furthermore the settlement boundary at Westbridge Park excludes all Green Infrastructure designation identified on the Stone Area Inset 2 map (P2-C3) of the adopted Plan.

Since the Plan for Stafford Borough was adopted in June 2014 the Council has invested significant resources in order to deliver new leisure developments at Westbridge Park, as set out in the Cabinet report dated 11 December 2014 (P2-N22) and the Leisure Strategy for Stone (P2-N23). The new leisure development will be part financed by a new retail development (see Appendix 1 for details), with a conditional contract for the sale of the land to a third party in place. Implementation of both the leisure and retail developments within the Stone Settlement Boundary at Westbridge Park (P2-A3) will provide major new leisure and community facilities for the local area as well as meet a significant proportion of the new future retail provision identified in Policy Stone 1 of the adopted Plan (P2-C1). Westbridge Park is on the edge of the town centre and, in the Council's view, the provision of additional car parking and a new retail outlet (M&S food store) within the settlement boundary will support the vitality and viability of Stone town centre.

As a current planning application for the retail development is pending consideration by the Council it is inevitable that a number of documents have been submitted to the Part 2 Examination Library concerning this proposal. The Council will be considering all relevant factors through the decision-making process for the planning application, including updated information from the applicant. A planning application for the leisure developments is anticipated in the new few months (P2-N23).

On a point of clarification raised at the site visit on Wednesday 3 August 2016 the Council would like to confirm that the new retail and leisure developments will increase car parking provision at Westbridge Park from 77 spaces to 157 parking spaces, as detailed on page 51 of P2-N22 (Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report dated 11 December 2014 – Sports and Recreational Facilities in Stone). The Council's commitment to investment in Stone has been achieved despite a prolonged period of financial constraint for local authorities. The proposals will bring leisure facilities in Stone up to a standard comparable to that provided to Stafford residents and the Leisure Strategy for Stone (P2-N23) is fully supported by Sport England. Furthermore the road layout at Westbridge Park leading to the sewage pumping station will be maintained, and improved highway safety provided through the access road entrance being widened and a new junction.